CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The news media are our central repositories and disseminators of knowledge and as such, exert a considerable influence over our perceptions of groups and lifestyles of which we have little first hand experience. They have the power to create issues and define the boundaries of debates. The news can organize opinions and develop world views by providing structures of understandings into which isolated and unarticulated attitudes and beliefs may be fitted.

Research in newspaper is a fascinating experience. Newspapers are constant companions for many and inspite of the massive stride in the field of communication, it continues to lure the reader, either at home or while traveling for many a day is not complete without reading their favorite newspaper. Even after the advent of the internet, the pleasure of holding and reading a printed version continues to be popular.

Among the news items published, those dealing with crime and violence and ofcourse cinema grab the attention of the reader instantly. Crime reporting is one of the major areas covered by the newspaper. Different types of crimes, which occur in the society, are featured in these newspapers.
Newspapers, in recent years, have generally drifted away from general issues to crime and violence, analyses of major social problems, and investigations of governmental and corporate wrongdoing. Therefore, it is now common to find crime stories splashed with big headlines even on the front page of major newspapers. Thus, the need to study the coverage of crime reporting in major newspapers is bound to throw up exciting findings. Hence, the need was felt to analyse the content of crime coverage in the newspapers.

The research focus is the result of widespread belief among members of the public and its significant influence among public behaviour, the general quality of life in local communities and the quality of life in the nation as whole. In this connection, the study attempted to study the response of the readers of the four newspapers in reacting to crime and examining the cognitive distinctions underlying these separate responses.

Reporters are the main content providers of news for the newspaper apart from the news agency. Among the reporters, the crime reporters are those who provide the newsroom with spot stories and interesting incidences of violence, which get prominence in the newspaper. Thus, it was but natural to elicit the views of the crime reporters through focus group discussion as part of the research.
Aim of the study

The aim of the present study was to find the importance of crime news among the newspapers and its impact on the readers.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the crime reporting in English and Tamil newspapers through content analysis.
2. To analyse the readers' opinion on crime reporting in newspapers and
3. To study the attitude towards crime reporting among the crime reporters through focus group discussion.

Hypotheses of the study

1. The Tamil newspapers concentrate more on crime coverage than that of English newspapers.
2. No significant difference will exist between the four newspapers in space devotion for crime news.
3. Among the English newspapers selected for the study, The New Indian Express concentrates less on crime coverage than that of The Hindu.
4. Among the Tamil newspapers selected for the study, Dina Tanthi concentrates more on crime coverage than that of Dina Malar.
The methodology followed for the present study is presented under three sections.

A. Content analysis

B. Quantitative analysis of the Data collected from the readers

C. Focus Group Discussion

A. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Roberts (1989) defined content analysis as any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information; Krippendorf (1980) defines it as a research for making replicable and valid references from data to their context. Kerlinger’s (2000) definition is fairly typical: content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables.

Content analysis could determine the extent of newspaper reporting in terms of amount of space or number of articles. The present study adopted content analysis to study the space devoted for crime coverage in selected newspapers published in Chennai.

The two types of content analysis are conceptual and relational analysis. The present study involved conceptual analysis. In conceptual analysis, the concept
chosen for the examination for the present study was crime reporting and the analysis involved quantifying and tallying its content on crime reporting.

**Selection of the newspaper**

The Chennai editions of two English newspapers, The Hindu, The New Indian Express and two Tamil newspapers, Dina Malar and Dina Tanthi were chosen for the study. These four newspapers served as the mirror of the progress and happiness of the people for the development of the nation and smooth sailing of the government where crime event are an indicator.

A systematic random sampling procedure was adopted to select the four newspapers on the alternate days for a period of six months from January, 2002 to June, 2002. Therefore 90 copies of alternative days of each of the paper were selected for the study.

**Analysis of crime coverage**

A thorough reading of various newspapers magazines, text books and journals were made to understand the different types of crime. Then a close analysis was done to categorise the crime published in the newspapers into 9 categories.

The researcher has classified crime into 9 categories, namely, General crime, Sensational crime, Extremist/ Terrorist Crime, Crime against women, Political
crimes, Economic offences, Crimes related to prohibition and narcotics, Juvenile crime and Police image building.

But this categorisation of crime was done only for the purpose of convenient study. Keeping in mind the terms associated with the above mentioned crime categories, the crime coverage was analysed in the four newspapers.

The researcher studied keenly the reports which appeared in the main edition of the newspaper and calculated the space devoted for crime coverage. Advertisements supplement were not the part of the study. The space of the crime news was physically measured in centimeters using a scale. The area of crime news was calculated in column centimetres. In the newspaper, each column is 4.5 cms width. The total area was calculated adding the areas of all crime reports separately for the nine categories of crime used in the study.

B. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA COLLECTED FROM THE READERS

Quantitative analysis was carried out to find the opinion of the readers towards crime reporting in newspapers.
The research design for this section was ex-post facto (descriptive study) in nature (Kerlinger, 2000). Survey method was followed for this section of the study. It was cross-sectional in nature.

