

AN ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER READING PATTERNS AMONG THE YOUTH**Dr. Jehangir Bharucha**

Senior Vice Principal, H R College, Mumbai.

Abstract: *The reading of newspapers is very useful for young citizens to develop their language ability and to get knowledge of current events and the world. This study analyses the newspaper reading habits of the youths in the metropolitan city of Mumbai. It uses a sample size of 120 youth. . Findings of the study show that youth in Mumbai do not read newspapers a lot and the Times of India is the newspapers they mostly read. Global affairs, are the major sections they read.*

Key words: Newspaper, Youth, Reading Habits.

INTRODUCTION

A newspaper is a serial publication containing news, several articles and advertising. It is typically published daily or weekly. Newspapers contain different sections to acknowledge the interests of one and all. Traditionally and till date, newspapers have always been printed and physically distributed door to door. Though in the past few years, with the advancement of technology, news can be obtained online on websites, blogs, applications etc.

The reading of newspapers is very useful for young citizens to develop their language ability and to get knowledge of current events and the world. The newspaper also indicates the programmes and policies of the corporate sector and the government. Newspapers also provide criticism of economic social –political issues and lots of other information and entertainment to the readers

People read newspapers for different reasons and purposes, some of which include pleasure, leisure, relaxation, information and knowledge. Reading books, magazines and newspapers from childhood helps a person to develop their thinking and understanding. It also helps to improve vocabulary. Reading is an intellectual action which is possible only if a man forms a habit of reading and practices these from childhood.

People read newspapers to be updated about what is happening around them. It also serves as a great source of entertainment. Advertisements also form a significant part of the newspaper. Reading newspaper is thus a good habit that can provide a great sense of educational value.

Newspapers contain news that is read by everyone alike, regardless of their caste, religion, economic background, gender and age. Thus it's a tool in a democracy that promotes equality and communal harmony.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the book *Children and Young People's Reading Habits and Preferences: The Who, What, why, Where and When*, the authors Christina Clark and Amelia Foster conclude that reading for pleasure or independent reading benefits children in numerous ways. For example, the amount that children read for enjoyment and for school has been found to be a major contributor to their reading achievement. Similarly, independent reading volume is a powerful predictor of differences in children's vocabulary and general knowledge differences, even after controlling for relevant general abilities such as IQ or text-decoding skills.

Similar findings were also made by the OECD study (2002), which showed that reading enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socioeconomic status. Thus, "the frequent admonition for children to 'Read, read, read' makes sense in that extensive reading promotes fluency, vocabulary, and background knowledge" (Pressley, 2000,).

There is also evidence that the amount of reading not only impacts on reading achievement and educational attainment, but also increases general knowledge, social skills, and community participation.

The act of reading can also help children compensate for lower levels of cognitive ability by building their vocabulary and general knowledge. Conversely, children who read very little do not have the benefits that come with reading, and studies show that when struggling readers are not motivated to read, their opportunities to learn decrease significantly (e.g. Baker, Dreher and Guthrie, 2000). It is therefore important that parents, teachers and literacy consultants examine the factors that may influence children's literary lives at home or at school (Chen, 2005).

Praveen Patel, Devendra Patel & Haresh Patel in their article "*Reading habits of newspaper in pharmacy college: An analytical study*" observed under graduate students, and post graduate students spent less than 30 minutes per day to reading the news paper. Pharmacy professionals spend 30 minutes to 1 Hour to read the newspaper.

A study was carried out by Annamalai and Muniandy in 2013 in Malaysia on the reading habits of young adults. The results showed that the students passed most of their time using the Internet, playing computer/mobile games, and other technology-related activities rather than reading. Based on the study, reading is only considered as a minor activity during their leisure time. The former researchers discovered that the students did not enjoy reading as much as other activities that involve technologies. The students did not find reading easy and causing reading anxiety. They also felt that there are other ways to learn new things, rather than just reading. The students found reading unexciting and not motivating.

In a study that was performed by Ainain 2011 in Nigeria reported that the reading habit among the university students in Nigeria is very poor. The study also illustrated that the reading is not a pleasing activity for Nigerian students. Very few students were found to be active readers. Similarly, Serin in 2010 conducted a study among university students in Turkey. It was found that a considerable number of the students reading interests are "average" and they do not have strong enough reading habits. According to study, they often read a number of magazines, art books and newspapers.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Kumar in 2010 in India showed that the habit of reading among the students in India is strong. The study added that most of students in India read for the purpose of getting information and get better their general knowledge. Additionally it was discovered that students in India read within 3 to 4 hours per day, and they read mostly those issues relate to their school.

