

## Political Visuals Dominate in the Vernacular News Papers: "A Content Analysis of Front Page Political Visuals of Leading Indian Newspapers"

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### Abstract

India is world's largest democracy with 81 crore electorate for the 16th Lok Sabha out of 1.27 billion population. This study examines the representation of political visuals from the leading English Newspapers and vernacular Newspapers in 2011 on the front page. In the process of this study, 355 political visuals out of the 2,394 total visuals from the 336 front pages (editions) of eight selected newspapers of Chandigarh editions were examined. The results of the study indicated that vernacular news papers published more number of political visuals as compared to English newspapers in India and there was a greater significance attached to visuals in Language press/vernacular newspapers. All the selected vernacular newspapers have published more than 10% political visuals on the front page and Punjab Kesri carried 23.9% political visuals. Majority of the political visuals, 71.5%, were used along with a story on the front page while 28.5% visuals were published without a story attached to it and as a stand-alone picture symbolizing an event or certain circumstances. The Tribune, a prominent English newspaper of North India, was the only English newspaper which used 100% visuals with story.

**Keywords:** Political visuals; Photojournalism; Front page visuals; Visuals study; Vernacular newspaper; Visual communication

### Introduction

The newspaper is a medium of news communication which performs the functions of informing, educating, influencing, and entertaining, among others with the use of words and visuals all over the world. Information through the visuals is processed much faster than verbal, it takes about half a second (500 milliseconds) to translate sensing (hearing, smelling, touch) into conscious awareness of these stimuli. Visual elements dominate perception, brain perceives, stores, and processes verbal and visual information mainly on distinct routes and with distinct mechanisms [1].

Similarly political photographs play an important role in political communication around the world after the domination by the television communication importance of the visual communication has increased [2]. With the help of visuals we grasp error free information and emotional involvement. We all know that a good photograph is worth thousand words. The use of photographs in newspapers not only makes news, article and features more interesting and memorable but also helps in understanding them in an easy way.

Visuals are very important in indian politics, in every corner we can see the cutout and posters of political leaders in India in various occasion. Newspapers are consistently publishing political visuals every day on their front pages and inside pages, attaching higher importance to political scenario in India.

In this age of information technology, visuals have taken the centre stage and today print media largely depends on them to give a more appealing look. Not only this, now visuals are used with the vital info of the story and this has resulted in origin of a new concept in print media called Info graphics (or the information graphics symbolizing graphics that depict some information through visuals alone and without text). Be it any big news-election stories, mishap stories or sports stories-info graphics along with big visuals are used by newspapers and magazines to attract readers and it has been accepted widely by the readers too [3].

In past, most newspapers/magazines in India had static visuals merely to fill space and such trends were noticed across vernacular and

English press both. Visuals in those days did not hold any significance but were placed with the news stories, features and articles as rituals. Readers were also interested in the text and written matter and did not pay much heed to the importance of their placement. With the advent of electronic media, visuals and info graphics became important.

The appearance and outlook of the newspapers from then and now has undergone sea change. Boring and flat pages of newspapers have brightened and glamorised with visuals. The action visuals and info graphics, presently in vogue, tell volumes about the event to the reader before they actually read the story.

My study is basically focused on the analysis of politics related visuals carried by The Tribune, The Times of India, The Indian Express, Punjabi Tribune, Ajit, Dainik Tribune, Punjab Kesri and Dainik Bhaskar Chandigarh edition on Page 1 during the first week of first six months of 2011.

### Visual Communication

Visual communication is a process of communication through the image. Any form of image that is used to communicate an idea, whether it's a sign, poster, drawing, photograph or television advertisement, can be included in the field of visual communications [4]. Visual communication is an effective mode of communication through visual support and it presents ideas and information which can be read or viewed. Visual communication is primarily represented and articulated with two-dimensional images which can be represented

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by signs, typography, drawing, graphic design, illustration, colour and electronic resources. It also explores the idea that a visual note bearing text has the power to inform and educate [5].