Selection of the sample

As this research pertained to the study of the Chennai Edition of the four newspapers, the sample was taken from Chennai city. Moreover, as the main thrust of the research was on content analysis, this feedback was taken to substantiate the study on the reader's response. The sample selected for the present study were readers of anyone of the four newspapers chosen for the study. The sample was selected using random sampling technique. The address of subscribers of the four selected newspapers was got from the newsagents. From the list of readers given by the newsagents, the readers were selected randomly.

Tools used for the study

After careful examination of the available research techniques, questionnaire was found to be the most appropriate procedure for collecting the necessary data for the study. The questionnaire consisted of ten simple questions designed with the view to find whether crime stories appeared to be making a distinctive contribution or merely to be reiterating or reinforcing ideas that were otherwise current. The questionnaire was checked for reliability with the help of the pilot study.
C. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Qualitative research was carried out through focus group discussion to gather information about the various aspects of crime reporting from the viewpoint of crime reporters to analyse the importance of crime reporting and its impact among the readers.

Selection of the sample

Purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the participants of focus group discussion. The respondents involved in the focus group discussion were a group of 20 crime journalists who had minimum three years of journalistic experience. Their ages varied between 25 years and 45 years. They belonged to different newspapers and electronic media.

A topic guide was formulated to conduct the focus group discussion among the women entrepreneurs. The focus group discussion was conducted for about 2 hours duration. The researcher acted as a facilitator to co-ordinate the interaction and to elicit information based on the guidelines by keeping in mind the objectives of the study. Discussions were triggered from a number of open-ended key questions pertaining to participant’s role in crime reporting. The facilitator was supported by a documenter to document the opinion of the participants. The
documenter was a silent observer. Focus group discussion was conducted in the month of March, 2003.

**Processing and analysis of data**

The data obtained by content analysis was quantified and analysed. The statistical methods used for inferential analysis were 't' test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The data obtained through the questionnaire were coded, classified and tabulated for further statistical analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to present the responses of the readers. Qualitative analysis was made on the information gained through focus group discussion.

**Findings of the Study**

**Content Analysis**

The result of the content analysis has revealed that Tamil newspapers give more space for crime coverage than English newspapers. It was seen from the study that during the 6 months period on an average, the overall crime coverage occupied significant space coverage among the selected four newspapers. Among the classified crime stories, those under the general crime category had occupied the maximum amount of space. The newspapers gave more or less equal importance to sensational crime news and police image building followed by the news on political crime. News on economic offences, Juvenile crime, crime against women and
prohibition and narcotics had more or less equal importance. The space coverage for news on extremists/ terrorist was the least.

However, overall crime coverage was more in the Tamil newspapers than in the English newspapers. The results support the null hypotheses of the study.

**Quantitative analysis of the Data collected from the Readers**

Among the selected respondents, majority of them expressed that crime news was sensational. It could be found that majority of the respondents (70 percent) revealed that they had fear of crime, after reading the crime reports on newspapers.

It was found that 91 percent respondents gained awareness and took precautions against crime on reading crime reports on newspaper. It is interesting to note that 90 percent of the respondents strongly revealed that they would inform the authorities (Police) immediately if they witness a crime.

95 percent of the respondents preferred victim version than that of police version. Majority (85 percent) of the respondents found to have interest on crime news. 75 percent of the respondents read only one newspaper whereas the remaining 25 percent read more than one newspaper.
Results of focus group discussion

Several interesting observation were thrown up during the FGD leading to interesting debate and providing valuable information. Even for crime reporters who were engrossed with the work, the discussion provided exciting inputs from their colleagues. Apart from the research purpose those who participated in the FGD felt it was an absorbent and fruitful experience. The discussion aimed to gather information on various aspects of crime reporting from the viewpoint of the crime reporters. Thus it could be concluded from the discussion that a crime report formed the essence of the newspaper and was given its due priority, which was reflected in the columns. There is a high readership value for crime reports. They played a very important role in society by creating awareness among the public and also bringing pressure on the authorities concerned to take remedial measures for prevention of crime.

Recommendations for further research

1. A comparative analysis of crime coverage in the media vis a vis police statistics to find if the media coverage is a true reflector of the crime index.
2. Qualitative analysis on the ethics adopted in the media with reference to women and juvenile offenders.
3. Retrospective approach to the challenges faced by the print media with the advent of the satellite television on coverage of political and social issues.

4. An in-depth analysis of entertainment content in the newspaper and the television.

5. Media ownership and news control in the Indian context – A review.

Conclusion

Coverage of crime news dominated the four newspapers during the study period. Tamil newspapers had more crime stories and also devoted more space for these reports when compared to the English newspapers. On an average, both the Tamil newspapers had given equal coverage for crime reports. Similarly, the two English newspapers though had less crime coverage when compared to Tamil newspapers, they contained more or less equal crime reports.