

A Study on Newspaper Reading Habits and the Future Existence of Newspaper Industry

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Abstract: Newspaper is a source that provides information about a country's economic situation, sports, games, entertainment, trade and commerce. Reading newspaper as a habit will widen one's outlook and will enrich one's knowledge. This paper aims to study about the newspaper reading habits among various age groups of people and survival of the newspaper industry. The paper also tries to study the demographic profile, preference of the language, interesting sections of the paper. A structured questionnaire was circulated to collect information from the respondents of Chennai.

Keywords: Newspaper, Reading habit, Chennai, Survival – Newspaper Industry.

I. Introduction

Newspaper evolved in the 17th century, as information sheets for businessmen. In India the first newspaper was published on 29th January 1780 by a British man named "James Augustus Hick" under the British rule and the name of the paper was, "The Bengal Gazette" or "Calcutta General Advertiser" or was commonly known as the "Hicky's Gazette" A newspaper is a periodical publication containing written information about current events and is often typed in black ink with a white or gray background. Newspaper is a source that provides information about a country's economic position, politics, sports, games, entertainment, trade and commerce. It also include as opinion materials such as columns, weather forecasts, review of local services, obituaries, birth notices, crosswords, editorial cartoons, comic strips, and advice columns.

Reading newspaper as a habit will widen one's outlook and will enrich one's knowledge Newspapers have traditionally been published in print (low-grade paper - newsprint). However, today most newspapers are also published on websites as online or e-newspapers and some have even abandoned their print versions entirely. This has made the newspaper publishing industries to think over, thereby a crisis of existence. The newspapers in future, as we all think, newspapers would become just a platform for the buyers and sellers to get connected and to view attractive offers given by corporates to sell their products.

On 24th July 2019, PRINT WEEK INDIA - SomNathSapru reported on "The future of Newspapers in India" says that there is growth in newspaper & periodical industry from 2001 till date. There are 16 different language publications and confirms that the competition is fierce in the industry and earns a substantial profit. Developing economies like India & China has a growing market with ever-growing literate readership.

ADGULLY BUREAU as on Jan 07, 2019: Digitalization has impacted the increasing use of the Internet search function, through large engines such as Google, has also changed the habits of readers. Readers are more likely to seek particular writers, blogs or sources of information through targeted searches, rendering the agglomeration of newspapers increasingly irrelevant. Sanjeev Bhargava (**Brand Director, Times Group**) said, "The rise in newsprint cost will certainly cause some serious hiccups from the profitability point of view, but the industry is optimistic that the price rise is temporary and will come down to manageable levels. It all depends on the volume of printing as it is a variable cost."

"While newsprint cost has impacted the business, we feel it is imperative to change gears and work towards more unique and innovative brand led offerings," said Shalini Gupta, VP, Brand & Communication, Lokmat Media Group. On the contrary, Kamal Krishna –National Head, Media solutions (Print), Mathrubhumi felt that the impact will be more in the long-term than at present. He also added that "It is likely to put 30-40 per cent additional burden on the print players".

This paper aims to study about the newspaper reading habits among various age groups of people. The paper also tries to study the demographic profile, preference of the language, interesting sections of the newspaper. This paper tries to assess the future existence of the newspaper industry. A structured questionnaire was circulated to collect information among 144 respondents of Chennai.

Objectives of the study

- To study the demographic profile of the respondents
- To study the newspaper reading habits among the respondents
- To know the preference of the language and medium of reading
- To know the most preferred sections of the paper
- To assess the future existence of newspaper industry

II. Research methodology

The study is exploratory in nature. Primary data was collected with the help of Google forms. It was circulated through whatsapp, mail and Instagram. The data was collected from 144 respondents of Chennai. The collected data was tabulated and the data was analyzed and interpreted by way of simple frequency and percentage analysis.

Research Gap

Surveys and studies have been conducted to find the reader's habits, preferences, among urban population, among undergraduate students of a particular state, post graduate students of a particular university. The author would like to study the demographic profile of the respondents who read newspapers and would like to find out the preference of the respondents on printed newspapers when compared to the e medium and on the future of the newspaper industry. This study is restricted to Chennai.

Limitation of the study

The study was conducted only in Chennai city of Tamil Nadu. One cannot generalize the finding of the study to the country. Since the respondents have filled in through Google forms it may be subject to personal bias. Due to time constraint the data was collected only among 144 respondents. The forms were circulated among known people. So it is a selective sampling and not a random sampling.