Visual communication applies artistic licence to communicate thoughts and ideas through sight. People skilled in visual communication can work in various fields of communication such as journalism, advertising, Web designing and publishing. They use many simple and advanced mediums, materials and techniques to get their message across-everything from pencils to computers.

Jerome Bruner, a psychologist of New York University, have proved the importance of visuals communication with his research, which says "people only remember 10% of what they hear and 20% of what they read, but about 80 percent of what they see and do."

## Political Visuals

Coverage of the political leaders in the newspapers through the visuals is called political visuals. We always see our leader's visuals during rallies, party meetings and press conference through the newspapers. A reader can have the feeling of the event after seeing the photos of political rallies in the newspapers. A reader can understand the meaning of political leader photo after see his or her smile and gestures. Visuals give the actual scene of political circle and our mind understands the visuals very effectively. Findings of neuroscience say, the brain perceives, stores, and processes verbal and visual information mainly on distinct routes and with distinct mechanisms [6]. When a visual and an auditory stimulus occur at the same time, the visual elements dominate perception [1].

## Objective of the study

The objective of this study is to analyze the front page political visuals of leading vernacular newspapers in India which concern political news coverage. The Chandigarh editions of these vernacular and English newspapers were considered for this study.

## Research questions

- How much area was given to political visuals by each newspaper?
- How many political visuals were carried/used on the front page?
- How many visuals had captions with them?
- How many visuals were used with story and without story on front pages?
- How many visuals were local, regional, national and International?
- What were the sizes of the visuals?

## Review of Literature

The front-page is a crucial page for each newspaper and political activities are reported on daily basis and these are mostly along with supporting visuals. Front page is a major selling point of each newspaper and acts like a window to news inside and it attracts the readers to buy newspapers, while and visuals create interest to read newspaper further and specifically the story that goes with it.

Researchers at the Eko [7] of School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Iowa, USA studied cartoon images of political leaders of African published by the African newspapers: Le

Cafard libere (The Liberated Cockroach) of Senegal, Le Messenger Popoli (Popoli Messenger) of Cameroon and Le Marabout (The Marabout) of Burkina Faso, and one 'traditional newspaper' [8], The Daily Nation of Nairobi, Kenya. This study shows how three newspapers have used human beings cartoons with animal attributes for satire purposes.

David Domke [9], Meg Spratt of University of Washington and David Perlmutter [10] Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge conducted a study "The primes of our times? An examination of the 'power' of visual images?" in 2002 [11]. According to these researchers, images most often *interact* with individuals' existing understandings of the world to shape information processing and judgments. They find that visual news images

- influence people's information processing in ways that can be understood only by taking into account individuals' predispositions and values, and
- at the same time appear to have a particular ability to 'trigger' considerations that spread through one's mental framework to other evaluations.

James N Druckman [12] of University of Minnesota studied the affect television political behavior. He studied the Kennedy-Nixon debate or listened to an audio version and television version. Television images give significant effects, people believe on personality perceptions in their evaluations. As per the study of Druckman [12] television images matter in politics, and may have indeed played an important role in the first Kennedy-Nixon debate [13].

Joan L Connors [14] of Randolph-Macon College have studied the Political Cartoons representations during the 2004 USA Presidential Campaign. He examines representations of presidential candidates in political cartoons to identify how often references to nonelection themes are made, with particular attention to allusions made to factors from popular culture [15]. As per his study political cartoons give only one of its kind of media message, they offer voters an opinion on the campaign or candidates encapsulated typically in a single image [16].

Michael Griffin [17-19] of University of Minnesota and Simon Kaganb of Tel Aviv University have studied the visual imagery in TV spots from the 1992 U.S. presidential election and the 1992 Israeli national elections. As per the study cultural imagery in political campaigns is truly needed to better understand the formation of candidate images, the shaping of campaign rhetoric, and the nature of political myth making [20].

