



Coverage of Agricultural Issues in Leading Indian Hindi Dailies: A Content Analysis

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HIGHLIGHTS

- India's highest circulated Hindi newspapers, *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Amar Ujala*, published a limited number of agricultural issues.
- The majority of the agricultural news items published in both dailies were situation based.
- National level agricultural issues received the highest priority in both newspapers.

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ABSTRACT

The majority of India's population is directly or indirectly engaged in the agricultural sector. Currently, Indian agriculture is facing various challenges, but timely information dissemination is one of them. The present study was conducted to examine the agricultural issues published in two leading Hindi newspapers, i.e. *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Amar Ujala*. Editorials, opinion columns, and feature articles published in the Panipat edition of Haryana State during January 2023 and December 2023 were selected for the study. The study concluded that India's highest-circulated Hindi newspapers, *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Amar Ujala*, published a limited number of agricultural issues. Both dailies have given the highest importance to national-level agricultural issues.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has played a crucial role in the development of human civilization. For many years, agriculture and allied sectors have been a significant source of employment and income in many developing countries, including India. India's rural economic life has revolved around agriculture. Agriculture is considered a way of life for farmers and peasants (Jodhka, 2018). According to the 2011 census, about 54.6 per cent of India's total workforce is still engaged in agriculture and allied sectors (Annual Report of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, 2022-23). Despite a declining share of agriculture in India's national income and employment, it remains an important sector of the Indian economy (Jodhka, 2023). The agriculture sector globally is facing several challenges (Rosegrant et al., 2021). In India, low productivity, lack of irrigation facilities, untimely dissemination of information, inadequate capital inflow, lack of farm laborers, scarcity of cold storage, less income, problem of land, lack of new technology, soil degradation, lack of subsidies,

farmers' suicide, climate change and marketing problems are major agricultural issues (Nandkarni, 2018; Kumar, 2019; Patel & Nagaich, 2021 & Jodhka, 2023). According to a NITI Aayog report, the share of agriculture in India's gross domestic product (GDP) is declining due to the growth of the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. However, it still remains an important sector in India as this sector provides livelihood opportunities to millions of rural people (Patel et al., 2022). Despite their crucial economic contribution, Indian farmers, especially those in rural and remote areas, consistently face difficulty in obtaining timely and reliable agricultural information (Amar et al., 2025).

Previous studies indicated that issues related to agriculture have not received much importance in the Indian media (Mudgal, 2011; Venkatesha & Kamble, 2019). Agriculture only makes news when commercial interests are involved. Mass media have considerable power to shape public opinion on any issue. Among print media, newspapers occupy a significant position. Despite the rapid proliferation of digital media in India, newspapers remain a

crucial source of information and knowledge for dissemination (Sharma et al., 2023). This medium considered an important part of the lives of millions of Indians as their day begins with newspapers. Different contents of newspapers viz. news stories, opinion columns, editorials, and feature articles serve different purposes. Newspaper can play an important role in raising awareness on agricultural issues among the masses and farmers. Agricultural development in India is a matter of concern, so it is the responsibility of journalists to provide adequate coverage on different aspects of agricultural issues. Content analysis being powerful tool to analyse various dimensions of coverage has been used by authors for different purposes (Nain, 2003; Sondarava et al., 2019; Nain et al., 2019; Kobba et al., 2019). The main objectives of this study were to categories various themes of agricultural issues and to make a comparative analysis of agricultural news content between selected newspapers. In addition, the aim of this study was to know the different approaches to agricultural news content published in the selected newspapers.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of this study, the content analysis method was adopted. Content analysis is considered a very popular and appropriate method for the interpretation of media content. Social science scholars and media researchers consider content analysis as a flexible method for analyzing text data. Researchers also defined content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context (Krippendorff, 2004). In this study, an attempt was made to analyze the agricultural news content published in selected newspapers. Only those agricultural news items published on editorial pages were analyzed. Editorials, opinion columns, and feature articles concerning agricultural issues were analyzed in this study. Letters to the editor and advertorials were not part of the study.

