



CMS media lab

REPORT 2010

FACE OF CORRUPTION IN NEWS MEDIA

A Report
on their
Coverage

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Foreword

Corruption is a major and widespread aspect of our public life today. The media both print and electronic is an important part of the society's architecture. Its function is collecting and spreading information about developments in the society. It has been said that a great newspaper is a nation talking to itself.

CMS has been rendering a great service to the nation by holding a microscope and a telescope to the media in our country. This latest Report 'Face of Corruption in News Media' focuses on the extent of coverage in the media on the issue of corruption. It points out that the coverage of corruption has gone up significantly since 2008.

Is it because the extent of corruption itself has gone up? Or is the perception of the incidence of corruption more than the reality? Has the Right to information Act injected a greater enthusiasm?

Another related issue is can the media mobilize public opinion to fight corruption?

As I see it there is intense competition for grabbing eyeballs in the electronic media. Corruption real or fancied next to sex is a surefire subject to grab attention. The veneer of occupying a moral high ground is an added bonus. Is my assumption correct? The answer must be based on further studies.

The report can be a very useful starting point for a greater understanding of the dynamics of corruption and effective ways of tackling it.

All citizens interested in the progress and prosperity of our country must read and reflect on this thought provoking report.

August 21, 2010

N Vittal, IAS (Retd.)
Former Central Vigilance Commissioner of India

Preface

The purpose of this monograph is to put in public purview the trends in the coverage of corruption in our news media. These recent trends could be looked into from different perspectives – sociological, good governance, agenda setting, RTI, etc. A UNDP report (2008) contended that media coverage of corruption helps create public pressure against corruption. But is it also helping bring down corruption in the country?

One perspective CMS would like to put forward, based on its several rounds of India Corruption Study in the last one decade, is that the more the reporting of corruption in mass media, particularly the way the news channels presents and repeats corruption related stories, the more the perception that corruption is all over. These CMS studies on corruption in public services have brought out that actual experience of citizens with corruption in public services is much lower than their perceptions. How should this variance be understood?

Putting together insights from those annual surveys with these trends in news media coverage, calls for a sensitivity analysis of the way our news media covers corruption and the potential it has to help snub and curb corruption in the country. This monograph of CMS Media Lab is a first step in that direction. We welcome your suggestions.

September 3, 2010

P N Vasanti
Director

Definition of Corruption

The items monitored under Corruption were those where there is conflict of interest and/or monetary gain is involved directly or indirectly for illegitimate private gain. Number of items and time devoted for each story was studied.

Notes

1. *Study Period:* January to May 2010 (Study period for first chart is six years).
2. *Television:* Figures are based on Prime Time (7 to 11pm) coverage by 6 National News Channels. The channels include Aaj Tak, DD News, Star News, Zee News, CNN IBN and NDTV 24x7.
3. *News Dailies:* Figures are percentage of front page coverage of 7 news dailies- Dainik Bhaskar, Hindustan, Dainik Jagran, Hindustan Times, The Time of India, The Hindu and The Indian Express.
4. *Radio:* Figures are percentage of time devoted on corruption issues during prime time (7 to 11pm) news bulletin in All India Radio.
5. Figures are percentage of time devoted on corruption during prime time coverage.
6. The IPL related corruption coverage not included in the analysis except Chart I.

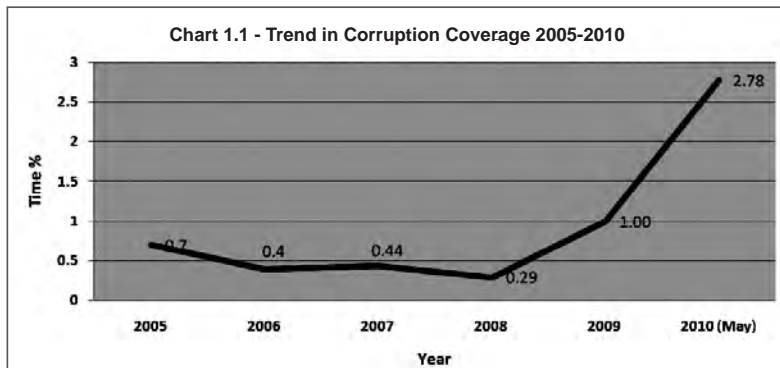
Reference Data: Stories on corruption out of total stories by channel (Jan-May 2010)