Professor Sandra E Moriarty [21] of School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Colorado and Professor Mark N Popovich [21] of Department of Journalism at Ball State University have studied the 1988 campaign coverage of Republican presidential, vice presidential candidates and Democratic candidates in photographic coverage in Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World. They have studied the 15 attributes of photographs, such as camera angle, whether or not the candidate was smiling or frowning, active or passive, and the manner of dress. As per the study findings editors attempted to balance coverage between both parties.

The study of Jennifer Ehidiamen [22] is about the News pictures in Nigerian Newspapers on front-page. The Guardian newspaper and the Punch newspaper were used for the study. Publication of June 2007 was used for this study. The content analysis method was applied in this research. They have used simple random sampling method 15 editions of these newspapers were selected. The photos were studied on the basis of News worthiness, space allocation, the pattern and diverse trend of

coverage. Findings of this research showed that Nigerian Newspapers need to improve on the use of News pictures, especially the front-page photographs for the better communication of news worthy messages effectively [23].

Research on the front-page newspaper photographs [24] was done to identify changes in photography in selected major American daily newspapers over a period of 40 years (1936-76) [25]. The content analysis revealed an expected technical and social evolution in the newsroom, pressroom and darkroom. Six newspapers were studied: The Chicago Tribune, The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The St. Louis Post Dispatch, and the Washington Post. They were selected on the basis of their national prominence and their availability in microfilm files. Each newspaper was analyzed for a week each month for three years 1936, 1956 and 1976. The analyses were limited to photos on Page 1. Each photograph was examined in terms of size, subject, source, location on page; racial and sex composition, and whether accompanied by an article. The survey years were selected to represent equal intervals for what seemed a long enough period to clearly observe change [26].

There was also an increase in the photos by newspapers staffers. The placement of photos on the page was studied and was noted that editors maintained considerable placement flexibility throughout the period. An increase in the use of the photos used alone was also noticed. The study for sex composition revealed that the use of male-only photos decreased during the survey period Sengletary, Michael W [27].

Paula Hoffman-Hall, University of Nebraska-Omaha [28], studied the visual agenda of Times and Newsweek after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, presented by media sources, Time and Newsweek magazine [29]. Photographs immediately following the attack, six months later, one year later, and eighteen-months later, were observed in this study. The research produced a total of 493 photographs. Images were coded for the primary subject, portrayal, perspective, topic, and location. Cross tabs and Chi-square tests were run, and the data collected was used to answer the central research question and sub-questions developed with the assistance of past research. Significant differences in the visual agenda between Time and Newsweek magazine were found for subject, perspective and topic. Similarities were found in the presentation of the local and portrayal of the primary subject. Significant differences were found for all dependent variables from the results of the test which examined the data over time. The research unfolded a story told from news photographs, capturing a horrifying event that the American people will not forget.

Shaun Kohn [30] of University of Oregon studied Men vs. Women in newspapers sports section photographs under the supervision of Kim Sheehan in 2000. This study examines photographs of males and females in newspaper sports sections. A content analysis of sports section photographs from four newspapers covering a 20-year span, starting in 1978, found that gatekeepers attached more salience to male athletes, and presented female athletes in a higher %age of photos indicating dominance, indicating being dominated, and indicating emotion, when compared to males. Additionally, it was found that the presence of female athletes is increasing in the sports section, though there is still a large gender gap in 1998.

A Comparative Study of Photojournalism in American and Korean Newspapers conducted by the Yung Soo Kim and James D Kelly [31], Southern Illinois in 2005. The content of 628 news and feature photographs in ten elite American and Korean newspapers

was analyzed for differences in composition, subject number, and subject identification. The Korean approach to photojournalism was purely descriptive while the American approach was more interpretive [32]. Koreans presented far more news, emphasized the group, and maintained a consistent composition. Americans ran more features, emphasized the individual and varied composition. Differences were explained by culture, normative protocols, and differing media philosophies.