III. Review of literature

Rani.I and Murugan.k.(2016) in paper titled "A Study on Reading Habits of PG Students in Special Reference by Anna University Regional Centre in Tirunelveli Library Users." Concluded that second year students visited library daily and used newspapers and web searched information for reading purposes.

Dr. V. N. Nagashetti, & Anand Y. Kenchakanavar (2015) evaluated a study on "News Paper Reading Habits among the Students of Municipal Arts and Commerce College, Laxmeshwar: A Sociological Perspective." The study was conducted among 216 students, revealed that most of the undergraduate students daily read their local kannadan newspaper and English newspapers. They preferred library as a best place to read the newspaper.

Dipika Majumder & Md. Mehedi Hasan (2013) in the paper titled "Newspaper Reading Habits of Private University Students: a Case Study on World University of Bangladesh" concluded that print copy was the best medium of newspaper, majority of the respondents preferred to read sports and entertainment news, preferred reading on 'Daily Star & Daily Prothom Alo – Bangladesh Newspaper.

Kanwal Gurleen Singh & Rajneesh Arya conducted a survey on the paper titled "A STUDY OF NEWSPAPER READERSHIP PATTERNS AMONG URBAN POPULATION OF PUNJAB" It was concluded that most of the respondents prefer to read Hindi Newspaper followed by Punjabi Newspaper. It can be further concluded from the study that there was no significant difference in language preferences between Males and Females. Age wise analysis revealed that Youngsters preferred English newspapers, the middle age group - Hindi newspaper and older persons - Punjabi newspapers. The education wise analysis shows that Hindi newspaper was preferred by most of the under graduates and graduates while most of the post graduates prefer to read more than one language newspaper. The income wise analysis shows no significant difference of average mean scores of language preferences for different income groups.

According to Sanjay Kumar (Indian school of Business) & V.V.S. Sarma (Kakatiya University) in "Performance and Challenges of Newspapers in India: A Case Study on English versus Vernacular Dailies in India". reports that "The print industry operates in a dynamic environment with readers' needs and preferences changing continuously. In such an environment, it is imperative for publishers to innovate consistently and also engage and interact with their readers on a real time basis. There are a plethora of opportunities that could benefit the flexible players who can adjust to the changing environment. Going forward we may witness expansion in regional markets and consolidation in established markets with only the fittest players survive the changing environment."

IV. Data Analysis and Interpretation

TABLE 1: Age & Gender Wise Analysis of Respondents

| AGE/GENDER | 10 TO 15 | 16 TO 20 | 21 TO 30 | 31 TO 40 | ABOVE 40 | TOTAL | % |
|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------|------|
| MALE | 7 | 41 | 10 | 5 | 14 | 77 | 53.4 |
| FEMALE | 0 | 25 | 13 | 11 | 18 | 67 | 46.6 |
| TOTAL | 7 | 66 | 23 | 16 | 32 | 144 | 100 |
| % | 4.86 | 45.83 | 15.97 | 11.11 | 22.22 | 100 | |

53.4% of the respondents are male and the remaining is female.

45.83% of the respondents belong to the age group 16-20. 4.86% of respondents are between age of 10 & 15.

TABLE 2: Gender wise Analysis of Respondents Buying Newspaper

| RESPONSES | YES | % | NO | % | TOTAL |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| MALE | 46 | 46.47 | 24 | 53.33 | 70 |
| FEMALE | 53 | 53.53 | 21 | 46.67 | 74 |
| TOTAL | 99 | 100 | 45 | 100 | 144 |
| % | 68.75 | | 31.25 | | 100 |

68.75% of the respondents buy newspapers of which 53.53% are women.

It was also found that the respondents who did not buy newspapers relied on E- medium or Television. Only very few read newspaper from their office or library.

TABLE 3: Gender Wise Analysis of Respondents Frequency of Reading Newspaper

| GENDER | DAILY | SOMETIMES | RARELY | NOT AT ALL | TOTAL |
|--------|-------|-----------|--------|------------|-------|
| MALE | 33 | 22 | 13 | 2 | 70 |
| FEMALE | 28 | 30 | 11 | 5 | 74 |
| TOTAL | 61 | 52 | 24 | 7 | 144 |
| % | 42.36 | 36.11 | 16.67 | 4.86 | 100 |

Only 42.36% of the respondents read newspapers daily and 4.86% do not read newspapers.

TABLE 4: Gender Wise Analysis of Time Spent On Reading Newspaper

| GENDER | <15 MIN | 15 – 30 MIN | 30-45 MIN | >45 MIN |
|--------|---------|-------------|-----------|---------|
| MALE | 34 | 11 | 14 | 6 |
| FEMALE | 37 | 16 | 16 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 71 | 27 | 30 | 9 |
| % | 51.82 | 19.70 | 21.89 | 6.56 |

51.82% of the respondents spend less than 15 minutes and 6.56% of the respondents spend more than 45 minutes.

