

# Analysis of Attitude towards Online and Print Publications: A Case Study among University Students

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## Abstract

Users enjoy and like both online and print news papers. But it is believed that it is necessary to adopt various modern techniques so as to identify the interests of the young college going population. Factors influencing attitude towards usage of print and online publication have been studied by several researchers. In this modern age, people are provided with a wide range of traditional and digital channels. Currently online news sites have greatly satisfied the expectations of the readers, and there has been a decrease in the circulation of print news papers. This study examines the consumer choice of print and online media with respect to demographics and preference of format. The study adopted a primary quantitative data collection approach wherein a paper based survey of 150 college post graduate students was carried out. Overall these results, acknowledged that the print edition has been the prevailing choice when compared to the print edition in terms of readership and preference and generates more profit to the advertising field.

**Keywords:** online and offline publications, preference of format, demographics, digital natives, advertising revenue, new business models

## 1. Introduction

The key infrastructure for governance and a well-operating polity can be provided by the media, as they could effectively provide information to the targets. In accordance to Pew Research Center (2009), providing information to the citizens so as to make them to play their role in the society is the major purpose of journalism. Wikipedia (2010) revealed that as the media is considered as the “fourth estate,” they are very important to politics. As media can reach broad population, it plays an important role in advertising and public relations.

Reporting and conveying the information to the audience is the major duty of the media as they not only convey the information to the viewers but also influence their behaviour. As stated by Alsem et al. (2008), they won't stop with informing the news to the viewers. They will also “create” or “describe” the news. In addition, an appropriate information gathering for reporting, influences the behaviour of the viewers (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2004; George & Waldfogel, 2006; Mullainathan & Shleifer, 2005), particularly by selecting the slant and spin in what is reported, they will influence the behaviour of the viewers (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2006, Gentzkow et al. 2006; Xiang and Sarvary, 2007)

Most of the researchers (Chyi & Chang, 2009; Chyi & Lasorsa, 2002; Chyi & Yang, 2009, De Waal, Schoenbach, & Lauf, 2005 & Online Publishers Association, 2004) identified that the users enjoy and like the print news paper than online news papers. But it is believed that it is necessary to adopt various modern techniques so as to retain the digital natives. However, still researchers could not identify a valid business model for online news even after sixteen years of study (Gill, 2011). They could find out the factors motivating the users to choose online news resources and the way through which the online resources fulfil the expectations of the readers. Further, the competition between online and traditional news platforms and the impacts of online news on traditional have not been focused by many researchers. Hence, it is important to focus on the literature that deals with the views of the youngsters about online and print media. The researcher of this study has attempted to compare the uses of online news platforms and old media forms. As the online news sites have greatly satisfied the expectations of the readers, there has been a decrease in the circulation of print news papers (Stempel et al.,

2000) and the impact of the same on younger generation.

## 2. Literature Review

Newspaper firms have started to search for online delivery channels so as to retain the young readers. As a result, they have transferred a considerable amount of their delivery channels from print format to online format. Most of the media firms have started to implement a 360-degree strategy that integrates content decisions “shaped by the potential to generate consumer value and returns through multiple platforms of expression of that content and via a number of distributive outlets” (Doyle, 2010).

In this modern age, people obtain information by means of Internet. In a recent research, it is identified that next to television, people use internet to get to know the daily events and newspaper is ranked as the third news platform. In this research, it is also identified that the link between citizens and news has become portable and participatory (Pew Research, 2010). About thirty three percentages of the individuals tend to read news papers via mobile phones and thirty seven percentages of the individuals use social web sites such as Face book and Twitter to read newspapers. There has been an increase in the number of people who use mobile phones and other technologies. So Pew Internet (2010) insisted that the news organizations have to use social web sites so as to sustain their readers. It is true that youngsters are less likely to use traditional news formats when compared to other age groups (Edmonds, Guskin, & Rosenstiel, 2011), but could not conclude that they are not at all interested to use traditional news formats (Kaufhold, 2010b). Therefore, the news organizations should take steps to sustain the young readers (Graybeal, 2011).

