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READING ONLINE NEWSPAPERS AND READERS' PERCEPTION (A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF SARGODHA)

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to explore and document the perception of Students of University of Sargodha about Online Newspapers. For this purpose researcher developed the questionnaire after conducting pilot study, for study researcher took the sample of 300 students from University of Sargodha using purposive and convenience sampling technique. The results of the study shows that a large amount of students read Online newspapers to get information and most of the students prefer to read News in Online Newspapers. Findings of the effort describe that significant amount of students of University pay less attention to crime content and pay much attention to Political and sports content'. Further results narrates that more students prefer to read online newspapers over printed newspapers and students prefer to read both national and international Online Newspapers.

Keywords: Newspapers, Perception

BACKGROUND

Face of print revolutionized after the invention of paper. Printed words became more available. In 11th century A.D. Pi Sheng of China started to print with movable clay type and in 6th century Chinese engravers mastered art of wood-block printing (Sonquist& Dunkelberg, 1977). Books were produced by scribes based usually monasteries before Gutenberg's invention of printing press. Gutenberg developed movable printing press, he was a man of vision and that made the process much faster and cheaper than old version of wood-block printing. Gutenberg's investors

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Fust and Schoeffer repossessed his business before the first mass produced book was successfully printed. In 1609 Gutenberg's brilliant idea aided the creation of the first printed newspaper in Germany.

Less than 92 years later, in 1702, England had the first newspaper published daily; it was called the "Daily Courant" (Irene, 2002). Internet is a mode of exchange information stored in a computer with other connected computers through the world. INTERNET was developed in 1969 by ARPA (Advance Research Project Agency) and was called ARPANET then Arpanet was developed basically for use by the American Military. The internet grew out of defense related computer network known as ARPANET. In 1957 ARPA created by US president D. Eisenhower for scientific superiority of US over Soviet Union. In 1970 ARPA developed a network which was known as ARPANET. This ARPANET has developed into today's Internet. The real breakthrough to exponential growth in the internet came after the invention of World Wide Web. Since mid-1990 the growth of Internet is phenomenal (Nayyar, 1992). Until in 1990 the World Wide Web & the Internet was almost entirely unknown outside universities and corporate research departments. Since then it has full-grown to become an almost global part of modern information systems, becoming extensively accepted medium for all kind of customer relations such as advertising, online sales and services and brand building (Jabbar, 2007)

Internet access has been available in Pakistan since the mid-1990s. PCTL started offering access via the nationwide local call network in 1995. By early 2008, Internet penetration remained low, with about 9% of the population estimated to be users. There were signs that this was changing, however. The country has been pursuing an aggressive IT policy, aimed at boosting Pakistan's drive for economic modernization and creating an exportable software industry in much the same way as in India. There is no doubt that has been helping increase the popularity of the Internet. Statistics shows that there were 133,900 users of internet in Pakistan which was 0.1% of total population while in 2006 there were 12,000,000 users of internet which were 702% of the total population. These statistics shows the significant change in a country like Pakistan and show the growth and popularity of internet in Pakistan.

Online newspapers

Online newspapers were considered a revolution in mass media in the 1990s. On May 17, 1991, the Geneva-based research institute CERN released the World Wide Web standard. In May 1992 Chicago Online, the first newspaper service on America Online, was launched by the Chicago Tribune in the United States. Since the late 1990s growth in development of readership has been dramatic with most large and medium newspapers now having an online presence. In addition, many radio and TV stations now offer an online news site. By the year 2000, one in four Web users were reading news online with many reading it daily or weekly such that it became an important news channel. Their popularity survived the dotcom crash of 2000/2001 and readership increased

during the Iraq war when desire for as-it-happens news created demand for supplements to television and print media news, particularly among at-work readers (Jabbar, 2007).

