

A Survey about Readership of Newspapers in the Digital Age

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Abstract

This study focuses on the perception and readership of newspapers in the age of globalization. It investigates people's reading habits and their attitudes towards the content of newspaper. This survey study was conducted on 464 subjects selected on the basis of the non-probability convenience sample from five different localities of Karachi. The results indicated that average time spent on reading newspaper was more for males than females, more for respondents employed in private and government sector jobs and respondents who spent more time with newspaper had trust on information in the medium.

Key Words: Newspaper, Readership, Digital Age, Globalization

1. INTRODUCTION

With the growth in organized retailing emerging again local newspaper were looked as the media to generate response (Bagdikian, 1997). However with advent of new media options like internet, FM radio and mobile the long term sustainability of print could change (Downie & Schudson, 2009). The newspaper industry faces a double squeeze: the print business continues heavily to subsidize digital journalism, which cannot pay for itself by attracting enough advertising or subscriptions or a mixture of the two; and the new digital players put increasing pressure on newspaper circulation, readership, and the business itself (Kovach, Bill and Rosenstiel, 2001).

While daily print newspaper circulation has been in decline globally, by 17 percent between 2006 and 2010 in the United States, 11.8 per cent in Western Europe, and 10 per cent in eastern and central Europe, it has risen 16 per cent in the Asia Pacific region and 4.5 per cent in Latin America over the same period (Riess, 2011). With nearly three-fourths of the world's 100 top-selling daily newspapers now published in Asia, India and China are regarded as 'the world absolute leaders in the newspaper industry' (WAN, 2009).

This research was undertaken in this perspective and to understand the impact of newspaper information in the city of Karachi. There has not been exact data available on the exact readership of newspaper, which throws up findings that put print medium role in creating impactful learning. This study tries to answer several recurring questions on press effectiveness in creating desired impact with the following objectives in mind:

1. To study the contribution of newspaper media in total scenario in Karachi.
2. To study popularity of various newspapers and related contribution over media impact.
3. To study consumer population regarding daily newspaper media and its comprehensive value.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The study is an empirical one based on primary data which required for the study was collected by means of structured schedule administered to the identified sample in five major localities of Karachi. The data required for the study was collected from both male and female respondents. To make the sample composition diverse and representative of the population concerning to the study. The sample was drawn from following occupations

- Business man
- Self Employed
- Government Employment
- Private Sector Employment
- Academician
- Students

2.3 Instrument for Data Collection

Structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data required for the study by conducting field survey. A standardized questionnaire ensures comparability of the data, increases speed and accuracy of recording and consequently facilitates data processing (Malhotra, 2004).

While framing the questionnaire for the study, objectives were made and then required information was listed down and in due process questionnaire was prepared with utmost care. Before the actual survey a Pilot survey was carried out and the data collection method was tested. Required modifications were done in the schedule so as to prevent any pre bias and fatigue while responses were collected. Adequate care has been taken to include only the appropriate questions and to eliminate the unnecessary ones.

The questionnaire had following sections

Section 1: Response on Media Engagement Response & Attitude towards advertisements

Section 2: Response on Newspaper Readership Engagement

Section 3: Response on Newspaper Advertising

2.4 Sampling

Sample of 464 participants for the study was taken from five industrial and business localities of Karachi namely Korangi Industrial Area, FB Industrial Area, SITE Area, Export Promotion Zone and I. I. Chundrigar Road.

Since the universe constitute a large numbers people who could be the viewer of newspaper advertisements, appropriate sampling technique was required to have the right sample representative of the population from which meaningful conclusion could be drawn. Hence a Stratified Random Sampling Technique was adapted on the basis of proportional allocation by giving due weightage on the demographic profile in all the five selected areas.

To make the sample representative in line with the objectives the respondent's selection was filtered further on two levels. The level one filtration was educational qualification till higher secondary was taken. This was being taken as the focus of the study was to understand the engagement of audience which could better relate with educational levels. At the second level was familiarization with internet usage was taken since the effectiveness of newspaper advertising was being tested in the scenario of emerging internet advertising. This filtration was applied to take respondents who were well versed with computers and had internet accessibility. Such composition was being done to understand preference and time allocation between different media options.

2.5 Data Collection

After having passed through various stages, the questionnaire was administered through mails but due to very low response rate, personal interview and telephonic interviews were scheduled to collect the response.

The collected data has been prepared primarily through percentage for tabular presentation. Preparing the data for computer application, they were coded as per requirement. The data were tabulated, cross tabulated and wherever required subjected to statistical tool for proper analysis. Raw data were transferred to an excel spreadsheet, so as to use for tabulation and cross tabulation. Depending upon the objectives, data were analyzed by specific statistical tools. The results were interpreted in the form of tables as per need.