Factors influencing attitude towards usage of print and online publication have been studied by several researchers. In this modern age, people are provided with a wide range of traditional and digital channels of mass media. As stated by Lacy (2004), the individuals will make their choices among these channels based on their perceptions. Chyi (2009) stated that in order to have sustainable operations, the media industry has to get a clear idea on determinants of media consumption. Edmonds (2009), Rosenstiel, Jurkowitz, & Ji (2012), Saba (2009) and Shields (2009) pointed out that most of the online news publishers concern about the feasibility of digital subscription models. In accordance to Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press, (2010), news papers couldn't convert the online usage into revenue.

### 2.1 College Students as “Digital Natives”

In accordance to a recent Pew report, the youngsters are more interested to use modern devices when compared to other age groups. Most of the college students are interested to own a laptop and to access internet via mobile phones, as they believe that these devices would differentiate them from other age groups. Smith, Rainie, & Zickuhr, (2011) have compared the internet usage of U.S college students and other age groups. They found out that Internet is used by ninety eight percentages of students. Moreover, wireless gadgets are used by ninety two percentages of the students so as to access internet. But only seventy five percentages of the U.S adults are found to use internet and fifty seven percentages of them were found to access internet via wireless gadgets. Therefore the concept of “digital natives” which conveys that every youngster uses the modern digital technology is proved to be inaccurate. But it is true that, the college students are the majority of the tech-savvy populations. With the help of the college newspaper advisers, this study has assessed the future of news papers, by investigating the opinions of the students about different newspaper formats.

The following challenges are faced by the commercial newspapers in this modern age:

In accordance to Newspaper Association of America (2012a) though there is an increase in the population of U.S, the circulation of news paper has become declined since 1987 (weekday) and 1993 (Sunday). As per the information from Newspaper Association of America (2012b), only 13.6% of the overall advertising revenue of the newspapers is contributed by the online edition in 2011. Penenberg (2004), insisted that the digital natives and physical news papers should be modified so as to attract more and more people. This is the only way to overcome these challenges. In addition to that, an experimental study can be performed to find out the core problem. In order to address the following research issues, the researcher of this study has focused on readership, advertising, and format preference and presents the following conceptual framework.

### 2.2 Conceptual Framework

#### 2.2.1 Newspaper Consumption among Young Adults

The youngsters are usually less interested in reading print newspapers than other age groups. In a study conducted by the Pew Research Centre (2010), forty six percentage of the individuals with the age of sixty years were found to read news paper daily. But only seven percentages of the individuals with the age of eighteen to twenty four years were found to use news paper as a news resource. Edmonds et al., (2011); Mindich (2005) and

Prior (2007) stated that before the emergence of internet, the age differences in newspaper consumption patterns existed. Most of the youngsters are interested to spend more time online when compared to other age groups. From Pew Research Centre's Internet & American Life Project, (2011) it is identified that in U.S, internet is used by ninety five percentages of the individuals with the age of eighteen to twenty nine years and forty one percentages of the individuals with the age of more than sixty five years.

We could conclude that youngsters have lost interest in reading print newspapers after the emergence of online news websites. Kaufhold (2010b) pointed out that in a survey conducted by three hundred and twenty two journalists, it was found out that the youngsters give more preference to online news rather than print news. Five hundred and twenty students from a public university were examined by Althaus and Tewksbury (2000) so as to identify the role of internet in their daily life. The researchers have expected that the people who use internet as a news platform won't be interested to use traditional news papers and TV for the same purpose. But, it was identified that though the people have enough computer knowledge and internet access, these factors didn't reduce the use of news papers. They have found that, with the emergence of Internet, there has been a decrease in the number of audiences of entertainment.

In Netherlands, De Waal and Schoenbach (2010) have conducted a two-wave representative panel survey of adults. In this study, they observed how the online news are used and evaluated by the people and how the emergence of online news affects the traditional media. The differences between the usages of newspaper websites and non-paper news websites have also been found out in this study. Due to the increase in the number of newspaper website users, there has been a decrease in the circulation of print newspapers. However, among the individuals who use non-paper news websites, there has been an increase in the circulation of print news papers.

Traditional print news papers and other news sites fulfil different needs. So, the well-educated youngsters and males prefer other news sites to print news paper. But, due to the cost of the print newspapers, most of the individuals have started to use news paper websites.