## Research Methodology

The newspapers that I have chosen for the study of political visuals on the front-page are The Times of India, The Tribune, The Indian Express, Dainik Bhaskar, Punjab Kesri, Dainik Tribune, Punjabi Tribune and Ajit. These papers are interesting to analyze as they represent three different language readers, English, Hindi and Punjabi all the newspapers are leading newspapers in their languages in India.

For this study, method of quantitative and qualitative content analysis was adopted to examine the political visuals published on the front page of the selected newspapers of Chandigarh edition in the 1<sup>st</sup> week of each starting six month of 2001 and 2011. These newspapers represent a large range of readership in India.

A coding sheet is prepared and visual content is coded in various categories for collecting the data. This process was done for each edition of all the selected newspapers under study respectively. The author of this research paper is having 18 years of photojournalism experience and doing research in communication, coded all the sports visuals. For checking coder reliability, Scott's pi formula was used. Fifty visuals were coded twice to get the Scott's pi these visuals were not included in this study. The coder reliability value of Scott's Pi is 0.534 and 80 Percent Agreement.

Content analysis is a research technique for objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. According to Prasad [33], "It is described as the scientific study of content of communication". For this study, method of qualitative and quantitative content analysis are adopted to examine the presentation, selection of visuals and changing trends in visual communication in the newspaper industry.

Content analysis is used in various disciplines like as communications, political science, history, social sciences, and psychology. This is used in this study to find out the changes in visuals presentation in one decade.

Content analysis was introduced by the Harold Lasswell to study the propaganda in the begging. The U.S. government sponsored a project to Harold Lasswell to assess enemy propaganda during World War II, he used the content analysis method to evaluate the propaganda.

Content analysis is very effective method to analysis the media images, this method has been used by many researchers in previous newspaper studies to find the answer of newspaper photographs [5]. As per the Birrell "content analysis is a method for examining the message or content of the media such as newspapers, to draw inferences about encoding and decoding practices of the communication system".

## Quantitative content analysis

It is an important tool for studying what is actually in the media. As per the Smith [34], "qualitative analysis deals with the forms and antecedent-consequent patterns of form, while quantitative analysis deals with duration and frequency of form" Quantitative content

analysis is done after collecting data or exact information from the newspapers. It is considered non biased research and very easy to use for presentations, its results are easily analyzed and more reliable.

### Qualitative content analysis

As per the Hsieh and Shannon qualitative research is "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns".

In Qualitative content analysis method we goes beyond the counting the visuals, quality of the visuals studied in this technique. It gives permission to researchers to understand the social reality in a subjective but scientific manner. The method of qualitative content analysis regularly starts during the early stages of data collection.

Political visuals of all the selected newspapers (2011) on Page one examined in terms of column of visuals, location of visuals, visuals used with story or without story and visuals without caption or with caption. How much space was given to visuals? The study doesn't analyses the visuals carried out by the advertisements.

### Data Analysis

I have studied front- page visuals of 1<sup>st</sup> week of every month in the first six months of The Tribune. The total numbers of 355 political visuals were published in the 2011. Based on my study, the statistical data% age wise is defined in. The tables have been elaborated and explained.

As per Table 1, the total area during the 1<sup>st</sup> week of every month in the first six months of the selected newspapers was 95286.09 Sq cm in 2011. In which 16.74% space was given to all visuals published on the front page and 10.10% area was given to political visuals within the total visuals area in 2011.

As per Table 2, Ajit newspaper have given maximum space 2270.18 sq cm (21.34%) to political visuals on the front page out of the selected newspapers which followed by the Dainik Tribune 2069.82 sq cm (18.2%), Punjab Kesri 1597.88 sq cm (13.7%), Punjabi Tribune 1002.81 sq cm (10.2%), The Tribune 722.26 sq cm (6.2%). The Indian Express 896.97 sq cm (5.5%) and 4.4% in the Times of India and Dainik Bhaskar.

