

Abstract

The image of the political entities and leaders is not an accidental mixture of circumstances, something given, something that appears by itself, on the contrary it is well-planned, specialists on communications take care of it, they identify the key characteristics of the image of the political entity or candidate, they manage its development and modify it when necessary. Orzekauskas and Smaiziane (2007) indicate that according to Gee (2000) there are four levels of image building: fundamental, internal, external and intangible image building. The media plays a prominent role in building political images of politicians at the moment. The research question of this study was what is the role of the newspaper in building political images? This research question was tested under the hypothesis of Newspaper acts as a prominent factor in building political images. The main objective of this study was investigating the role of the newspaper in building political images. The qualitative research approach had been used as the methodology of this study. The political figure of Ranasinghe Premadasa had been selected as the sample of the study. The period of 1978 to 1988 where Premadasa assumed office as the Prime minister was selected as the time frame. Newspaper was selected as the selected media and Sinhala language was selected as the medium of the newspaper. Only seven newspapers were selected which were continuously published during the time frame. Among the selected seven Sinhala language newspapers, 100 news items were selected to investigate regarding the political image building of R. Premadasa. The articles have been analyzed according to the method of content analysis under the conceptual analyzing method with the elements of image structure theory. According to the analyze, the hypothesis of newspaper acts as a prominent factor in building political images had been proved and the objective of investigating the role of the newspaper in building political images had been furnished. The study revealed that the newspapers have built the Premadas's fundamental, internal, external and intangible image in the mind of the people through articles, editorials and photos systematically in the time as the prime minister. Premadasa's vision, philosophy, qualities, development projects, public appearances, media relations, social services and talents were projected through the newspaper to build his political image, which helped him reach the pinnacle of politics in Sri Lanka as the President.

Key words - Political Image, Image Building, Image structure theory, Role of the Newspaper, Ranasinghe Premadasa