

# Readers' perception and marketing orientation of newspapers in Kerala- An Empirical analysis

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**Abstract** - Newspapers play an important role in the social and cultural upliftment of the society. In a State like Kerala, the literacy rate is very high and reading a newspaper becomes a part of the daily life of every Keralite. The main sources of income of a newspaper organization are advertisement revenue and income from circulation. The volume of advertisement revenue is directly related to the readership and circulation of the newspaper. The circulation of a newspaper is related to the marketing orientation efforts of the newspaper organization. The success of the marketing orientation activities of an organization depends on the readers' attitude towards it. Analysis of the readers' perception towards various marketing orientation activities would direct the newspaper organization in framing more effective marketing oriented activities.

**Key words:** *Marketing orientation, readers' perception, newspaper, readers' attitude.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Newspaper industry is a part of the Media and Entertainment industry in India and it is one of the fast growing industries in India. One of the major features of media industry is that it mainly depends on advertising as its major source of income. In olden days News paper is considered as a tool to inform the daily happenings to the public. A strong press is very important for the preservation of democracy. It is considered as the fourth estate of our nation. Newspapers have a role to shape the present society and it always reflects the community that it covers. Now there are different ways collect and disseminate news, like online newspapers, social network, blogs, new features of mobile phones etc. (Meikle & Guy, 2011, Pew research centre, 2010)

According to UNESCO, a daily general interest newspaper is a publication devoted primarily to recording news of current affairs, politics, etc; which is published at least four times a week. A non daily general-interest newspaper is defined as a publication devoted primarily to recording news of current events, public affairs, international affairs politics etc; which is published three times or less a week. (UNESCO, 1989)

## MARKETING ORIENTATION

Marketing is a discipline which is universally applicable to both profit and non – profit organization. It is stated that firms that are more market oriented will be more successful in their market, and others are not (Greenley, 1995).

Marketing orientation includes all the activities undertaken by an organization to market their product or service. Generally it includes, customer/reader orientation, co-

ordination and communication, competitor orientation, content orientation, marketing mix orientation and technology orientation.(Ottuparammal, Vinesh 2016)

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Harikrishnan (2011)** conducted his study with the objective to develop a 360 degree business model for newspaper industry, by integrating advertising, circulation and reporting. The respondents include seven leading newspaper publishers in India, Advertising agencies and Newspaper readers, both online and offline. According to this study, majority of the respondent was of the view that the best and foremost strategy of the newspaper for the future is looking at new platforms and new ways of delivering content.

**Jeffery (1997)** stated that the Indian language newspaper industry is going to become a vigorous part of Indian capitalism. He also argued that it is always dependent on advertising which is considered as an essential part of capitalism. He divided his article into two sections. In the first section he tried to discuss the changes in printing technology, and rapid growth of circulation in Indian language newspapers. In the second section, he dealt with the growth of advertising.

**Kohli, Vanitha (2013)** discussed the various problems and the prospects of Media and Entertainment industry in India. According to her, Media and Entertainment industry includes Print, Television, Film, Music, Radio and digital. Among the different elements of Media and Entertainment Industry, print is the most important one. She also said that the inability to deal with new challenges in the Industry like standardising tools for buying and selling, lobbying for

regulatory changes, agreement on content etc are the major problems in the Indian print media industry.

**Ray (2005)** remarkably noted that there is a need to protect and promote small and medium newspapers and he put forward a number of recommendations to encourage small newspapers. It includes additional advertisement support to these papers by the govt., providing newsprint at a cheaper rate, supplying machinery and other equipments at a concessional rate, and quick clearance of advertising bill.

**Campbell (2004)**, has opined that market oriented journalism is increasing all over the world, especially among the developing nations. The critics of market driven journalism says that it is a negative approach, and it lowering the standard of journalism by giving more considerations to the paid advertisers and profit oriented owners. In the true sense, the role of newspaper is to communicate the ultimate truth and facts without any prejudice and bias. But, in most of the cases, the mass audience is interested in this kind of market oriented journalism

**Chandra & Wexler (2008)**, stated that Mergers in the two sided industries are totally different from the mergers of traditional industries. In their study they were analyzing the methods adopted by two sided industries like newspapers, to balance the interest of two different groups of consumers, say readers and advertisers. They were also tried to study the economic effect of mergers. They find that the increased concentration does not led to higher prices either for circulation or for advertising.

**Chyi (2012)** stated that recent economic recession caused a substantial decline in advertising revenue of newspapers, and as a result some major newspapers in United States have renewed their efforts to find alternative revenue models. For that purpose they conducted a survey on paying intent on different newspapers formats and the amount they are willing to pay. It showed that the print edition outperform other formats in terms of usage, preference, and paying intent and is perceived as the most valuable platform.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The newspaper industry is a very big industry in India with lot of problems, issues and challenges. In olden days, newspaper is the only option in front of person to get updated the latest information and views regarding various social issues. But, nowadays, there are other options to the general public to get information. It compels the newspaper companies to undertake research to identify the expectation of readers from printed newspapers. Unfortunately most of the newspaper companies in Kerala have failed to realize the fact.

