

Media: Social Marketing of Terrorism

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Abstract

The role of media in terrorism marketing is critical. Through the media terrorists are able to create a larger voice for themselves and create hostilities among people. The present study examines the role played by media in terrorism and the purpose of terrorists to use media as a source of information channel. It was found there is a mutually beneficial relationship between terrorists and the media. Media market terrorism for viewer ratings, income generation from advertisement and terrorist intention to interact with media is to gain attention, recognition and legitimacy.

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Introduction

The term Terrorism is derived from the French word "Terrorisme" means instilling fear. Terrorism according to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is defined as "The unlawful use or threat of violence against persons or property to further political or social objectives. It is usually intended to intimidate or coerce a government, individuals, or groups or to modify their behavior or politics". It is the use of violence against civilians for impersonal non-monetary objectives by private actors.

Acc to Wikipedia Dictionary, Terrorism is the systematic use of terror especially as a means of coercion. It refers to those violent acts which are intended to create fear (terror), are perpetrated for a religious, political or ideological goal, deliberately target or disregard the safety of non-combatants (civilians), and are committed by non-government agencies. In November 2004, a United Nations Secretary General report described terrorism as any act "intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a

government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act". In simple terms, terrorism is the threat or use of violence for political, religious or ideological purposes designed to influence the attitudes and behaviour of a group or to achieve objectives that are otherwise unattainable (Rapoport and Alexander, eds. 1982). Terrorism is not new and though it was seen since the beginning of recorded history it is hard to define. The earliest known organisation was the Zealots of Judea. The Assassins were the next group to show recognizable characteristics of terrorism, as we know today. Though both Zealots and Assassins operated in antiquity, they are relevant today as forerunners of modern terrorists in aspect of motivation, organisation, targeting and goal and although both were ultimate failures still they are remembered hundreds of years later (International Terrorism and Security Research). Terrorism has today become the latest threat to world peace. The menace of terrorism whether perpetrated by individuals, groups or state forces is a crime against humanity which has wounded societies all over the world. The terrorist has not

only threatened the ideals of democracy and freedom but also caused a serious challenge to the existence, progress and development of mankind. The modern technology has further added a new dimension to terrorism as the highly sophisticated weapons are now easily available to the terrorist groups as well. In the world-wide there are numerous terrorist organisations that are existing actively in their apart from other International terrorist organisations. The alarming increase in terrorist attacks in this century is a cause of serious concern.

A critical role in creating a chain reaction of a terrorist act is played by media as it plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions on a variety of important issues, both through the information that is dispensed through them, and through the interpretations they place upon this information

According to Fawaz Gerges the use of the media is so important for Al-Qaida, that many within the organization have said that Bin Laden was “obsessed” with the international media, “a publicity hound”, and that he had “caught the disease of screens, flashes, fans, and applause.” (Gerges 2005, 194-197). And he was not the only extremist to value the media so highly. Al-Zawahiri is believed to have said that “[more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media.” An Islamist magazine wrote: “Film everything; this is good advice for all mujahideen. (...) You should be aware that every frame you take is as good as a missile fired at the Crusader enemy and his puppets.” (Quoted in: Economist, 2007). And from their point of view, they seem to be right. Bruce Hoffman argues on terrorist attacks that “without the media's coverage the act's impact is arguably wasted, remaining narrowly confined to the immediate victim(s) of the attack, rather than reaching the wider 'target audience' at whom the terrorists' violence is actually aimed.” (Hoffman 2006, 174). In fact, it is conceivable

that the terrorists could attain their aims without carrying out a single attack; the desired panic could be produced by the continuous broadcast of threats and declarations – by radio and TV interviews, videos and all the familiar methods of psychological warfare.” (Ganor 2002).

Purpose

The purpose of present study is to examine the role played by media in terrorism and to find the reason as why terrorist use media as a source of information channel.

Hypotheses

To obtain the purpose of the research following hypotheses were formulated:-

1. Beneficial relationship exists between terrorist and media.
2. Media markets terrorism for viewer ratings.
3. Terrorist use media as a source of information channel to gain attention.

Method:

Sample

A sample of 50 working personnel (both male & female) was selected on the basis of incidental cum purposive sampling method. The age range was 25 – 40 yrs from NCR region of Delhi.

Tool

The data for present study is based on both primary and secondary sources. For primary sources researcher used a self prepared questionnaire which consisted of 5 questions with three alternative answers. The respondent had to choose one answer from the three available options. The collection of data was also followed by a short interview with respondent on one to one basis. For secondary sources researcher used reports of electronic and print media.