As per Table 3, Punjab Kesri is the only newspaper which used five column visuals (1.2%) . Maximum Half column visuals were used by Punjab Kesri (49.4) and followed by Ajit 42.4%, Times of India 40%, Dainik Bhaskar 33.3%, Punjabi Tribune 29.3%, Dainik Tribune 5.6%, The Tribune 5.3% and Indian express have published 1.3% half column visuals. Whereas The Indian Express have published maximum 78.1% one column visuals followed by Dainik Tribune 77.8 percent, Dainik Bhaskar 48.5%, Times of India 48%. The Tribune 47.3%, Punjabi Tribune 41.5%.

The Tribune newspaper have published maximum (31.6%) two column visuals. While Ajit have published 27.3% two column visuals followed by Punjabi Tribune 19.5%, The Indian Express 9.4%, Dainik Tribune 9.3%, Punajb Kesri used 5.9% and Times of India have published 8%. Ajit have published maximum 10.6%, three column political visuals which followed by The tribune 10.5, Dainik Tribune 5.6%, Dainik Bhaskar 3%, Indian Express 3.1%, Punjab Kesri 1.2 and Punjabi Tribune published 2.4%. The Tribune is the only english newspaper, who have published 5.3% four column visuals and Dainik Bhaskar, Punjab Kesri and Ajit newspaper have published 3, 1.2, 1.5% respectively. Dainik Bhaskar have used maximum 12.2% one and half column visuals followed by the Punjabi Tribune 7.3%, Punjab Kesri 7%. The India Express 6.3%, Ajit have published 4.6%, Times of India 4% and Dainik Tribune have published only 1.7% one and half column political visuals on the front page.

As per Table 4, Dainik Tribune have published maximum 87% visuals related to region followed by Punjabi Tribune 58.5, Ajit 47%, The Tribune 42.1, The Indian Express 28.1, Punjab Kesri 27.1%, Times of India 20% and Dainik Bhaskar have published only 9.1 regional political visuals. But they have published maximum 72.7% national political visuals whereas Punjab Kesri, The Indian Express, Times of India, The Tribune, Ajit, Punjabi Tribune and Dainik Tribune have published 68.2, 59.4, 56, 42.140.9, 31.7 and 11.1%. Times of India have published maximum 24% international political visuals followed by Dainik Bhaskar 18.2%, The Tribune 15.8%. The Indian Express 12.5%, Ajit 10.6%, Punjabi tribune 9.8, Punjab kesri 4.7% and Dainik Tribune have published minimum 1.9% international political visuals.

Figure 1 indicates that maximum politics related visuals are used by the vernacular news papers. The Punjabi Kesri published 23.9% followed by the Ajit (Punjabi language) 18.6%, Dainik Tribune 15.2%, Punjabi Tribune 11.5% and Dainik Bhaskar 9.3%. Whereas the maximum political visuals on the front page are used by the English newspaper is 9% by the Indian Express than followed by Times of India 7% and The Tribune 5.4%.

As per the Figure 2, Ajit, Punjabi Tribune and The Tribune have published 100% political visuals with story, whereas Dainik Tribune and Times of India have published maximum political visuals without the story, 72.2% and 64% and with story 27.8% and 36% respectively. While Dainik Bhaskar, Indian Express and Punjab Kesri have published maximum visuals with story 66.7, 56.3 and 75.3% and 33.3, 43.8 and 24.7% without story respectively.

As per the Figure 3, Dainik Bhaskar, Punjabi Tribune and Times of India have published maximum visuals without the caption 87.9, 53.7 and 64% and with caption 12.1, 46.3 and 36% respectively. Whereas Dainik Tribune, The Tribune, Indian Express, Ajit and Punjab Kesri have published maximum visuals with caption 87, 84.2, 68.8, 57.6 and 50.6% and 13, 15.8, 31.2, 42.4 and 49.4% without caption respectively.