News Channels	Total Stories (in numbers)	Stories on Corruption (in %)
Aaj Tak	3844	2.50
DD News	7813	1.05
Star News	7415	1.87
Zee News	4710	3.80
CNN IBN	6836	2.40
NDTV 24x7	5899	3.14
Total	36517	2.31

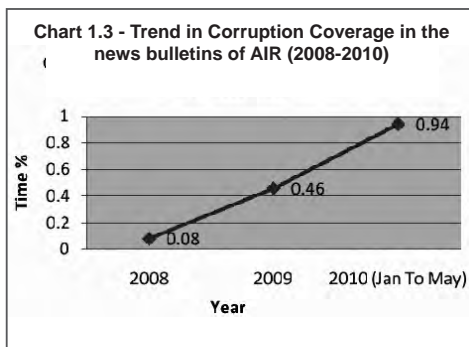
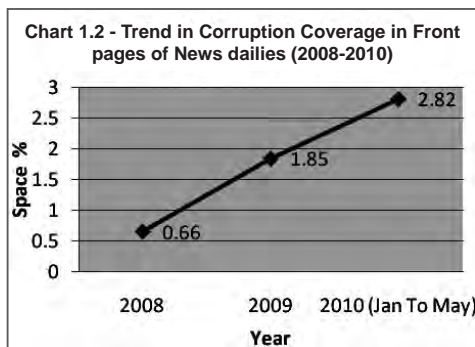
Source: CMS Media Lab

News Media Concern

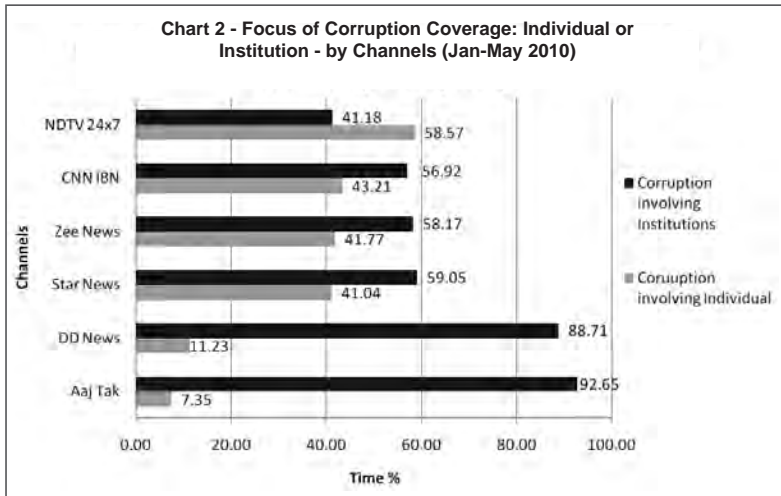
The trend in Corruption coverage in Prime-Time bulletins by the 6 television News Channels during 2005 to 2010 show almost four times increase in percentage of time given for news stories on corruption in 2010 compared to that in 2005.



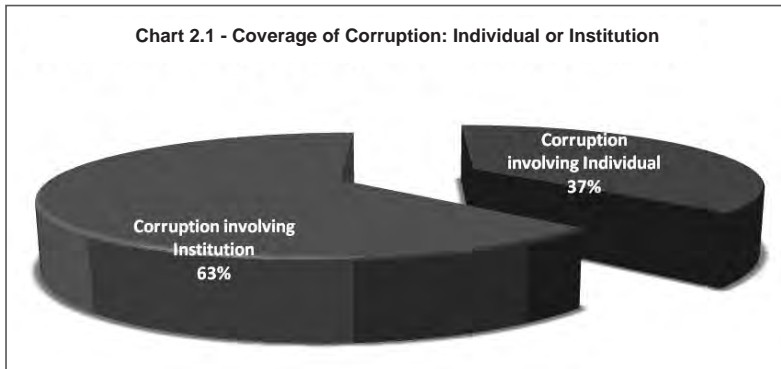
Further, it is noticeable that the time devoted for corruption related news by television news channels has been on increase since 2008.