Significance

Newspaper has become an important part of the breakfast table. Newspaper gives us information about the social, political and cultural world around us. Newspapers keep the people in touch. We also develop cosmopolitan outlook because by reading newspapers we no longer think of our own town or our country rather we think of the world as a whole (Ayesha, 2006). In the past few years, the growth of the Internet has been incontestable; it affected the people interaction pattern, communication pattern and way of gathering information. According to Nielsen//Netratings 2002 more than 400 million people use the Internet. During the past few decades the Internet has risen from an educational system and governmental to a medium supporting high-speed video, audio, and text communication between ordinary people across the world, changing our political, social and cultural life (Irene, 2002).Internet has got so much popularity that traditional media like T.V., Radio and Newspapers are also using internet to transmit information and now there are many T.V. channels and Radio stations which are available on internet. Along with T.V. and Radio, Print media is also being shifted to the World Wide Web. Books and newspapers are two most important parts of print media now as internet has got so much popularity. Both newspapers and books are now available in printed form as well as on internet there are many newspapers which are providing their printed edition as well as their internet edition. Many newspapers which are only available on World Wide Web and these newspapers are getting popularity day by day (Ayesha, 2006).

An online newspaper, also known as a web newspaper, is a newspaper that exists on the World Wide Web or Internet, either separately or as an online version of a printed periodical (Nicholas, 1995). Online newspapers are getting popularity day by day because of many reasons. The most important reason is that they provide interactivity. SheizafRafaeli defined Interactivity as "an expression of the extent that in a given series of communication exchanges, any third (or later) transmission (or message) is related to the degree to which previous exchanges referred to even earlier transmissions (Dudeney, 2000). Interactivity is similar to the degree of responsiveness, and is examined as a communication process in which each message is related to the previous messages exchanged, and to the relation of those messages to the messages preceding them.New media is an expanding term that encompasses all new technologies we have today. Interactivity is seen as a key association with new media as it basically sets apart the 'Old' and 'New' media. Old media could only offer a sit-back type interaction, whereas new media is much more engaging to their audiences. Technologies such as DVD's and digital TV are classic examples of interactive media devices, where a user can control what they watch and when. However, the Internet has become the prime model of an interactive system. Users can become fully immersed in their experiences by viewing material, commenting it and then actively contributing to it (Hsiang and George, 1998).

With the popularity of computer and internet it has become very easy to access the information for common people without paying so much. Now time has gone when one had to read the newspapers available in the country, internet has been vanished the boundaries of information. Now every newspaper, available on World Wide Web, is in access of every one. There are many newspaper available on internet are those which are updated continuously providing latest information to the readers now one can save the newspaper in his/her computer for future use and it is so much easy to save and retrieve the information for research and other purposes. In most of the developed countries online newspapers are so popular there is heavy traffic on online newspaper's websites because it is easy for them to access the online newspapers because most of the people in developed countries have access to internet. In Pakistan internet was not popular in last decade but it is getting popularity because government has taken many steps to make it easy to access the internet for the common people especially for the students of universities because university students are those which require latest information for their research and other purposes. As internet is getting popularity interactive media is also getting popularity and being one of the most important parts of interactive media, online newspapers are also getting popularity day by day. There are not so many research conducted about Online Newspapers. In view of the above scenario, it will be a matter of great interest to explore the usage and perception of university students about Online Newspapers.

Study's Objectives

- To explore university students' using habit of internet.
- To uncover purpose of using internet by university students.
- To find out the frequency of reading online newspapers by university students.
- To dig out the purpose of reading online newspapers by university students.
- To find out the students' preference regarding selection of online newspapers.
- To uncover the students' preference regarding selection of online newspapers' content.
- To find out the preference of students regarding reading online and printed newspapers.
- To explore the university students' level of interest while reading online newspapers.