Year	Total Area in Sq cm	Area of Total Visuals in Sq cm	Area of Political Visuals within total visuals	Total Photos
2011	569173	95286.09 (16.74%)	9632.33 (10.10%)	355

**Table 1:** Shows the Space given to Political visuals in all the selected newspapers.

Papers	Tribune	TOI	Express	Bhaskar	P Tribune	Ajit	P Kesri	D Tribune
Area of visuals	11537.32	9725.004	16139.82	14396.46	9809.22	10636.84	11660.9	11370.62
Area of Political visuals	722.26 (6.2%)	431.31 (4.4%)	896.97 (5.5%)	641.1 (4.4%)	1002.81 (10.2%)	2270.18 (21.34%)	1597.88 (13.7%)	2069.82 (18.2%)

**Table 2:** Shows the space given to Political visuals in all the selected newspapers.

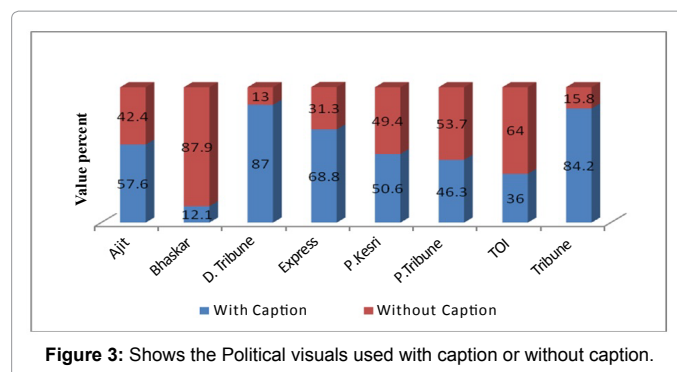


Newspaper	Half	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	One and half
Ajit	42.4	13.6	27.3	10.6	1.5	0	4.6
D Bhaskar	33.3	48.5	0	3	3	0	12.2
D Tribune	5.6	77.8	9.3	5.6	0	0	1.7
Express	3.1	78.1	9.4	3.1	0	0	6.3
P Kesri	49.4	34.1	5.9	1.2	1.2	1.2	7
P Tribune	29.3	41.5	19.5	2.4	0	0	7.3
TOI	40	48	8	0	0	0	4
Tribune	5.3	47.3	31.6	10.5	5.3	0	0

**Table 3:** Shows the Column used for the Political visuals in all the selected newspapers.

Newspapers	Regional	National	International
Ajit	48.5	40.9	10.6
Bhaskar	9.1	72.7	18.2
D Tribune	87	11.1	1.9
Express	28.1	59.4	12.5
P Kesri	27.1	68.2	4.7
P Tribune	58.5	31.7	9.8
TOI	20	56	24
Tribune	42.1	42.1	15.8

**Table 4:** Shows the location of the Political visuals in all the selected newspapers.



**Figure 3:** Shows the Political visuals used with caption or without caption.

to English newspapers. Ajit newspaper have given maximum space 2270.18 sq cm (21.34%) within the selected newspapers and minimum space 4.4% for the political visuals given by The Times of India.

Maximum politics related visuals were also used by the vernacular news papers. The Punjab Kesri published 23.9% followed by the Ajit (Punjabi language) 18.6%, Dainik Tribune 15.2%, Punjabi Tribune 11.5% and Dainik Bhaskar 9.3%. Whereas the minimum political visuals (5.4%) on the front page are used by the English newspaper The Tribune.

Use of visuals with the news item increase the credibility of the news and attract the readers to read the news. As visuals depict reality of the situation which always work as an evidence to show the authenticity of a an event that occurred and published on the newspapers. Visuals break the monotony of news content and evoke readers emotions. Newspapers should prefer to use visuals with each news item. The study shows that Ajit,Punjabi Tribune and The Tribune have published 100% political visuals with story, whereas Dainik Tribune and Times of India have published maximum political visuals without the story, 72.2% and 64% and with story 27.8% and 36% respectively.