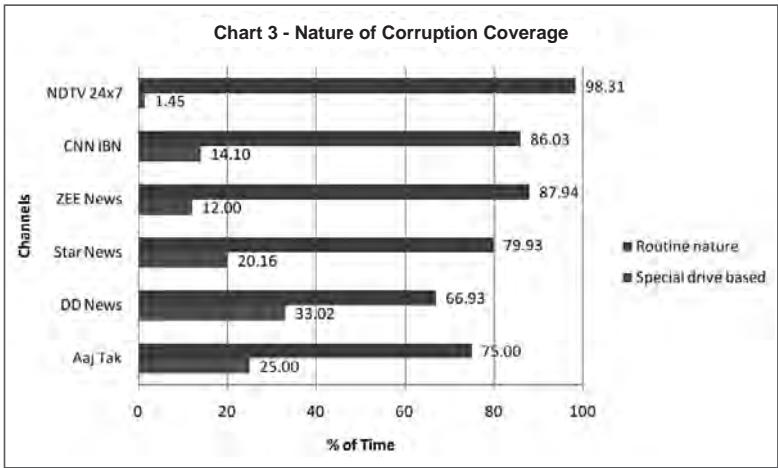
Coverage of corruption in the three prominent news media has been on increase significantly since 2008. In terms of percentage, it is lesser in All India Radio as compared to television news channels and news dailies. This could be due to the reason that AIR has limited time slot/space for news and there is no exclusive news channel/station in All India Radio.



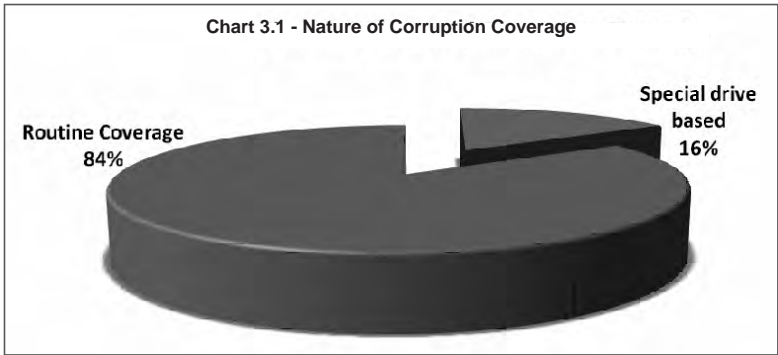
Hindi news channels like DD News and Aaj Tak focused more on Institutional level corruption whereas, NDTV 24X7 and CNN IBN English channels focus was comparatively more on corruption involving individuals.



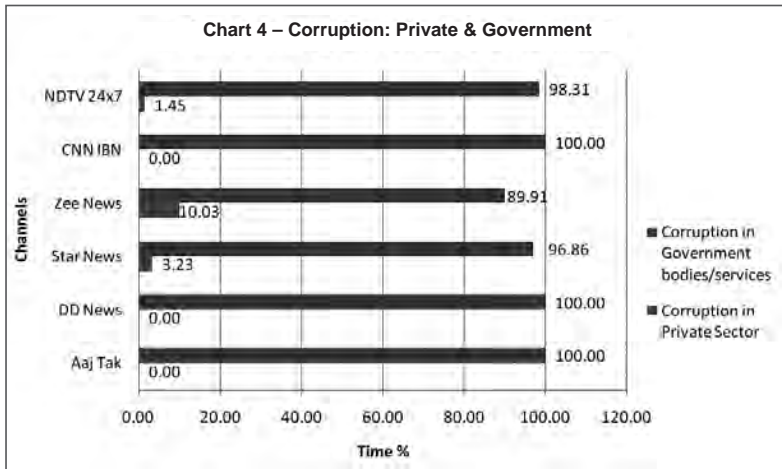
Overall, around two third of the corruption related stories involving institutions got more coverage. For example, corruption in institutions like MCI, NHAI, BSNL and BMC constituted a major portion of corruption coverage.



