CHAPTER - IV

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0. INTRODUCTION:

The methodology adopted is that of qualitative research, based upon the inductive method. Data has been collected and pieced together to get appropriate and meaningful explanation.

4.1. RESEARCH PREMISE:

The method for the present study combines the analytical induction strategy with the case study method. On its own, the analytical induction strategy blends research premise formulation with data analysis. The research premise is that the mass media in India should be governed by a law of privacy and there exists an urgent need to formulate such a law due to the emergence of all intrusive information technology. A series of sting operations and investigative practices by media persons have raised the questions of legality and ethical concerns of professional conduct. Though bordering on the citizen’s right to know, the issue does not look so simple. In other words, it is a complex issue that demands a holistic approach by both the legal and media fraternity.
4.2. THE CASE STUDY METHOD:

The case study method ‘uses as many data sources as possible to systematically investigate individuals, groups, organisations or events.’ (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003, pg 129). It is also defined as ‘an empirical enquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, in which boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly visible’ (Ibid). The case study method has its own characteristics of being ‘particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive’. It gives scope for further research and can be combined with any relevant theory to gain further insights into the issue. Since the method uses a wide array of evidence in the form of ‘documents, historical artefacts, systematic interviews, direct observations and even traditional surveys’, the validity of data has its own significance.

4.3. QUESTIONNAIRE METHOD:

In order to support the findings an indicative sample survey of respondents, across a spectrum of a ‘variety of people’ has been conducted. The sample is purposive and non-probable in character. However, response was forthcoming from 66 respondents out of 153 copies of the questionnaire distributed. Based on the responses, the data was tabulated for definitive inferences. The geographical area of the survey was Barak valley of South Assam and national capital region (NCR) surrounding Delhi.
4.4. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED:

The responses have been tabulated and analysed following percentage analysis method and chi-square tests. A non-parametric test as chi square test is used as it is much easier to compute and can be used to treat data that is to be measured on nominal (classificatory) scales. Here since the sample size is small hence chi square test has been preferred.

The results of the tests have been interpreted table-wise and a consolidated summary has been placed at Chapter-VII.

In a democratic polity like India, more and more people in public sphere have started complaining of invasion of privacy by media. Not only tabloidization of print but also of electronic media has made the issue serious. There has been significant research in the developed countries regarding immunity of the social media users from the misuse of their personal information by the interested groups. The area has so far remained unexplored in India and other Third World countries and the information uploaded in the Net by the unscrupulous users is a fertile ground for exploitation by the media.

The research work has attempted to suggest suitable measures that have been taken from an ethical and legal perspective to curb and legitimise the use of personal information for media gratification.
4.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

Studies on privacy related issues more so in the field of relevance to the Indian context have not been done on an extensive scale in Indian Universities.

The reasons can be attributed to the low level of awareness on privacy issues and privacy rights among the masses. Hence the urgency of carrying out studies on privacy and its various aspects was perhaps not felt.

But in the present era when India is emerging as a global power, efforts to check privacy invasions by the media are being realised which need to be studied and examined in right earnest in the context of our needs and culture which is diverse and multi-ethnic. This was the inherent spirit in taking up the study which would perhaps inspire new researchers to take up such studies and provide them with some leverage in their studies on the issue in the days to come.

As mentioned earlier privacy is a relatively new concept in India compared to Western countries and there was not much literature on privacy intrusions by media and its legal and ethical aspects on which the researcher could bank upon to initiate the research work.

Access to information and data on privacy in the Indian scenario was Herculean and often frustrating. The non-availability of free source of information was another serious handicap when it came to the research findings in other countries.
However, sincere efforts have been made to relate issues on privacy intrusions by media through case studies in the Western world and those incidents that occurred in India.

During the process, judgements of both Western and Indian courts have been analysed and interpreted to correlate the existing notions of privacy prevalent in both the developed and developing world to suggest some concrete steps for privacy protection in India. In this manner the study has thrown open the way for more discussions on privacy and academic studies on the subjects of privacy and privacy intrusions by media.

A sample survey has been done among some respondents ranging from the common man to journalists and lawyers but it was felt that the number of respondents should have been in the range of 500-1000 covering different states of India having different cultural affinities. But though questionnaires were sent out to more than 150 people only a miniscule number has responded.

It is felt that the analysis of data gathered from the feedback received will act as a guiding light for future research in the topic. The research work is basically qualitative in nature and hence too much dependence on a large sample size was avoided as acquiring more data would not necessarily lead to more information.

While commenting on qualitative research Wimmer & Dominick says “there are however some disadvantages associated with qualitative
methods. First, sample sizes are sometimes too small (sometimes as small as one) to allow the researcher to generalise the data beyond the sample selected for the particular study. For this reason, qualitative research is often the preliminary step to further investigation rather than the final phase of a project. The information collected from qualitative methods is often used to prepare a more elaborate quantitative analysis, although the qualitative data may in fact constitute all the information needed for a particular study.”

The study has suggested some definite conclusions on the need for privacy protection by media from a legal and ethical perspective but devotion of much more time was a serious handicap in the present case as sufficient extra period of time would have lent more credence to the data analysis and would have provided the future researcher with much more academic material than that has been provided for by the present research.

References:


2. Ibid.,1, pg.47