As far as the newspaper industry in Kerala is concerned, organizations are undertaking a lot of activities to increase

the circulation of newspaper. The whole activities undertaken by an organization to improve the circulation of newspaper come under the head marketing orientation efforts of the organization. The marketing orientation activities of different newspaper companies are influenced by the readers' perception about the newspaper. This study is an attempt to examine the readers' perception about a newspaper and the factors influencing the buying of a newspaper.

### Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study

1. To identify the readers' perception about the news paper as a medium of communication.
2. To examine different factors influencing the buying decision of a newspaper.

### Hypothesis

1. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference in the time spend by newspaper readers on the basis of reader category

## III. METHODOLOGY AND DATA BASE

To study the objectives set in, it makes use of both secondary and data primary data.

### Sources of Secondary Data

Secondary data related to the study have been collected from journals, books and reports like Journal of marketing, Business Today, Economic and political weekly, RBI Bulletin, WAN- IFRA World Press Trends, Annual reports of Ministry of information and broadcasting, and various websites.

### Sources of Primary Data

The study is mainly based on primary data. One of the reasons for depending more on primary data is that the non availability of secondary data. The primary data were collected from different newspaper readers.

### Selection of Sample Frame

To evaluate the readers' perception about the marketing orientation of the newspaper companies, 150 newspaper readers were selected at random from the four sample districts(Kozhikode, Ernakulam, Kottayam and Thiruvanthapuram) by using convenient sampling method, subject to the fulfillment of the inclusion criteria such as gender, income, age, education, occupation, area of residence etc. Thus the total sample size of the study comes to 600 newspaper readers. These samples were selected from both rural and urban areas. Based on the qualification, respondents were classified into up to SSLC, Plus Two, Graduate, Post graduates, and Professional qualifications. On the basis of occupation, population is categorized into students, govt. employees, self employed and professionals.

**Table. 1 Sample frame of newspaper readers**

District	Location		Total
Kozhikode	Rural	75	150
	Urban	75	
Ernakulam	Rural	75	150
	Urban	75	
Kottayam	Rural	75	150
	Urban	75	
Thiruvananthapuram	Rural	75	150
	Urban	75	
<b>Total</b>			<b>600</b>

Source: Primary data

In order to collect the required data from the respondent, a well structured interview schedule was developed. The independent variables used for the analysis are age, sex, religion, reader category, place of residence, time spend for reading newspapers etc. The various dependent variables are reliability of news, brand name of the newspaper, price of the news paper, availability of the newspaper, secular stand of the newspaper, quality of the printing paper, news coverage, colour and layout of the newspaper, political affiliation of the newspaper, font size and style of the newspaper, preferences of reading, elements of marketing mix (price, promotion, product, distribution) etc. The statistical tools used include mean score, standard deviation, one way ANOVA, Brown-Forsythe Test of Equality of means etc.

**Profile of the respondents**

The following table shows the profile of the respondents covering details like age, gender, religion, reader group, qualification, place of residence and number of newspapers subscribing.

**Table.2 Distribution of Profile of the respondents**

Sl. No.	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1.	<b>Age</b>			
	15-30	159	26.5	26.5
	31-45	314	52.3	78.8
	46-66	127	21.2	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
2.	<b>Gender</b>			
	Male	432	72.0	72.0
	Female	168	28.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
3.	<b>Religion</b>			
	Hindu	297	49.5	49.5
	Muslim	126	21.0	70.5
	Christian	177	29.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
4.	<b>Reader group</b>			

	Student	81	13.5	13.5
	Govt. servant	172	28.7	42.2
	Self employed	102	17.0	59.2
	Professional	61	10.2	69.3
	Pvt. employed	184	30.7	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
5.	<b>Qualification</b>			
	Up to SSLC	17	2.8	2.8
	Plus two	94	15.7	18.5
	Degree/Diploma	314	52.3	70.8
	Post graduation	114	19.0	89.8
	Professional	61	10.2	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>	
6.	<b>Place of residence</b>			
	Rural	300	50.0	50.0
	Urban	300	50.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
7.	<b>No. of newspapers subscribing</b>			
	One	501	83.5	83.5
	Two	99	16.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: Primary data

**IV. READERS' PERCEPTION ABOUT NEWSPAPER**

It is very necessary to identify readers' perception about the newspapers as a medium of communication. Though there are different variables which reveal the perception, a few of them were taken into consideration. It includes time spend in reading newspapers, motivation to read newspapers, regularity in reading newspapers, habit of reading various news items etc.

**Time spend in reading newspapers**

In the competitive world, there is war among the Medias to attract the readers' time. An analysis is done to know the average time spend by readers in reading newspapers in minutes on the basis of reader category and age of the readers. The following table reveals the average time spend by readers on category wise.

**Table 3 Mean score distribution of time spend on the basis of reader category**

Reader category	N	Mean time	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Student	81	36.48	12.079	1.342
Govt servant	172	39.27	14.456	1.102
Self employed	102	36.81	13.530	1.340
Professional	61	36.89	16.360	2.095
Pvt employment	184	38.51	16.631	1.226
Total	600	38.00	14.918	.609

Source: Primary data

The table reveals that the average time spends by readers in the group of students, self employed, and professionals are 36.48, 36.81 and 36.89 minutes respectively. In the case of govt. servants, the mean time is 39.27with a standard

deviation of 14.456, whereas people belong to the privately employed group is 38.51.