Photo captions are one of the most read text in a publication after the titles of news content. The caption gives the important information of the photographs and attract readers to read full news item. The photo caption provides the basic information needed to understand a photograph and its relevance to a common reader. The captions writing is an essential part of the photojournalist work [35]. During the writing of captions all the important elements of news writing is considered [36]. An inadequately written caption can mislead the readers and some time reduce the impact of a good visual and damage the credibility of a newspaper. Dainik Bhaskar have published maximum visuals without the caption 87.9% and Dainik Tribune have published maximum 87% visuals with caption.

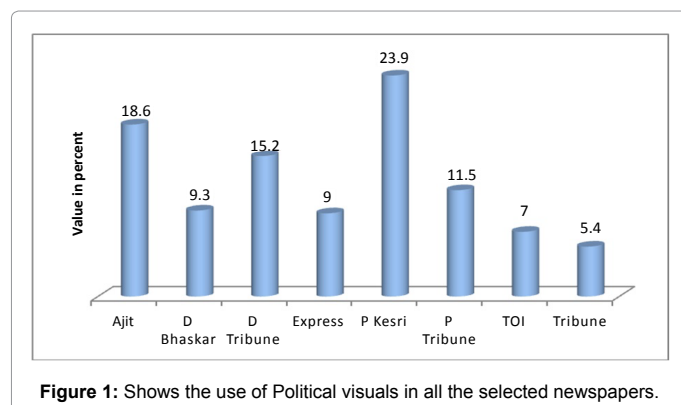
Visuals evoke emotions and attract the readers to read the news item in the newspapers. Keeping the importance of visuals Punjab Kesri used 1.2% five column visuals and The Tribune published 5.3% four column visuals. Ajit have published maximum 10.6%, three column political visuals. Maximum Half column visuals were used by Punjab Kesri (49.4) and The Indian Express have published maximum 78.1% one column visuals. The Tribune newspaper have published maximum (31.6%) two column visuals.

Dainik Tribune have published maximum 87% regional political visuals, whereas Dainik Bhaskar have used minimum 9.1% regional visuals on the front page of newspaper, but they have published maximum 72.7% national political visuals and minimum Dainik Tribune have used minimum 11.1%. Times of India have published maximum 24% international political visuals.

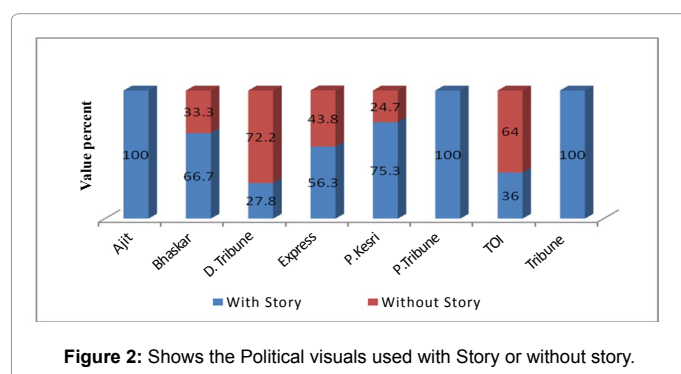
## Results and Discussions

After the analysis of the data collected from the 336 editions (front page) of 2011 newspapers, the following observations were made:

Spaces (Area) of the visuals are very important in the newspapers as big size photographs attract the readers and communicate the message effectively. As per the study vernacular newspapers have gave maximum space (area) to political visuals on the front page as compare



**Figure 1:** Shows the use of Political visuals in all the selected newspapers.



**Figure 2:** Shows the Political visuals used with Story or without story.

In conclusion, the content analysis of front page political visuals of eight leading Indian Newspapers (Five vernacular and Three English newspapers) of 2011, shows significant difference in the use of political visuals on the front page by all the newspapers.

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