MAJOR CONCEPTS AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

Internet using habit

The major concept of the study is the use of internet with certain frequency. It is conceptualized as 1) **Very frequently** means use of internet daily. 2) **Frequently** use of internet in a span of 1 to 2 days. 3) **Sometimes** means once in a week to once in a month. 4) **Chatting** means exchange of messages and to talk with other people anywhere in the world by using computer and internet. 5)**Surfing** means to explore and see more and more websites. 6) **Searching** means search websites, pictures songs, videos and text etc. on the internet by using search engine 7) **Research** means to use internet to find any new information about known things.

Exposure to online newspapers

The study deals with online newspapers. It is conceptualized as exposure means to watch and to read the online newspapers. The study deals with the exposure of students to online newspapers i.e. **very frequently**, **frequently** and **sometimes**. Time spend means how much time they consume in reading the online newspapers.

Purpose of reading online newspapers

Purpose of reading online newspapers & content preferred in online newspapers is another concept of the study. 1) To get informed about different international, national or local issues. 2) To make opinion means to make point of view about certain issue. 3) Entertainment means that they enjoy reading the online newspapers. 4) Habitually means, students read online newspapers because it is their habit.

Preference

It is conceptualized as which online newspaper students prefer (a) National (b) International (c) Both and what language of online newspapers they prefer (a) Urdu (b) English (c) Both. What content students prefer to read in the online newspapers? Preference means that what content they like to read. Content means anything that is available (i.e. News, Editorial, Column, Articles & Advertisement) on webpage of the online newspapers. Much interest they take like very much to read online newspapers, somewhat interest means less interest then very much interest. No interest means don't like the particular content. Preference regarding the printed and online newspapers is important aspect of study. Preference means the students like to read online newspapers.

Interest level

Interest level is another concept of the study. It means how much interest readers take in different contents (i.e. Political, Sports, Terrorism, Showbiz and Crime) while reading online newspapers. The literature Review is the springboard for any research study. A literature review is systematic search and analysis of published information that accredited scholars and researchers have written on a topic. It is organized according to the research objective, thesis or the problem/issue that a researcher wishes to address. Mark Duze conducted research Online Journalism: modeling The First Generation of News Media on World Wide according to him the Internet and specifically its graphic interface the World Wide Web is reaching a level of saturation and widespread adoption throughout the world. Specifically for journalism practiced online - in the discipline of computer-assisted reporting (CAR) and a specific kind of journalism: online journalism - we can now identify and theorize about the impacts the global system of networked computers has had on journalism. This paper signals four particular journalisms online as these have emerged in the 'first generation' of news media on the World Wide Web (1993-2001), discusses the key characteristics - cf. hypertextuality, interactivity, multimediality - which

determine the 'added value' of these journalisms, and provides three specific strategies journalists may use to further enhance the potential of journalism online: annotative reporting, open source journalism and hyper adaptive news sites (Hsiang and George, 1998).

In July 2004 Beverley G. Hope and Zhiru Li conducted a research on Online Newspapers and found that there has been a proliferation of online newspapers over recent years and differences in classification of factors across culture, sex, and age (Beverley and Zhiru, 2004). A 1996 a survey by Steven Ross and Donald Middleberg about newspapers and magazines finds that 77 percent of all newspapers and magazine editors plan an online edition. They compare that figure with only 54 percent the previous year. At daily newspapers, 15 percent are already on line, and an estimated 72 percent expect to be on line within five years. Some 29 percent of the magazines in the sample are distributing an electronic product, and another 31 percent expect to be doing so by next year. In San Jose, California, the Mercury Center launched its first edition May 10, 1993 on America Online, and is generally considered the first newspaper to go truly on line. In the affiliation with AOL, which ended in July 1996, about one-fifth of the site was free with headlines and short news summaries. The rest was available to paid subscribers only. Managers estimate that in an average day, the service was visited by 10,000 to 12,000 users. Traditional newspapers are publishing online because they have little choice.... Although the Internet has a small population compared to that of North America, for example, it is growing rapidly. Current Internet demographics show that most users are either university students or faculty. They are not a market force. However, in the future big spenders will be among those rushing to get online. Once a newspaper establishes its online product it has to come up with a way of paying for it (Nicholas, 1995).