Hence it can be hypothesized that,

H1: Respondent demographics have an impact on choice of preferred media of reading news.

### 2.2.2 Preference of Format

Reliable findings were obtained from the studies on preferences of the users for digital vs. traditional news formats. It is identified from these studies that users would prefer the news in print format. Mueller & Kameroner, (1995) studied the views of students about the online version of the San Jose Mercury News. It was identified from this study that this electronic news paper was "unappealing to browse leisurely, inappropriate for all news material, uncomfortable to travel through, not preferable over traditional newspaper and more difficult to read than a traditional newspaper". Chyi & Chang (2009), Chyi & Lasorsa (1999, 2002) Chyi & Lee (2012) studied about the views of the users about print newspaper and its online edition. As both of them were found to provide the same information at the same cost, the user preferred print news paper to its online version.

De Waal, Schoenbach, & Lauf (2005) studied the perception of the users about the usefulness of print and online news papers and other media. It was identified that in accordance to the viewers, print newspapers and TV are more useful than other media. In 2008, online Publishers Association Similar conducted a research on 25,852 visitors of forty one main U.S. news sites. It was identified that in a 2-to-1 margin, online media were found to be deemed less pleasing, less friendly, and less pleasurable than offline media (Online Publishers Association, 2004). But, the researchers have not studied the extent of influence of media formats on the basis of age groups. But, the individuals with the age of eighteen to twenty four years are described as "digital natives" by the researchers. In 2001, Marc Prensky introduced this term. As stated by Palfrey & Gasser (2008) the individuals who are born after the emergence of modern technologies are referred as digital natives.

The term "digital immigrants" is used to refer to the people who came to this world before the emergence of modern technologies. As the digital natives born after the emergence of technologies, they could well understand the technology and they would have more advanced media habits than others. As an example, Yaros (2008), a media scholar stated "the digital natives are leading the way—and are way ahead of news organizations".

Hence it can be proposed that,

H2: Choice of format has an impact on respondent choice of preferred media for reading news.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Sampling and Data Collection

This study examines the consumer response to print and online media with respect to demographics and their reasons for this choice. The respondents difference in opinion with respect to need for revolutionization of print media is also identified. The study adopted a primary quantitative data collection approach wherein a paper based survey of 150 university students was carried out. The survey instrument was broadly categorized into four main sections including respondent demographics, choice of online media, reasons for decrease in advertising revenue for print media and possible future solutions to be adopted. For the current study the researcher used a random sampling method while selecting the sample population among the respondents who were present at the college canteen. Those respondents who were interested were made to sit at tables offered by the mall for conducting the survey were given a pen and paper survey. Large font sizes were used as suggested by Dillman, (2000) along with more free spaces. The survey questionnaire was concise and presented to be finished within a period of fifteen minutes. To ensure that there is presence of non response bias the researcher compared the responses obtained early in the day (mid morning break) to the responses obtained late in the day (mid after noon break) by making use of independent sample t-test. No differences were observed suggesting the presence of non response bias from the students. A total of 150 questionnaires were prepared and distributed equally during the breaks. Once the respondents were done with the survey the questionnaires were analysed and checked for basic errors and accuracy of the information. After the check a total of 102 questionnaires were deemed proper after the survey. The collected responses were coded and entered into an MS Excel 2007 file following which the data was analysed using SPSS ver 18.0. The researcher made use of descriptive (chi square analysis) and inferential statistics (ANOVA) for analysis.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Impact of Respondent Demographics

There was a significant relationship between respondent demographics and choice of preferred media type as observed from table 1. It is observed that this relationship is observed across gender ( $\chi^2= 3.643$ ,  $p = 0.050$ ). It is observed that men showed a higher rate of preference with respect to the preferred media (64.7% of men when compared to 35.3%) of women. Similarly table 2 indicates that majority of the respondents across all nationalities were found to prefer online media over offline media. However, it is to be noted that most of the respondents were Non Resident Indians. The relationship between choice of media as well as the nationality of the respondent is identified ( $\chi^2= 9.829$ ,  $p = 0.043$ ). Majority of the respondents were found to be in the age group of up to 20 (41 respondents) and 21-30 (33 respondents). It is identified that among these respondents the preference was clearly with respect to online media when compared to offline print media with 44.7% and 32.9% of them preferring online media indicating an association between age group and choice of preferred media ( $\chi^2= 6.335$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ). Majority of the respondents were found to be in income group of 6000 - 8000INR and it was observed that in this group majority of them preferred online media (38.2%) indicating an association between age group and choice of preferred media ( $\chi^2= 12.992$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ).