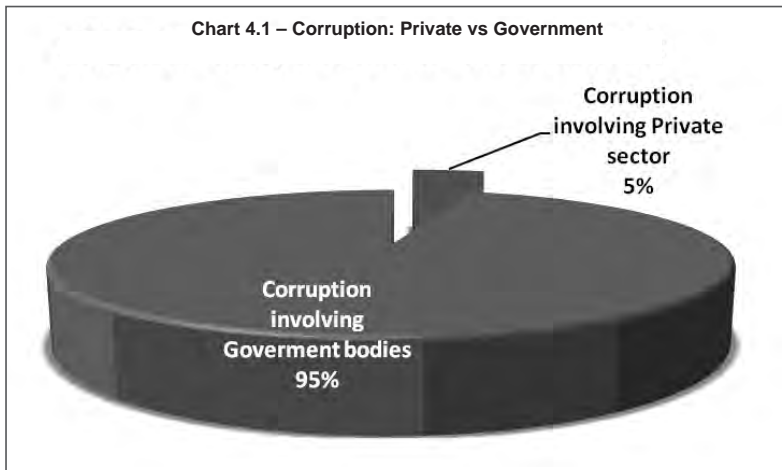
Hindi news channels carried relatively more special drive coverage than English news channels.



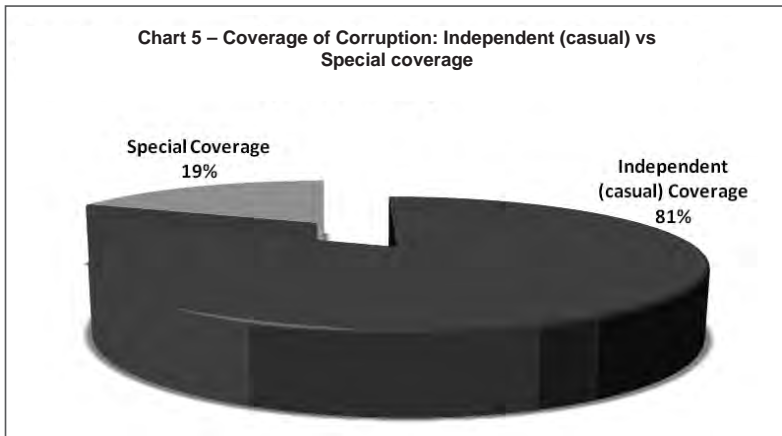
The study showed that most of the prime time coverage of corruption was of Routine nature (e.g- bribery, raids by CBI/IT, land scams, fraud etc). Very little effort was infused by the channels as less time was devoted on special drive such as corruption in politics, Laws to protect whistle blowers among others.



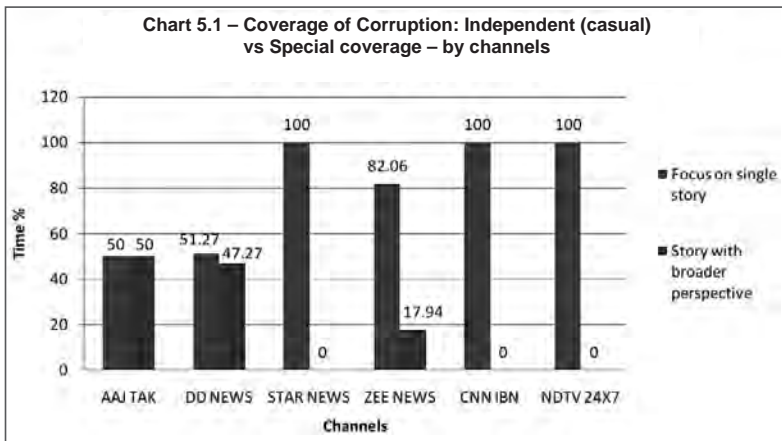
Zee News had more coverage of corruption in the private sector. DD News, Aaj Tak and CNN IBN had none during the period of review.