Nowadays foreign newspapers and magazines are available in many countries all over the world and may become a very valuable tool in the hands of EFL teachers who are always looking for authentic material. Most of these newspapers or magazines have a web-based version, therefore "all this material is quickly, cheaply and readily available from the comfort of our desks or homes" (Dudeney, 2000). Reading online newspapers or magazines in the EFL class a positive exercise because (a) students are able to access to the Internet and get information (b) online newspapers and magazines can provide students with a wide variety of formal and colloquial English, (c) students practice reading and, at the same time, are informed, which is very motivating, (d) it is a refreshing change of routine. Reading online authentic material in the EFL class is a very productive exercise and, as the Internet offers an incredible amount of varied newspapers/magazines about almost any topic, the EFL teacher can perfectly avoid repetition. Christoph Neuberger, Jan Tonnemacher, Matthias Biebl, and Andre Duck in 1998 conducted the research about the future of online newspapers in Germany. According to them the research project "Online -- the future of newspapers?examined the producers, their products and the users of German online newspapers. The study was conducted on online editorial boards by standardized mail survey in 1997 of all 81 daily newspapers with a World Wide Web presence (return quote:

78%). Findings revealed that about two thirds of users prefer printed newspaper and just under a third prefer the online version (Beverleyand Zhiru, 2004).

In 1995 Poynter Institute symposium, online editors provided anecdotal evidence about their readers and content. Michael Gordon, the director of Interactive Studio at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, publishes Access Atlanta as well as other projects. Access Atlanta includes four automated wire services, searchable classified advertisements that are available one day earlier than the print version, and a search archive for the past five years, and links to the World Wide Web. Immediacy has proved to be a key in capturing users. Koon said he thinks the reader should get valuable, breaking news on the first available screen of an online service. "We were one of the first to put breaking news up (on the Web) in this fashion. But on many sites, you have to go through three or four levels to get news and information, and we think that's a mistake. Robert Picard provides some standard principles of media economics, and three concepts seem germane to the discussion of electronic newspapers. First, most of the newspapers remain free and should be examined in the context of nonpublic radio and television rather than making a comparison with traditional newspapers, where subscription receipts can account for 30 percent of gross income. Second, demand for advertiser access to audiences varies, depending on the medium. Third, the amount of money spent on all media remains relatively constant at 3 percent of total consumer spending (Nicholas, 1995).

A random-sample telephone survey was conducted in Austin, Texas, to investigate the public's response to local, regional, and national newspapers' print and online editions. Print readership was strongest among readers of that same newspaper's online edition. The substantial overlap of online and print readerships for the local daily suggests the potential of a complementary product relation. The print format was preferred-even among Internet users-when compared with the online edition, other things being equal (Hsiang and Lasorsa, 2002). Modern society is nearly unimaginable without the mass media: newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film, cable networks, internet, World Wide Web, etc. the mass media are contributing many things to many people and serve a variety of functions, depending upon the type and structure of political and economic system in which media function, prepare and stage of development of society, and keeping in view the interests and needs of specific individuals (Severin& Tankard, 1992). In the mass communication, uses and gratifications approach describes audience as active media users as opposed to passive receivers. In contrast to traditional media effects theories which focus on "what media do to people" it focus on "what people do with media" (Katz, 1959).

Uses and gratifications approach also postulates that the media compete with other information sources for audience's need satisfaction (Katz *et al.* 1974). As traditional mass media and new media continue to provide people with a wide range of media platforms and content, it is considered one of the most appropriate perspectives for investigating why audiences choose to be

exposed to different media channels (Hassan, 2009). The approach emphasizes audiences' choice by assessing their reasons for using a certain media to the disregard of others, as well as the various gratifications obtained from the media, based on individual social and psychological requirements (Severin and Tankard, 1997). As a broader perspective among communication researches, it provides a framework for understanding the processes by which media participants seek information or content selectively, commensurate with their needs and interests (Katz *et al.* 1974). Audience members then incorporate the content to fulfill their needs or to satisfy their interests (Lowery and Deflure, 1983). This Theory is relevant to the present study as the users or readers read the online newspapers to get information, to make opinion for entertainment and habitually so we can say that online newspapers fulfill the cognitive, affective and connective needs of the readers.