The age groups of such respondents who spend more time are usually above 30 years.

TABLE 5: Analysis of Language of Newspaper

| LANGUAGE PREFERRED | FREQUENCY | % |
|--------------------|-----------|-------|
| ENGLISH | 80 | 58.39 |
| TAMIL | 50 | 36.50 |
| HINDI | 3 | 2.19 |
| TELUGU | 3 | 2.19 |
| OTHERS | 1 | 0.73 |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100 |

58.39% of the respondents preferred English newspapers and next preferred was the regional language Tamil.

TABLE 6: Analysis of preferences of respondents on various sections

| SECTION | MOST PREFERRED | LEAST PREFERRED |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| HEADLINES | 84 | 21 |
| STOCK MARKET PRICES | 25 | 40 |
| ENTERTAINMENT | 36 | 23 |
| SPORTS | 33 | 31 |
| SENSATIONAL | 30 | 20 |
| HEALTH & FITNESS | 34 | 16 |
| ASTROLOGY | 23 | 42 |

Majority of the respondents prefer to read the headlines as the first preference.

Watching stock market prices & Astrology section are the least preferred sections by the respondents.

TABLE 6 [A] Age & Gender wise analysis of Headlines and Sports Section

| HEADLINES | 10 TO 15 | 16 TO 20 | 21 TO 30 | 31 TO 40 | ABOVE 40 | TOTAL |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| MALE | 1 | 19 | 4 | 4 | 12 | 40 |
| FEMALE | 0 | 17 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 44 |
| SPORTS | 10 TO 15 | 16 TO 20 | 21 TO 30 | 31 TO 40 | ABOVE 40 | TOTAL |
| MALE | 1 | 18 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 23 |
| FEMALE | 0 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 10 |

Respondents belonging to the age group between 16&20 give high preference in reading headlines and sports section.

TABLE 7:Details of Respondents Subscriptions

| NAME OF THE NEWSPAPER | RESPONSES | % |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| TIMES OF INDIA | 47 | 34.3 |
| THE HINDU | 35 | 25.55 |
| DINAMALAR | 8 | 5.84 |
| DINATHANTHI | 7 | 5.11 |
| TIMES OF INDIA& THE HINDU | 10 | 7.3 |
| TIMES OF INDIA & DINA MALAR | 15 | 10.95 |
| ECONOMIC TIMES | 4 | 2.92 |
| E papers | 10 | 7.3 |
| DINAKARAN | 1 | 0.73 |
| TOTAL | 137 | 100 |

34.30% of the newspaper reading respondents prefer Times of India and 25.55% prefer The Hindu.

TABLE 8: Age &Gender Wise Analysis of Responses for future existence of the Newspaper Industry

| RESPONSES | YES (121)-84.03% | | NO (23) | |
|-----------|------------------|--------|---------|--------|
| AGE GROUP | MALE | FEMALE | MALE | FEMALE |
| 10 TO 15 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| 16 TO 20 | 34 | 20 | 7 | 5 |
| 21 TO 30 | 8 | 12 | 2 | 1 |
| 31 TO 40 | 4 | 11 | 1 | 0 |
| ABOVE 40 | 12 | 16 | 2 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 62 | 59 | 15 | 8 |
| % | 43.06 | 40.97 | 10.42 | 5.56 |

84.03% of the respondents opined that the newspaper industry would still survive in spite of the impact of e medium and technological changes.

The majority of the respondents belong to the age group between 16 & 20. This is a good indicator for the newspaper industry.

V. Findings &Conclusion

The respondents in the age group of 16- 20 were very enthusiastic in responding to the questionnaire. They preferred English as the medium of reading news either in e medium or print medium. Majority of the respondents 66.66% i.e.96 of 145 felt that newspaper reading was essential for oneself to enhance their general knowledge, useful for preparation for competitive exams and to know about current affairs of the economy. 84.03% of the respondents opined that the newspaper industry would still survive in spite of the impact of e medium and technological changes. Some respondents felt that reading printed newspaper gave them full satisfaction when compared to e medium or television, as there were many other sections and news which other medium would not give. Respondents above the age group of 40 felt that Printed medium cause no harm to eyes even if read for hours together when compared to e-medium.

Suggestions:

Paper reading habits to be made compulsory in every educational/ higher educational institution thereby improving the habitual reading & writing skills, of student community. Also, the newspaper should carry more qualitative and un-biased news.

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