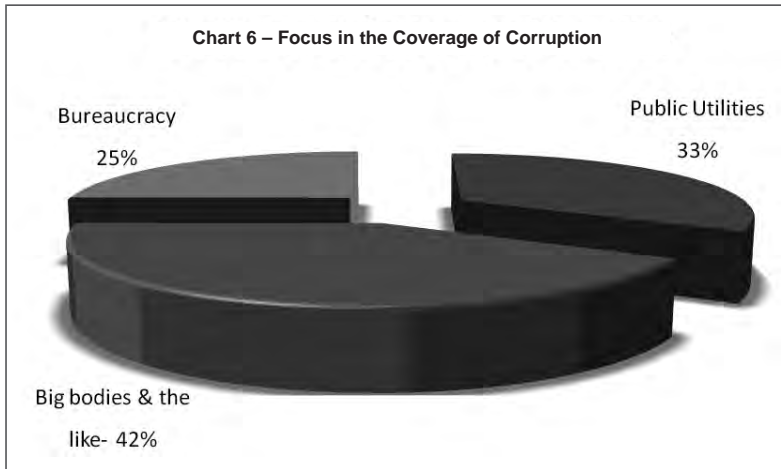
The channels devoted most time on corruption relating to government bodies/services hardly anything to do with Private sector.



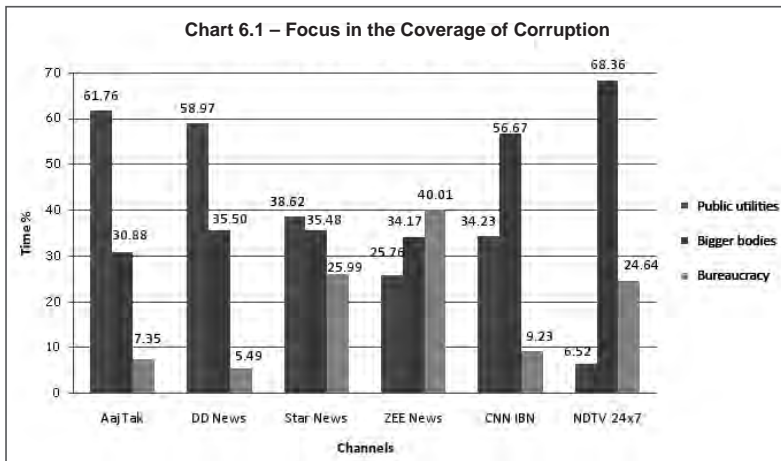
In covering corruption, channels devoted most of their time on independent (one time) news stories (e.g. – Sukhna Land scam, CBI probing 2G Spectrum, IT raids, etc).The channels barely carried Special or a follow-up series to expose corruption.



Hindi Channels like Aaj Tak and DD News devoted around half of the time on corruption for carrying special coverage on corruption issues. English channels had none during the period of review.



The channels focused more on the scams referring big bodies (ABCL, DRDO, NHA, BMC, Adani Group) and bureaucracy (IAS/IPS officers involved in corruption). However one third of stories were to do with public services, e.g. scams related to MCI, Railway reservation, Water, electricity, etc.



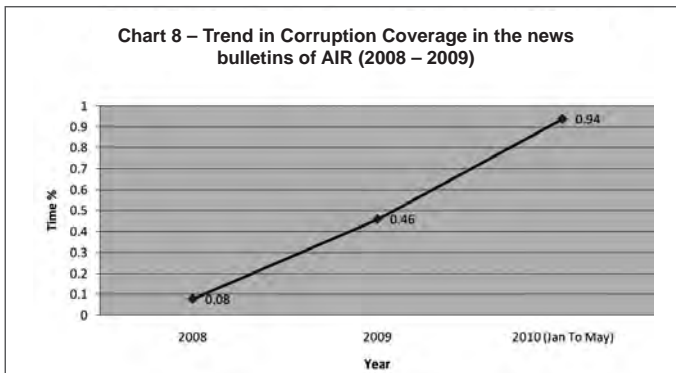
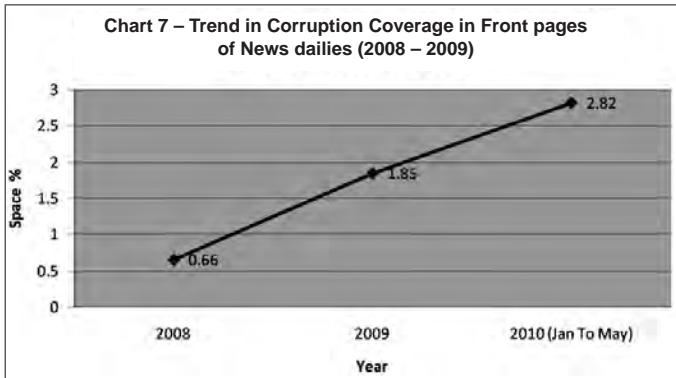
While focus of Aaj Tak and DD news was more on corruption related to public services; English news channels had more coverage of corruption involving big bodies.