METHODOLOGY

Wimmer and Dominick (2003) write, "Surveys are now used in all areas of life. Businesses, consumer groups, politicians, and advertisers use them in their everyday decision-making process. This study was planned to identify to the Perception of University Students to Online Newspapers. Keeping in view the nature and requirements of present study, survey research procedure was adopted to explore and examine the nature of Perception of university students about online newspapers. Population is defined as, "the universe of events from which the sample is drawn (Reinard, 1994)". In the study, the universe is the male and female students of University of Sargodha. The first step in the research process is to specify the group of persons or unit of analysis to be studied. The researcher would like to study the entire population to strengthen the findings. But practically the researcher is unable to study the entire population. According to Babbie (1992), "a sample is a subset of population observed for purposes making inferences about the nature of the entire population itself" Reinard (1994) writes, "Sampling involves selecting events from a population because researcher rely on a portion of all data conclusion."The sample is an approximation of the whole and not be viewed as a whole in itself.

In present study researcher used two techniques of sampling a).Purposive b).Convenience. A purposive sample includes subjects or elements selected for specific characteristics or qualities and eliminates those who failed to meet these criteria. (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003). In present study researcher first of all selected all those people from University of Sargodha who use the internet and from this group those people were further selected which are exposed to online newspapers using Convenience sampling. Before the collection of data from the specified sample, a pre-test was taken in the homogenous population. It gives the researcher an opportunity to see weaknesses and flaws in the question design. Many serious grammatical and conceptual mistakes and errors can be avoided by taking time to make an adequate pre-test (Sonquist and Dunkelberg, 1977). In

the light of pretesting several changes were made in developing the final questionnaire. The format was revised and the order of the variables redesigned to facilitate the recording of sensitive and accurate responses. So on the basis of results of pre-test many changes were made to make questionnaire error-free and easily understandable by removing the ambiguities in the response categories. After removing all the errors from the questionnaire data collection was performed using purposive and convenience sampling technique. All questions were standardized to develop uniformity in asking questions and recording responses. Face to face procedure was adopted and all the respondents were contacted personally. After giving final shape to questionnaire one hundred male and female were interviewed. It took one month to complete survey. Some students refused to fill the questionnaire because they had no time to respond to lengthy questionnaire. Load shedding was the biggest problem that disturbed the flow of work very badly. "Scientific research involves the collection of a mass data. Its analysis involves the reduction of data from unmanageable summaries" (Babbie, 1992).

After collection, the data was reduced. Data reduction is the translation of information from one form to another to simplify problems of analysis, storage and dissemination to other scholars. Data for computer analysis generally consists of assigning a code number as compared to letters or words. Therefore, word and sentence responses were changed into numbers and stored in the computer. After the completion of the coding process, the next step was to apply statistical techniques in order to work out the findings. To meet this purpose MS Excel software was used. First, a separate date-feeding file was created in which separate and exclusive columns for each variable are automatically available. In this process, all the assigned numerical numbers to all responses were stored in the machine. For scientific enquiry in social sciences, the most effective and basic means are statistic and computer. Both are extensively used to such an extent that some of the scientific studies are not possible without their use. To obtain accurate results formulas in MS Excel were used to obtain accurate results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The internet as a new appliance of information technology has pervasive in our lives as most integral part of culture. It is used for variety of purposes and there are many people which spend a reasonable amount of time on internet specially students of university. The results of the study that with which frequency the students of university use the Internet are shown in Figure 1.1.



Figure 1.1: Frequency of using internet

For which purpose university students use internet an important question and the results of the study show that significant amount of university students use internet for searching purpose while surfing and research is another priority for which students use internet (see Figure 1.2).