Thus proving the hypothesis,

H1: Respondent demographics have an impact on choice of preferred media of reading news.

The hypothesis was accepted and it was concluded that there is association between respondent demographics and their choice of preferred media of reading news.

Table 1. Demographics and choice of preferred media

	Criteria	Preferred Media, n (%)		Total	$\chi^2$	p value
		Offline	Online			
Gender	Male	15 (88.2%)	55 (64.7%)	70 (68.6%)	3.643	0.050
	Female	2 (11.8%)	30 (35.3%)	32 (21.4%)		
	Total	17 (100%)	85 (100%)	102 (100%)		
Nationality	UAE	8 (47.1%)	15 (17.6%)	23 (22.5%)	9.829	0.043
	Other Arabs	5 (29.4%)	53 (62.4%)	58(56.9%)		
	Indians	3 (17.6%)	8 (9.4%)	11 (10.8%)		
	Other Asians	1 (5.9%)	5 (5.9%)	6 (5.9%)		
	Others	0 (0%)	4 (4.7%)	4 (3.9%)		
	Total	17 (100%)	85 (100%)	102 (100%)		

Age	≤20	3 (17.6%)	38 (44.7%)	41 (40.2%)	12.992	0.001**
	21-30	5 (29.4%)	28 (32.9%)	33 (32.4%)		
	31-40	1 (5.9%)	10 (11.8%)	11 (10.8%)		
	41-50	3 (17.6%)	6 (7.1%)	9 (8.8%)		
	>50	5 (29.4%)	3 (3.5%)	8 (7.8%)		
	Total	17 (100%)	85 (100%)	102 (100%)		
Respondent income	< 2000	3 (17.6%)	4 (4.7%)	7 (6.9%)	6.335	0.012
	2001-4000	2 (11.8%)	10(11.8%)	12(11.8%)		
	4001-6000	7(41.2%)	17(20%)	24(23.5%)		
	6001-8000	4(23.5%)	35(41.2%)	39(38.2%)		
	>8000	1(5.9%)	19(22.4%)	20(19.6%)		
	Total	17(100%)	85(100%)	102		

The reasons behind respondent preference of online and offline media was also examined in table 2. It is observed that among respondents who preferred online media majority of them indicated that the speed (37.6%), price (29.4%) were the most important feature which attracted them. In comparison, among respondents who preferred offline media it was observed that majority of them that display (35.3%) and price (29.4%) were the most common reasons

#### 4.2 Impact of Format Preference

Table 2. Respondent preference of online and offline media

Reasons for preference	Preferred Media, n (%)		Total
	Offline	Online	
Price	5 (29.4%)	25(29.4%)	30 (29.4%)
Content	2 (11.8%)	17(20%)	19(18.6%)
Display	6(35.3%)	9(10.6%)	15(14.7%)
Faster	2(11.8%)	32(37.6%)	34(33.3%)
Other	2 (11.8%)	2(2.4%)	4(3.9%)
Total	17(100%)	85(100%)	102(100%)
Chi-Square value =12.443		p-value=0.014*	

Table 3. Comparison of respondent response on attributes of online and offline media

	Preferred media	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-value	p-value
Reasons for choice of online media and decline of print media	Offline media	24.1765	1.81091	8.244	0.005
	Online media	25.5059	1.72946		
	Total	25.2843	1.80416		
Reasons for decrease in advertising revenue	Offline media	27.0000	1.58114	10.168	0.002
	Online media	29.0471	2.54440		
	Total	28.7059	2.52351		
Possible suggestions to be adopted	Offline media	18.0588	2.22122	9.141	0.003
	Online media	19.9881	2.43218		
	Total	19.6634	2.49510		

From the results of ANOVA in table 3, it was identified that the respondents who preferred online media strongly were in favour of online media being looked upon as a replacement to print media (F = 8.244, p value = 0.002). From the study it is seen that the respondents who preferred online media agreed with the impact of free digital content affecting demand of print media, loss in print revenue and fall in consumer subscription, fall in advertising revenue and an ultimate impact on company's market shares.