As most of the channels are based in Delhi the coverage of corruption was confined mostly to the state or NCR region, followed by Maharashtra. Almost 78 percent of time of corruption coverage originated from Delhi and Maharashtra.

Table 1: Corruption coverage (State-wise)

Top 5 States with most corruption coverage	Time %
Delhi (include NCR)	46.73
Maharashtra	31.08
Madhya Pradesh	1.94
Rajasthan	0.86
Andhra Pradesh	0.54

Similar to the trend noticed in television news channels, corruption coverage on the front pages of News dailies has been on increase since 2008.



In All India Radio as well, similar to Television news channels and news Dailies, the news bulletins broadcast during Prime Time (7 to 11 pm) show a steep increase in corruption coverage during the last three years.

Summary

This monograph brings out how coverage of corruption in news media of the country has gone up significantly since 2008. This is in the case of all news media - news channels, news dailies and AIR News. The time devoted for coverage of corruption was much more than the time they devote for coverage of health, education— even put together. What signified this upswing in coverage and with what consequence is something for further research.

One possibility could be new found enthusiasm in the wake of RTI Act's implementation. An analysis of time devoted for corruption stories in the news bulletins to an extent is misleading as channels tend to repeat even within the same bulletin. CMS Media Lab's annual reviews have brought out that the extent of repeat in news bulletin is around 40 percent. To add to it, the reviews also brought out that in its 24-hour programming schedule, the news channels gave around 38 percent of the time for programmes based on entertainment, sports, lifestyle, business, automobiles, crime, astrology and teleshopping (See Annex 5). These trends also need to be looked into against the background of various rounds of CMS India Corruption Study in the last decade, which shows that perceptions of citizens about corruption in public services are much higher than their actual experience while availing the services. And, it is generally believed that the basis for perception most often is prioritized as they get covered and reflected in the news media.

This monograph tries to bring out that coverage of corruption by news media is not sufficient enough to sensitize or motivate people to move against corruption or contain corruption. This could be because the scope and structure of coverage of corruption is such that it does not provoke people enough as the items were mostly at higher end or about "big corruption".

Three-fourth of space and items on corruption covered by news bulletins were mostly about big bodies, bureaucracy and involving political or high profile personalities and Government services and as if "petty" corruption and involving vulnerable people do not matter or bother so much. There were hardly any items covered which involved ordinary citizens and the larger public from their perspective. Also, most of the coverage was not a result of proactive initiatives of the media in context.

This analysis also reminds an important recent UNDP report on "Tracking Corruption, Transforming Lives" (2008). One of its observations was that "strong media can boost anti-corruption efforts" but "serious constraints still impede the full power of the press to report on corruption". Even more relevantly, UNDP report observed that "the press is most effective where there is a plurality of media representing diverse view and ownership patterns, and operating in a competitive market". To what extent this has been the case in India? This monograph is a first step in that enquiry.

Annexure 1

Corruption Issues	Total		
	No of story	Total Time (in min)	Total Time (in %)
Initiative Based Reporting	28	157	15.80
Systemic (Routine) Reporting	317	837	84.15
	345	994	100.00
Corruption Involving Individual	171	368	37.01
Corruption Involving Institutions	174	626	62.94
	345	994	100.00
Routine Coverage	302	694	69.81
Special Coverage	43	300	30.16
	345	994	100.00
Public Utilities	86	329	33.14
Big Bodies	164	417	41.97
Bureaucracy	95	248	24.92
	345	994	100.03
Corruption Involving Private Sector	23	46	4.61
Corruption In Government Bodies/Services	322	948	95.35
	345	994	100.00