2.6 Data Analysis

For majority of analysis, percentage technique was used. Inferences were made both by detailed reading and through technical analysis by established statistical tools.

2.7 Limitations

No work is ever completed without any limitation, there is bound to be some limitations that restrain the task of researcher. This work is also, not a different case, few of the stark limitation as faced by researcher are as follows:

- The study focuses on newspapers of Karachi; it has influence of nationaladvertisers releasing advertisements as plan of national release.
- The time period of the study and type of advertising carried out can aredecision based on business cycles of industry.
- Influence of purchase decisions could be based on combined effects ofvarious Medias; however the focus of this study is to identify the impact ofnewspapers media in the overall decisions related to purchase.
- This study was limited to study only four media of high frequency and thuswas not able to include outdoor media and magazines.
- In this kind of study where diverse profiles and multiple variables are to beexamined, the response error cannot be nullified.
- Recent exposure of respondent with any of the media could have created abiaised response.

With the utmost care and highest level of efforts researcher, accept all responsibility for the limitations in this research work and report preparation.

3. FINDINGS

Table 1

Demographic Profile(N=464)

Respondents' Occupation Profile	Business (18.80%)	Job Private (29.91%)	Job Government (15.38%)	Academician (11.11%)	Housewife (11.11%)	Students (13.68%)
Respondents Gender Profile	Male (61%)			Female (39%)		
Respondents' Age Profile	18 – 25 (17.65%)	25 – 35 (27.73%)	35 – 45 (32.77%)	45 – 55 (18.49%)	55 – 60 (2.52%)	60 Yrs (0.84%)

While constituting the respondents adequate care was taken to have representation of different sectors and job functions. Businessmen& Self Employed constituted 19% of the total population, this sample constituted of first generation entrepreneurs, family business, and small business owners. Self Employed category included professionals like Tax &financial planners, doctors, lawyers. Respondents with Government service were 15% which comprised of provincial government, central government and district government corporations. While taking this sample adequate care was taken to include across organization levels. Academicians comprised of 11% of the total sample both from private and government educational institutes. The sample constituted

of 11% housewives, their spouse were employed in one of the categories mentioned above. Students comprised of 13% of the total population, all students were college and university students ranging from engineering, management, commerce, science and design.

The sample constituted of 61 % of males and 39 % of females. The above table also shows the age profile of the respondents, the major segment comprised of 32% with the age range of 35 – 45 years followed by 27% within the age range of 25 – 35 years.

Table 2
Media Rating on Qualitative Parameters(N=464)

Parameters	Ease of Access	Timely Updated	Information Search	Trust
Television	47.01%	45.69%	2.56%	13.68%
FM Radio	3.42%	3.45%	0.85%	0.00%
Newspaper	42.74%	29.31%	31.62%	71.79%
Internet	6.84%	21.55%	64.96%	14.53%

Media rating of four leading media was done on four parameters. Newspapers and Television were highest in ease of access with 47% and 42% of the respondents indicating the same. Television was leading in terms of timely updates followed by newspapers and internet.

Internet was rated highest on the parameter of information search followed by newspapers. More consumers favor the Internet with the ability to do comparative search. Newspapers were rated highest on trust and credibility indicated by 71% of the respondents.

Table 3
Newspaper Reading Purpose (N=464)

Purpose of Newspaper Readership	Percentage
Information Search	0.00%
Careers	10%
Local, National & International Updates	79.1
Advertisement	10%
Entertainment	0.83%
N/A	0.00%

On studying Media consumption patterns Newspaper was one of the most preferred media in terms of convenience to consume. All the respondents for the study were definitely readers of one of the newspapers on a daily basis. The time spent and the purpose differed with respondents and occupationally profile. According to Grotta et al. for the small town daily newspaper the audience was primarily interested in local news content as shown by our data as well.

Respondents were asked purpose of reading Newspaper for which 55% of them indicated national and international updates, followed by 24 % of concerning with information on city updates. Interestingly 10 % of the respondents indicated Advertisements as the reasons for newspaper reading. Qualitatively the readership interests varied between various sections of the newspaper. It was felt front page stories are always worth reading for other stories they read headlines or the first paragraph.

This analysis is done in the subsequent questions, where newspaper engagement was examined in details on various patterns.

The respondents not only consider newspapers as a time pass activity but they felt it covered issues and topics concerning to them. Also they felt newspaper offered good source of advice concerning to various issues like places to visit, health etc. Newspapers lead other media with organizing information well. Most consumers feel that newspapers can be used anywhere and anytime.