From the results of ANOVA in table 3, it is also observed respondents who preferred online media identified with the impact of online media on advertising revenue (F= 10.168, p =0.002). These include attributes like

availability of alternative advertising, speed of internet, lesser time to read, lack of attractive templates in print media and type of customer service. It is also identified that respondents who prefer online media over print media agree with the fact that there is a need for print media to adapt to a certain degree of change ( $F= 9.141$ ,  $p=0.003$ ). This includes promotion of innovative new products, building deeper relationship with consumers tapping new revenue streams, reinventing the current model of presenting content and building an infrastructure to make print media have an online counterpart.

From Tables 2 and 3 it can be proposed that,

H2: Choice of format has an impact on respondent's choice of preferred media for reading news

The hypothesis was accepted and it was concluded that there is association between the choice of format and respondent's choice of preferred media for reading news.

## 5. Findings

Overall these results, acknowledged that the print edition has been the prevailing choice when compared to the print edition in terms of readership and preference and generate more profit to the advertising field. Regarding future outlook with respect to possible measures by which print media can overcome existing barriers, several students believed that an offline -only model would not be feasible for the next five years making it ideal for print media to arrive at novel measures to promote their readership among young adults. They incorporated the managerial implications for commercial newspaper on considering the future of their industry.

Nowadays, finding a profitable venture is very complex even if this field improves their advancement in the area of encryption and metering technology which are likely to provide feasible solution to the critical problems of payment method and copyright enforcement. Most of the conceptual dilemmas exist mainly in the key aspect of personalization, updating, interactivity, charging policies with respect to print newscast. As per Iyengar (1997), there is a growing tendency in the field of journalism towards tabloidization has created major threat to news quality. In order to generate sellable products, newspaper editors and reports are encountering the pressure so as to provide valuable reports in respect to daily events (Seale, 2003). Sometimes, the self-admitted limitations of newspaper journalists may create a threat to new quality specifically in reporting science or health related issues along with the intervention of statistics (Voss, 2002), while online media often promotes diversity in approach (Chyi and Huang, 2011).

The finding of the study has revealed much similarity with results previously published in literature. The study of Chyi & Huang (2011), Chyi & Lewis (2009), and Scarborough Research (2012) revealed that small online readership regarding print circulation has relatively high in local (commercial) newspaper market. Moreover, the reports of Chyi & Chang (2009), Chyi & Lasorsa (2002), Chyi & Lee (2012), Chyi & Yang (2009), De Waal et al (2005) and Online Publishers Association (2004) indicated that most of the respondents on an older age prefer print newspapers while college students though identifying with importance of online media go for print newspapers. Such a result is not observed in this study indicating the need for further research. To the end, do young adults in India prefer getting news online to reading the edition of a newspaper. The response by most of the respondents is yes. So newspapers have to change their strategy for young adults because the main problem among today's adults is the lack of interest in news and the type of format it is presented in (Kaufhold, 2010a), so they have to improve little with print format as this can't be done with technology alone.

## 6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The development and influence of multimedia on publishing sectors have been promoted from the past few years. Only a small number of studies have addressed the issues and problems in such process. This is one of the papers to address such issues and problems with respect to newspaper industry. However this paper has its own limitations. One main limitation is the representative population targeted at a single college and cannot be used to signify the opinion of the young adults of today. Another limitation is the adoption of a close ended questionnaire which does not leave room for respondents to indicate their real opinion.

The underlying principle of online involvement in publications today is dependent on the combined effect of declining revenue in the publishing industry and continued performance advances in information as well as in communication technology. In the mean time, the developers involved in multimedia seem to be encountered with more uncertainty and insecurity with respect to commercial products and revenue raising models making it vital for future research in this area.

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