Annexure 2

Corruption Issues	Aaj Tak			DD News			Star News		
	No of story	Total Time (in min)	Total Time (in %)	No of story	Total Time (in min)	Total Time (in %)	No of story	Total Time (in min)	Total Time (in %)
Initiative Based Reporting	3	17	25.00	3	52	33.02	5	19	20.16
Systemic (Routine) Reporting	11	51	75.00	44	106	66.93	66	74	79.93
Corruption Involving Individual	4	5	7.35	16	18	11.23	43	38	41.04
Corruption Involving Institutions	10	63	92.65	31	140	88.71	28	55	59.05
Routine Coverage	13	34	50.00	39	68	42.99	69	74	79.66
Special Coverage	1	34	50.00	8	90	57.07	2	19	20.43
Public Utilities	6	42	61.76	18	93	58.97	16	36	38.62
Big Bodies	4	21	30.88	22	56	35.50	24	33	35.48
Bureaucracy	4	5	7.35	7	9	5.49	31	24	25.99
Private Organisation	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00	5	3	3.23
Government Organisation	14	68	100.00	47	158	100.00	66	90	96.86

Contd.

Corruption Issues	ZEE News			CNN IBN			NDTV 24X7		
	No of story	Total Time (in min)	Total Time (in %)	No of story	Total Time (in min)	Total Time (in %)	No of story	Total Time (in min)	Total Time (in %)
Initiative Based Reporting	9	49	12.00	7	18	14.10	1	2	1.45
Systemic (Routine) Reporting	96	358	87.94	51	112	86.03	49	136	98.31
Corruption Involving Individual	54	170	41.77	26	56	43.21	28	81	58.57
Corruption Involving Institutions	51	237	58.17	32	74	56.92	22	57	41.18
Routine Coverage	86	293	71.97	58	130	100.13	37	95	68.72
Special Coverage	19	114	27.97	0	0	0.00	13	43	31.04
Public Utilities	21	105	25.76	19	45	34.23	6	9	6.52
Big Bodies	49	139	34.17	30	74	56.67	35	94	68.36
Bureaucracy	35	163	40.01	9	12	9.23	9	35	24.64
Private Organisation	16	41	10.03	0	0	0.00	2	2	1.45
Government Organisation	89	366	89.91	58	130	100.00	48	136	98.31

Annexure 3

Corruption coverage originating from various states	Time %
Andhra Pradesh	0.54
Bihar	0.01
Chhattisgarh	0.05
Gujarat	0.25
Haryana	0.37
Himachal Pradesh	0.14
Jammu and Kashmir	0.29
Jharkhand	0.04
Karnataka	0.14
Kerala	0.09
Madhya Pradesh	1.94
Maharashtra	31.08
Orissa	0.19
Punjab	0.39
Rajasthan	0.86
Uttar Pradesh	0.26
West Bengal	0.14
Chandigarh	0.34
Delhi	46.73
Others	16.17
Total	100.00

Corruption coverage originating from various parts	Time %
Delhi	46.73
Mumbai	30.37
Kolkata	0.14
Other State Capital	3.80
Rural	0.40
Other Towns Cities	18.57
Total	100.00

Annexure 4

Contents of News Channels: Time use of Programme Category (2010)

Issues	Aaj Tak	DD News	Star News	Zee News	CNN IBN	NDTV 24x7	Total
	Time %	Time %	Time %	Time %	Time %	Time %	Time %
News Bulletins	47.64	76.31	60.00	63.33	66.67	60.00	62.32
Current Affairs	2.08	12.86	2.50	7.08	12.08	15.42	8.67
Entertainment	21.25	0.83	16.46	8.06	5.83	12.08	10.75
Sports	6.25	9.17	3.13	5.42	11.25	9.17	7.40
Lifestyle	0.00	0.83	1.25	0.00	3.75	2.50	1.39
Automobiles	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.42	0.83	0.21
Business	0.00	0.00	0.42	1.25	0.00	0.00	0.28
Crime	7.92	0.00	6.25	8.19	0.00	0.00	3.73
Astrology/ Superstition	14.86	0.00	6.25	6.67	0.00	0.00	4.63
Teleshopping	0.00	0.00	4.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.69
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00



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CMS Media Lab is a premiere media research and consulting organization. It is pioneer in media research with two decades of experience. CMS Media Lab analyses contents, tracks trends and studies media priorities and agenda setting function.

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