The Hindi newspapers have seen exponential growth in India in the last few years. The largest number of dailies were published in Hindi language (4,424), followed by Urdu (1,107), Telugu (1,065) and English (825). Hindi newspapers had the highest circulation with a total of 10,34,83,185 copies per publishing day, followed by English dailies (2,09,14,036) and Urdu dailies (1,97,81,900) (RNI, 2021-22). According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations July-December (2022) report, three Hindi newspapers were among the top five highest circulated daily newspapers in the country. Among Hindi dailies, *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Amar Ujala* ranked first and second, respectively, in terms of circulation. *Dainik Bhaskar* newspaper circulates daily 3,229,365 copies, while *Amar Ujala* circulates daily 1,638,534 copies at the national level (2023).

The nature of farming varies with the seasons, and agricultural schemes are initiated accordingly. Therefore, keeping the situation

in mind, researchers decided not to select samples of a particular period of the year, rather to include all the issues published in a year for the study. Hence, all the issues of both newspapers published from Haryana state from January 1st to December 31st, 2023 were selected for the study. During the selection of newspapers, it was noted that both dailies are published from various cities of Haryana. Finally, it was decided to include newspapers published in the Panipat district of Haryana due to convenience, as they were easily accessible within the available time and resources.

RESULTS

Number of agricultural issues

The details of the number of agricultural issues (agricultural editorials, agricultural opinion columns and agricultural feature articles) published by both newspapers presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that both newspapers published 547 editorials during the study period, *Amar Ujala* newspaper published 308 editorials, while *Dainik Bhaskar* published 239 editorials. Only, 22 (4.02%) of the total number of editorials came up under the agricultural category together from these two newspapers. *Dainik Bhaskar* has published 19 agricultural editorials (7.95%) of its total number of editorials, whereas *Amar Ujala* has published only three agricultural editorials (0.97%) of its total number of editorials. It is very clear that the number of agricultural editorials published by *Dainik Bhaskar* is higher than that of the editorials published by *Amar Ujala*. *Dainik Bhaskar* provided satisfactory coverage to agricultural editorials, while *Amar Ujala* gave only a minuscule proportion of its total editorials (less than 1%) to agricultural editorials. Further, the study shows that both newspapers published 1384 opinion columns, in which 760 opinion columns were published by *Dainik Bhaskar* and 624 opinion columns were published by *Amar Ujala*. Out of 1384 opinion columns, only 33 (2.38%) opinion columns were published by both newspapers on agricultural subjects. *Amar Ujala* published 25 agricultural opinion columns (4.01%) of its total number of opinion columns, while *Dainik Bhaskar* published only 8 agricultural opinion columns (1.05%) of its total number of opinion columns. It is evident from Table 1 that the number of agricultural opinion columns published by *Amar Ujala* is higher than that of the opinion columns published by *Dainik Bhaskar*.

During the period under study, 1619 feature articles were published by both newspapers. *Amar Ujala* published 916 feature articles, while *Dainik Bhaskar* published 703 feature articles. Only 10 (0.62%) of the total number of feature articles were on agricultural subjects. *Amar Ujala* published 8 agricultural feature articles (0.87%) and *Dainik Bhaskar* has published only 2 agricultural feature articles

Table 1. Number of agricultural issues

Name of Newspaper	Total No. of Editorials	Total % of Agricultural Editorials	Total No. of Opinion Columns	Total % of Agricultural Opinion Columns	Total No. of Feature Articles	Total % of Agricultural Feature Articles
<i>Amar Ujala</i>	308	0.97	624	4.01	916	0.87
<i>Dainik Bhaskar</i>	239	7.95	760	1.05	703	0.28
Total	547	4.02	1384	2.38	1619	0.62

(0.28%) of its total number of feature articles. Table 1 clearly shows that the number of agricultural feature articles published by *Amar Ujala* is higher than that of the feature articles published by *Dainik Bhaskar*.