Discussion:

The analysis of result was done qualitatively. The hypotheses framed are discussed as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Beneficial relationships exist between terrorist and media.

It was hypothesised that beneficial relationship exists between terrorist and media. The result also reveals the same thing as out of 50 respondents 38 respondents felt that a positive relationship exists between terrorist and media. Both the group help each other in attaining their objective. 12 respondent felt that no relation exist between the terrorist group and media house as media bring into light the real situation and the genuine new. Media in no way plays with sentiments of mass to gain any type of reward. The secondary sources reveal that there is a beneficial relationship between the terrorist group and media house. It was also found that the electronic media has a greater mass coverage compared to print media and is able to influence the audience views by giving first hand information to the mass. Thus the finding supports the hypothesis that beneficial relationship exist between terrorist and media.

Hypothesis 2: Media market terrorism for viewer ratings.

It was hypothesised that media market terrorism for viewer ratings. The result also revealed the same thing as out of 50 respondents 30 were of the view that media market terrorism for viewer ratings. 13 respondents felt that media market terrorism for income generation which it gets from advertisement. Remaining 7 respondents felt that marketing of terrorism is done to gain appreciation & rewards for the concerned media house. On the basis of secondary data it was clear that the main reason of media marketing terrorism is viewers' ratings which in return influence the TRP rating on which success of a channel and programme depends. The higher the TRP more will be the income from advertisement and this is followed by reward and recognition from the mass and governmental officials for the related issues on terrorism. Much like terrorists, journalists need a

public in order to exist. In addition, ratings are directly linked to advertisement income, and so the more people watch the news on a certain channel, the more money that particular channel will make. As Brigitte Nacos mentions: "The media are rewarded [for broadcasting terrorism] in that they energize their competition for audience size and circulation – and thus for all-important advertising." (Nacos 2006, 82). "It has been asserted that the news media report highlights only the sensational aspects of terrorism, the blood, the gore, the horror of the victims." Thus the hypothesis media market terrorism for viewer ratings is supported.

Hypothesis 3: Terrorist use media as a source of information channel to gain attention.

It was hypothesised that terrorist use media as a source of information channel to gain attention. On the basis of the response collected it was found that out of 50 respondent 35 reported that terrorist group use media to gain attention of the mass, the government official and the whole world. While 11 respondents reported the reason of using media as a source of information channel is for recognition and 9 respondents reported legitimacy as a reason for using media as a source of information channel by terrorist group. On the basis of secondary data it was found that for each terrorist organization the objectives in using the media may be different. In some cases, one objective is more important than the other. For some organizations, one of the objectives may not be an issue at all, or another objective should be added. Gaining attention is strongly linked to agenda setting. Terrorists are trying to be in the media as often and as long as possible, in order to become well known to the public. They attempt to influence media outlets so that they, in turn, will influence the audience by spreading the word on the existence of the organization: the terrorists get attention, and people will be aware of the existence, methods, and targets of the

group. In fact terrorists are thus carrying out propaganda by proxy. A major factor of this objective is to creating fear among the target population. The second objective is related both to agenda setting and framing. Not only do terrorists want to be known to the audience, they also want to try to get their message across through the media. Sometimes this can be achieved merely by carrying out attacks. Sometimes terrorist groups actually force media to publish their motivations, so that people throughout the world read and see about it. By regularly appearing in the media, terrorists are trying to become a legitimate representative of their own cause. Whether or not the audience agrees is, for this objective, of less importance. The theory is that merely the fact that they are treated by the media much like regular, accepted, legitimate world leaders gives them a similar status. This is mainly achieved by getting personal airtime through interviews and recorded videos or messages. If terrorists succeed in having the media frame their leader much like a “regular” leader would be framed, the audience may get the impression that the two are comparable. Thus the finding supports the hypothesis that terrorist use media as a source of information channel to gain attention.

Conclusion:

To eliminate terrorism completely, we must also address the other root causes of terrorist acts and alleviate situations where people are constantly facing indecency, desperation, and hopelessness. Education is a feasible long-term approach to help solve many of the current predicaments that we are facing. With this in mind, some have argued that media coverage of terrorist acts should be restricted, either by government or by the networks themselves, in the hope that, deprived of their theatre, terrorists will produce no more plays. The media are allies of the terrorists media want the 'story' and terrorists want their 'message'

spread. Media should use self-censorship by verifying story & factual information and also considering impact of story. It can soften impact by omitting story which is too much for a mass. Government censorship can also control market of terrorism by limiting media access and 'clearing' news stories.

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