Table 4
Newspaper Reading Time of Day(N=464)

Newspaper Reading - Preferred Time	Percentage
6 am – 10 am	73.11%
10 am - 2 pm	15.97%
2 pm – 6 pm	6.72%
6 pm - 10 pm	4.20%
10 pm to 12 pm	0.00%
N/A	0.00%

Morning time between 6 to 10 am was the most preferred time of newspaper reading, this was indicated by 73% of the respondents. The above table clearly indicates morning peaks, tapering with the progress of the day with 16% indicating between 10 am to 2 pm followed by 11% of the sample indicating reading preference between 2 to 10 pm. Even these respondents indicated they would prefer reading in morning once they get along the days schedule.

Table 5
Newspaper Reading Time Allocation(N=464)

Newspaper Reading Per Day in Hours	Percentage
Less than 1 Hour	67.41%
Between 1 - 2 Hours	20.38%
Between 2 - 3 Hours	10.34%
Between 3 - 4 Hours	1.86%
Between 4 - 5 Hours	0.00%
NA	0.00%

Newspaper reading of less than one hour was indicated by 67% of the respondents followed by 20% of the respondents indicating between 1 to 2 hours. They had same pattern of reading prefer to read the same sections and indicated they get a sense of what is in before start reading. Out of the sample 12% of the respondents indicated reading time between 2 to 4 hours per day.

Table 6
Newspaper Reading View (N=464)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
I feel like the day is incomplete if I miss reading the newspaper	56.78%	32.20%	5.08%	5.93%	0.00%	0.00%
Reading newspaper gives me something to talk about	40.34%	55.46%	1.68%	2.52%	0.00%	0.00%
I get highly involved in Newspaper Reading	28.81%	49.15%	13.56%	8.47%	0.00%	0.00%
I read newspaper for financial markets & investments	23.53%	36.13%	12.61%	10.92%	5.88%	10.92%
Newspaper reading makes me a part of my city	32.77%	64.71%	2.52%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Fifty seven percent of the respondents indicated that they look forward to getting the newspaper and agreed the sense of incompleteness, if, reading newspaper was missed on a day. This was in agreement indicated by 32% of the respondents. Only 11% collectively were undecided or did not agree on the same. The rating of this parameter indicates the strength of the medium which indicates a strong association of the medium with lifestyle of people. The response also indicates Newspaper Readership has habit formation and missing out creates sense of incompleteness. According to Ernest F. Larkin Newspapers are most important in routine life of a person. Seventy eight percent felt that those who do not read newspaper are at disadvantage, on the other only 8% of the respondents disagreed with this parameter.

Ninety six percent of the Respondents agreed that Reading Newspaper gives them opportunity to talk about with other people. Only 4% of the population did not agreed or remain undecided on this parameter. The response indicates that Newspaper Reading gives opportunity to connect with other people, as it gives something to talk about in the social circle. Qualitatively in the interviews it was reflected that people always discussion what they read in newspapers either at work place, home or points of meeting. The results indicated a strong parameter of Newspaper engagement, People feel information and knowledge power, and they also relate the social status with the readership quotient.

Respondents were asked to rate their involvement in Newspaper reading, 29% of the respondents strongly agreed that they get highly involved in Newspaper Reading followed by 49% of the respondents who agreed about the same. During the interviews it was mentioned that they did not notice other things going on and also get annoyed if any interruptions were made while reading newspaper. Only 22% of the respondents were undecided and disagreed on the high involvement

for Newspaper Reading. The results indicate that “Newspaper as media” had quality engagement with the audiences.

Newspaper engagement was tested reading with Newspapers being read for financial markets and investments. The study indicates 24% of the respondents strongly agreed followed by 36% who agreed on the same. Twenty nine percent of the respondents did not agree on this parameter. Newspapers in Karachi are important source of information for financial markets and trading. The response shows positive response towards the market news. Reading about financial markets and investments also supports the results on time and involvement spent on newspaper readership. Reading information about celebrities, sports, mythology, health and home care were the issues people look forward to the newspapers. Respondents felt newspapers as source to understand lifestyle of other people and way of leading good life.

The study indicates 32% strongly agreed followed by 65% agreed that Newspaper Reading makes them part of their city. These respondents also mentioned that they read newspapers for local news, and city happening, for national and international news they preferred television. Newspaper was considered as medium to be part of city, and thus a very strong base of readership concerning local and regional news. The preference of Sunday paper was higher and 96% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that they enjoy Sunday paper much more than the weekday paper.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Following conclusions were drawn from the study:

- Average time spent on reading newspaper was more for males than females.
- The average time spent on reading newspaper was more for respondents employed in private and government sector jobs.
- Average time spent on reading newspaper differs across cities.
- Respondents who spent more time with newspaper had trust on information in the medium.
- Qualitatively in the interviews it was reflected that people always discussion what they read in newspapers either at work place, home or points of meeting. The results indicated a strong parameter of newspaper engagement.
- Newspaper was considered as medium to be part of city, and thus a very strong base of readership concerning local and regional news.

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