Subject-wise categorisation of agricultural issues

All agricultural editorials, agricultural opinion columns, and agricultural feature articles were categorised into 19 different categories based on their coverage. The number of these categories described in Table 2.

Table 2. Subject-wise categorisation of agricultural issues

Content Category	<i>Amar Ujala</i> (%)	<i>Dainik Bhaskar</i> (%)
Marketing, Transport & Storage	11.11	10.34
Irrigation	2.78	00.00
Agricultural Finance	08.33	00.00
Supporting Services & Incentives	02.78	17.24
Agricultural Administration	13.89	03.45
Climate Change	05.56	20.69
Agricultural Production	05.56	10.34
Agricultural Technology and Innovation	05.56	06.90
Forestry	08.33	00.00
Agricultural Employment	02.78	00.00
Farmer's Suicide	05.56	00.00
Cooperative Farming	08.33	00.00
Natural Disaster	02.78	00.00
Stubble Burning	02.78	00.00
Fertilizer	05.56	00.00
Fisheries	02.78	00.00
Miscellaneous	05.56	13.79
Agricultural Schemes & Policies	00.00	13.79
Animal Husbandry	00.00	03.45
Total	100.00	100.00

The study depicts that both newspapers covered diverse aspects of agricultural issues. Out of the 65 agricultural issues, 36 were published by *Amar Ujala* newspaper, while 29 published by *Dainik Bhaskar*. Out of 65 agricultural issues, 15 (about 23%) were related to marketing, transport, storage and climate change categories. The table further reveals that *Amar Ujala* gave the highest priority to agricultural administration (about 14%), while *Dainik Bhaskar* gave the highest priority to climate change (about 21%). *Amar Ujala* did not publish single news item on agricultural schemes and policies and animal husbandry, whereas *Dainik Bhaskar* published 4 and 1 agricultural issues respectively on the same. Not even a single news item related to irrigation, agricultural finance, forestry, agricultural employment, farmers' suicide, cooperative farming, natural disaster, stubble burning, fertiliser, and fisheries was published by *Dainik Bhaskar*. Furthermore, each of the two newspapers published 2 agricultural issues on agricultural technology and innovation. *Dainik Bhaskar* published 3 agricultural news items on agricultural production, while *Amar Ujala* published 2 on the same subject. Both dailies published a few miscellaneous news items related to agriculture.

Purpose-wise categorisation of agricultural issues

Five purposes of the agricultural issues (agricultural editorials, agricultural opinion columns and agricultural feature articles) were identified in both newspapers (Table 3).

Table 3. Purpose-wise categorisation of agricultural issues

Approach	<i>Amar Ujala</i> Frequency (%)	<i>Dainik Bhaskar</i> Frequency (%)
Situation-based	21 (58.33)	12 (41.38)
Achievement-based	00 (00.00)	02 (06.90)
Advisory-based	06 (16.67)	11 (37.93)
Research-based	03 (08.33)	00 (00.00)
Policy-based	16.67	04 (13.79)
Total	36 (100.00)	29 (100.00)

Table 3 shows that five purposes, viz., situation-based, achievement-based, advisory-based, research-based, and policy based agricultural issues were identified during the period under study. A total of 65 agricultural news items, 33 (50.77%) were describing situations or related to events, 17 (26.15%) dealt with advisory, and 10 (15.38%) focused on policy related subjects in agricultural areas. Some agricultural issues highlighted achievements (2), while some were research-based in the agricultural sector. Table 3 further depicted that both newspapers have given the highest importance to situation based agricultural issues. *Amar Ujala* published 21 situation-based agricultural news items (58.33%), whereas *Dainik Bhaskar* published only 12 (41.38%). Both dailies gave advisory based agricultural news items as a second priority. *Dainik Bhaskar* published 11 advisory-based agricultural issues (37.93%) while, *Amar Ujala* published only 6 (16.67%) on the same. As far as policy based agricultural news items are concerned, *Dainik Bhaskar* published slightly more policy based agricultural news items than *Amar Ujala*. *Dainik Bhaskar* published 6 policy related agricultural issues (16.67%), while *Amar Ujala* published only 4 policy based agricultural news items (13.79%). It is evident from Table 3 that *Dainik Bhaskar* did not publish even single achievement based agricultural news item, whereas *Amar Ujala* did not publish single research-based agricultural news item.