In recent years there is strong research showing declining newspaper reading habits among the youth. People of different ages. There is also enough evidence proving that youth do not read newspapers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study seeking to assess the reading habits among student is conducted in the city of Mumbai.

A structured questionnaire was prepared having both close and open- ended questions and distributed among around 150 students. Random sampling method has been adopted. Out of this, usable responses were received from 120 students.

All these students belonged to the Commerce stream and were studying in the Higher Secondary Class or in Degree College. In addition to pursuing the undergraduate commerce degree a large majority of the students were also studying for professional examinations like Chartered Accountancy, Company Secretaries Course, Law, etc Some personal interviews were also conducted to get additional information from the target audience.. Almost equal representation has been given to male and female students

Many visits were required for collecting the filled-in-forms and the students showed a lethargic attitude.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

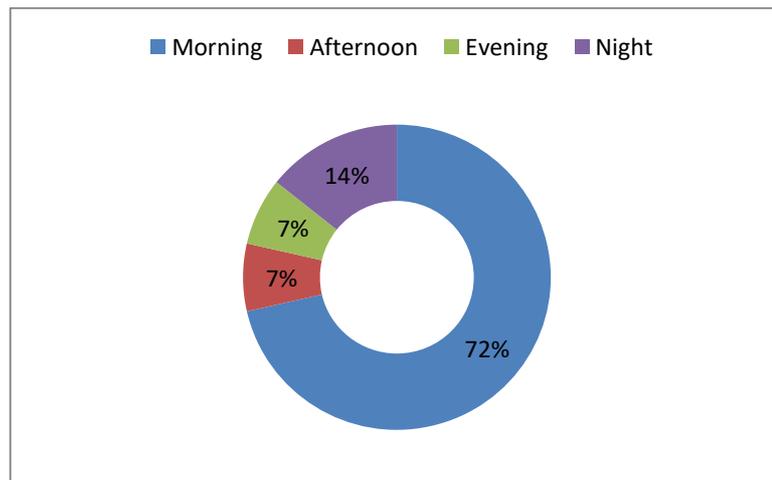
The study spelt out the following objectives:

- To determine how regular they read the newspaper
- The time spent in reading newspapers.

- The newspapers most read by the students.
- The sections of newspapers read most by students.
- The category of news items read
- Opinion about Electronic reading online newspapers

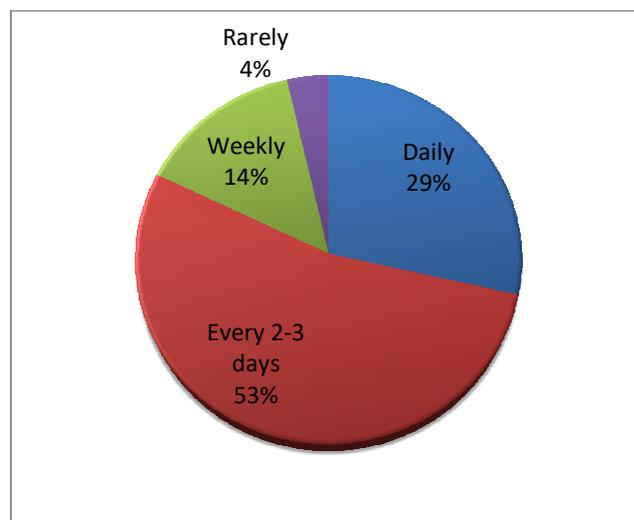
DATA ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS

Fig 1- The time of the day students prefer to read newspapers



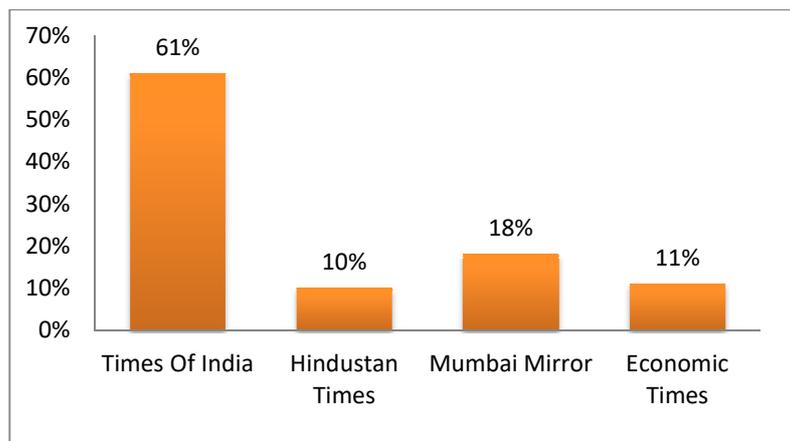
72% of the students read the newspapers in the morning. This is because people like to learn about the affairs of the previous day which gives them ample chance to discuss current affairs with others at work or college during the rest of the day. Also many people are accustomed to reading the newspaper with their morning tea or coffee.

Fig 2 - Frequency of reading newspapers



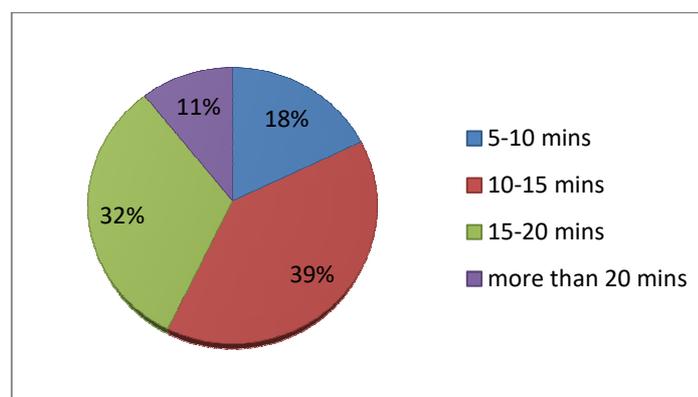
The survey shows that 53% of the student respondents read the newspapers once in every two or three days. They put this down to their busy study schedule but surely that is not an excuse as the older generation in the house would surely be reading the newspapers on a daily basis. This is also because the youth may sometimes prefer to read news online on their mobile phones on the go.

Fig 3- Preferred newspaper



61% of the youth choose to read the Times of India. The Times of India is the oldest English daily and thus the most trusted. It has been ranked the world’s top 6th newspaper by the BBC. The second most preferred newspaper is Mumbai Mirror which is a sister edition to the Times of India as it is published by the Times Group.

Fig 4- Time devoted to reading newspapers per day



62% of the students spend just 10-20 minutes to read the newspaper. Readers usually have favourite sections, be it sports, cinema and lifestyle, politics, world news or local news on which they tend to spend more time reading than other sections. Our study shows that students also read newspapers to be informed about statistical data like stock market rates, dollar rate, weather report etc

Ideal age to start reading newspapers

Almost 50% of the respondents feel that children should start reading newspaper when they are 10-12 years old as it is healthy for a child's mind to read the newspaper and this helps bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world. Reading newspaper from an early age helps children to develop interests in various aspects. Also having knowledge about current affairs boosts their confidence levels and increases their IQ.

Entire text vs. headlines

Only 20% of the respondents always prefer reading the entire text in an article while the remaining 80% usually prefer reading just the headlines. They justify this on the basis that the headlines give a gist of the article and thus readers save time and read only those articles which interests them.

Need for more visual content

42 % of the respondents strongly feel there is no need for more visual content in newspapers and they feel that sufficient number of images provided. 27% of the respondents hold the contrary view

Cumbersome to read?

43% of the respondents feel that Mumbai newspapers contain too many pages making them cumbersome and boring to read.

Immodest content

8% of the young adults feel there is an increase in the amount of immodest content in the newspapers these days. Over the years immodest content has increased mainly in the form of advertisements. It has been seen that media houses maintain strict censorship of content so as to not offend any group in the society. But advertisements form 70-80% of revenue generated by newspapers and we sometimes find obscene advertisements in newspapers.

Section of newspaper liked the most

80% girls and 70% boys are most interested in world issues. Globalisation has led to people getting interested in worldly affairs as nowadays countries are interlinked and events occurring in the United States have an effect on India.

The second preference for boys is the sports section and 90% start reading newspaper from the last page that is the sports page. As compared to boys only 60% of the girls are interested in sports news. Studies show that there has been an increase in interest of girls in sports. More and more girls are becoming keen on playing sports.