Figure 1.2: Purpose of using internet



Figure 1.3: Frequency of exposure to online newspapers



Figure 1.4: Exposures to Online Newspapers

The findings of the study that how frequently university students are exposed to the Online Newspapers show that more than half of the students (57%) are exposed some times to the Online Newspapers while 32% are exposed to the online newspapers frequently and only 11% of the students are exposed very frequently to Online Newspapers as shown in Figure 1.3.Findings of the study that how often are students exposed to online Newspapers shows that more than half of the students are exposed to the online newspapers whenever they got time (53%) while equal amount of students said that they are exposed to Online Newspapers once in a week and twice in a week (19%) while only 9% of the study that what is purpose of reading Online Newspapers shows that a large amount of students read online newspapers to get information while very little amount of people read online newspapers to make opinion, for entertainment and read the newspapers habitually. The results of the study are shown in Figure 1.5.



Fig 1.5: Purpose of reading online newspapers



Figure 1.6: Level preferred



Figure 1.7: Language preferred

Figure 1.6 shows the percentage of readers' preference about national online newspapers, international newspapers or both online newspapers. Results show that 47% of the students read both newspapers while 38% read only national and only 15% read only International newspapers. Figure 1.7 shows that 48% of the students read both English and Urdu language newspapers while 28% read only English while 24% read only Urdu language newspapers. What content university students prefer to read in Online Newspapers is another important question, the findings of the study show that most of the students prefer to read news in Online Newspapers. Study also shows that along with news students also read columns and articles. Results further show that very small amount of students read editorials, features and advertisements in online newspapers. As shown in Figure 1.8.



Figure 1.8: Content Preferred to be read by University Students





Figure 1.10: Reason for preference

The result of the study shows that there are more students (54%) which prefer to read online newspapers than those (46%) who prefer to read printed newspapers. As shown in Figure 1.9. Figure 1.10 shows why students prefer to read Online Newspapers almost equal numbers of students prefer to read online Newspapers because they are easy to access (31%), because they are free of cost (31%) and because they are updated continuously (28%). The results of the study show that significant of students take much interest in reading political content, Some take much interest in sports, terrorism and showbiz content while students do not show much interest in crime content as shown in Table 1.

	Much	Somewhat	Little	No
	Interest	Interest	Interest	Interest
Political	45	21	26	8
Sports	39	31	21	9
Terrorism	36	36	15	13
Showbiz	36	25	25	14
Crime	32	20	35	13
Others	10	6	4	80

Table 1: Interest taken by students in different contents on online newspapers

This study was designed to explore and document the perception of Students of University of Sargodha about online Newspapers. For this purpose researcher developed the questionnaire after conducting pilot study, for study researcher took the sample of 300 students from University of Sargodha using purposive and convenience sampling technique. The results of the study shows that a large amount of students read Online newspapers to get information as shown in Figure 1.5. These findings also support the hypothesis of study that is; 'it is most likely that University students read online Newspapers to get information'. The findings of the study illustrate that Most of the students prefer to read News in Online Newspapers. The findings also support the hypothesis 'it is most likely that University students are exposed to Online Newspapers to read News preferably'. The results of the study describe that significant amount of students of University pay less attention to crime content (see Table 1). This result matches the study hypothesis which is; 'it is most likely that University students pay less attention to crime content. Students pay much attention to Political and sports content'.

The result of the study narrates that more students prefer to read online newspapers over printed newspapers. As shown in Figure 1.9. These findings contradict the hypothesis that is 'it is most likely that University students prefer to read the Printed newspapers than Online Newspapers'. According to findings Students prefer to read online newspapers over printed newspapers as compared to printed newspapers. Figure 1.6 shows that there are more students which prefer to read both national and international Online Newspapers. These findings oppose the study hypothesis; 'It is most likely that University students prefer to read national online newspapers'.

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