Geographical coverage of agricultural issues

All agricultural issues (agricultural editorials, agricultural opinion columns and agricultural feature articles) were categorised geographically into five different categories based on their geographical importance. The details of the geographical coverage of agricultural issues are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 showed that both newspapers gave the highest importance to national-level agricultural issues. Out of 65 agricultural issues, 45 published by both newspapers were related to national-level agricultural news items. *Amar Ujala* published 27

Table 4. Geographical coverage of agricultural news contents

Geographical Categories	<i>Amar Ujala</i> (%)	<i>Dainik Bhaskar</i> (%)
District	05.56	00.00
State	02.78	03.45
Regional	2.78	06.90
National	75.00	62.07
International	13.89	27.59
Total	100.00	100.00

agricultural news items (75%) related to national level, while *Dainik Bhaskar* published 18 agricultural news items (62.07%), which were of national importance. The table further reveals that both newspapers gave the second priority to international level agricultural news items. *Dainik Bhaskar* published 8 agricultural news items (27.59%), whereas *Amar Ujala* published only 5 (13.89%), which were related to an international level. *Dainik Bhaskar* published 2 agricultural issues, which were of regional importance, while *Amar Ujala* published only 1 agricultural news item, which was related to regional importance. Each of the two leading newspapers published only 1 agricultural news item related to the state level. It demonstrates that both newspapers did not show interest in covering state related agricultural news items. Not a single agricultural news item pertaining to the district level was published by *Dainik Bhaskar*, whereas *Amar Ujala* published 2 such items. It indicates that *Dainik Bhaskar* completely ignored district-level agricultural news item.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal significant variations related to agricultural issues published by both newspapers. It is important to note that the central government runs various agricultural schemes to support farmers, yet the *Amar Ujala* published no news items related to agricultural schemes and policies and animal husbandry. The Indian agricultural sector is facing several challenges, including inadequate irrigation facilities, farmers' suicides, natural disasters, and the issue of stubble burning, but *Dainik Bhaskar* completely ignored them. According to the recent report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 10,786 farmers and agricultural labourers committed suicide in the country in 2023 (Bhagirath, 2025). For a long time, stubble burning has been a major cause of air pollution. In recent years, climate change has affected the agricultural productivity (Kumar & Saxena, 2024). It seems that these agricultural issues do not matter to the editor and senior journalists of *Dainik Bhaskar* newspaper. The overall coverage of agricultural news items in both leading Indian Hindi dailies was inadequate. Previous scholarly studies also confirm that India's leading Hindi newspapers provide low coverage to agricultural news items (Nain & Trikha, 2001; Mudgal, 2011; Yadav, et al., 2012; Singh, 2022). The findings of this study are consistent with Jain et al. (2023), who highlighted that agriculture receives meagre coverage in India's national newspapers. The majority of agricultural news items in both newspapers were situation-based, and national-level agricultural issues received the highest priority. India is predominantly an agricultural society, where a large proportion of

its population remains engaged in agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood and income generation. Editors and senior journalists of both newspapers should enhance agricultural news coverage in their newspapers. Editorials, opinion columns, and feature articles published in newspapers can play a significant role in educating and sensitising farming communities on various agricultural issues.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that India's popular Hindi dailies, i.e., *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Amar Ujala*, published a limited number of agricultural issues. The majority of agricultural news items published in both newspapers consisted of situation-based reporting. Both dailies predominantly focused on national level agricultural news items. Editors and senior journalists of both newspapers should enhance the coverage of agricultural news items in their newspapers, as more than half of India's population is directly or indirectly involved in the agricultural sector.

DECLARATIONS

Competing Interest: The authors have no competing interests.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that during the preparation of this work, newspapers reviewed very carefully. The authors take full responsibility for the final content of this publication. The authors also declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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