Politics is the third most preferred section by the respondents and it is seen that over the years more and more students are gaining interest in politics. This is a great step for a democracy as following politics leads to the formation of active citizen and society as a whole.

54% of the respondents like reading about environment and business whereas 46% do not.

Cinema and lifestyle is the fifth most preferred section. Trends show that girls are keener about this section than boys.

Digitalisation

70% respondents of the respondents think digitalisation and technology are hampering newspaper reading habits. Nowadays everything can be acquired at the click of a button on a mobile phone or laptop. People especially teenagers manage to do everything they want using just one device. This is made possible by software applications or websites of leading media houses like NDTV India, Times of India, and Times Now etc. The applications can be downloaded free of cost online and be used to receive updates.

DIGITAL V/S PRINT**Advantages of Digitalisation over Print**

- Digitalisation makes it possible to get live updates of events from over the world. It is easy to keep track of football scores or know about political decisions and laws in real time. Newspapers can never keep up with this as the news is published every 24 hours. Thus consumers already know who on the match by the time they read the newspaper.
- Digitalisation is less expensive than print media as applications can be downloaded free of cost.
- Online news can be received anytime, anywhere while on the go. Consumers can access updates while travelling to workplace or while waiting for food in a restaurant while

newspapers are delivered at a particular location and consumers need to be physically present at that location to be able to read the news.

- Digitalisation provides the feature of sharing news updates online. This feature is very useful in conveying exact information accurately and instantly. This is not possible in case of newspapers. Readers subscribe for different newspapers and thus receive different versions of news.
- Digitalisation provides high resolution images and videos while we often find bad quality images in the newspapers.

Advantages of Print over Digitalisation

- Constant updates and notification of online news keeps a person distracted. Research proves that people often get addicted to getting live updates and sharing the same which keeps them engrossed in the device for long periods. This causes harm to eyesight. No such health problems are seen in newspaper readers.
- Newspapers have been published from centuries and people are accustomed and habituated to physically holding and reading it. Thus people especially older generations find it difficult to adapt to the new technology.
- Classified ads and other important local news are not covered by digital media.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

-The survey was geographically restricted to South Bombay due to time and finance constraints.

-It was conducted among college students between the age group of 17 years to 21 years. Younger teenagers were not approached.

-Some students may not have disclosed the right information.

CONCLUSION AND INFERENCES

The newspaper remains an excellent medium providing consumer with news from all over the world and newspaper reading is an intellectual activity and a good habit for every citizen. Children should start reading the newspaper at an early age.

Teenagers in general acknowledge the importance of reading newspapers and appreciate its benefits. The youth clearly do not display regular newspaper reading habits. Also they have preferences of sections in a newspaper which vary from person to person on the basis of their gender, age, education and career. There has been an increase in the interest of teenagers in politics and them like reading political news in the newspaper.

With advancements in technology, teenagers are more inclined towards digitalisation than print media and prefer adapting to technology.

The Times of India is the most preferred national daily by teenagers in English language and also ranked the best in India.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

To parents - parents should insist that their children cultivate newspaper reading habits when they are young, so that it becomes part and parcel of their life. Also, there are many community libraries where children can be encouraged to go and read good books. All this will help them to express themselves well and write good English which will eventually lead to better academic performance in the near future.

To the Government- Studies show that children start reading fiction and other novels at a very early age but do not start reading newspapers till they are 13 or 14 years old. In order to develop newspaper reading habits in children from a young age, there is a need to provide special newspapers for children with appropriate content for their age as it is difficult for them to navigate the mountain of information in a newspaper.

To educational institutions -Schools and colleges should stongly encourrg e readership development. Most of the youth who had a reading habit said they were initiated into reading in their school. Faculty must encourage students to read. Every school and college should have a reading hour. Newspapers and books willays remain the most suitable medium for knowledge transmission.

References:

Akobundu, D. (2009). "Strategies for preservation and increased access to newspapers in Nigerian university libraries". Retrieved from: <http://www.digitalcommons.unl.edu/egi/viewcont>.

Praveen Patel, Devendra Patel &Haresh Patel (2014) "Reading habits of newspaper in pharmacy college: An analytical study". Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science. Vol. 3. (2),

<http://www.theguardian.com/media/pda/2010/feb/04/pew-research-teenagers-online-behaviour>

<http://journalism.about.com/od/trends/a/youngpeople.htm>