The following hypothesis is set to test the significance of difference in mean score.

H0: There is no significant difference in the time spend by newspaper readers on the basis of reader category.

The Analysis of Variance shows the following result.

**Table.4 Test of mean time on the basis of reader category**

ANOVA					
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	731.969	4	182.992	.821	.512
Within Groups	132568.031	595	222.803		
Total	133300.000	599			

The above table shows p value of 0.512, which is not significant even at 5 per cent level of significance, then accepting the null hypothesis. It means that there is no significant difference in the time spends by newspaper readers for reading newspapers on the basis of the reader category.

**Motivation to read newspapers**

In olden days, newspapers were considered as the only medium available for dissemination of information. But,

now the situation is totally changed. A number of modern medias have emerged to the knowledge dissemination like, TV, internet, mobile phones etc. In this present scenario, it is necessary to know the motive behind the reading of a news paper by each reader. The following table shows the results.

**Table. 5 Opinion about motivation to read newspapers**

Motivation	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Search specific information	180	30.0	30.0
Leisure reason	49	8.2	38.2
Updated news	51	8.5	46.8
As a habit	320	53.3	100
Total	600	100.0	

Source: Primary data

It is clear from the table that 53.3 per cent of the people reading newspaper as a habit, and 30 per cent of the respondents using newspapers for the search of specific information. The purchase of newspapers for leisure purpose is on 8.2 per cent, while 8.5 per cent readers buying it to update news.

**Number of newspapers reading regularly**

The following table shows the relationship between age of the respondents and the number of newspapers reading regularly.

**Table 6. Age and number of newspapers reading regularly**

			Age Category			Total
			15 -30	31-45	46-66	
No. of newspapers read regularly	One	Number	104	165	64	333
		% within Age Category	65.4%	52.5%	50.4%	55.5%
	Two	Number	51	132	58	241
		% within Age Category	32.1%	42.0%	45.7%	40.2%
	More than two	Number	4	17	5	26
		% within Age Category	2.5%	5.4%	3.9%	4.3%
Total	Number	159	314	127	600	
	% within Age Category	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Source: Primary data

It is seen from the Table that, among the samples considered for the purpose of the study, 55.5 per cent of respondents read only one newspaper; 40.2 per cent read 2 newspapers and the remaining 4.3 per cent respondents read more than two newspapers. Among the respondents belong to the age group of 15 -30, 65.4 per cent read only one newspaper; 32.1 per cent read two newspapers and the only 2.5 per cent respondents reading more than 2 newspapers. In the age group of 31 – 45, 52.5 per cent respondents read only one newspaper, 42 per cent read two newspapers and only 5.4 per cent respondents read more than two newspapers. As far as the respondents belong to the age group of 46 -66, it is followed that 50.4 per cent respondents read only one newspaper regularly; 45.7 per cent respondents read two newspapers and the remaining 3.9 per cent respondents read only more than two newspapers. It is observed that most of the respondents read only one newspaper, irrespective of their age.

**Habit of reading different news items in the newspaper**

In a traditional newspaper, news items are classified in different categories and presented in different pages depending on the editorial policy of the organization. There are total of fourteen news items were included in the interview schedule and the responses were analysed by using a binomial test. The binomial test was used to analyse the response in the dichotomous questions. The following table shows the results of binomial test.

**Table.7 Binomial Test on habit of reading different news items**

Statements	Group	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
Like to read editorial in a newspaper	Group 1	Yes	199	.33	.50	.000*
	Group 2	No	401	.67		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read sports news	Group 1	Yes	406	.68	.50	.000*
	Group 2	No	194	.32		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read classified ad	Group 1	No	373	.62	.50	.000*
	Group 2	yes	227	.38		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read display ad	Group 1	No	366	.61	.50	.000*
	Group 2	yes	234	.39		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read investigative report	Group 1	yes	295	.49	.50	.713
	Group 2	No	305	.51		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read business news	Group 1	No	405	.68	.50	.000*
	Group 2	yes	195	.32		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read political news	Group 1	yes	363	.61	.50	.000*
	Group 2	No	237	.39		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read local news	Group 1	yes	543	.91	.50	.000*
	Group 2	No	57	.09		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read entertainment news	Group 1	yes	319	.53	.50	.131
	Group 2	No	281	.47		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read international news	Group 1	yes	263	.44	.50	.003*
	Group 2	No	337	.56		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read cultural news	Group 1	yes	292	.49	.50	.540
	Group 2	No	308	.51		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read education news	Group 1	yes	187	.31	.50	.000*
	Group 2	No	413	.69		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read student supplements	Group 1	No	457	.76	.50	.000*
Like to read student supplements	Group 1	No	457	.76	.50	.000*
	Group 2	yes	143	.24		
	Total		600	1.00		
Like to read employment news	Group 1	No	285	.48	.50	.236
	Group 2	yes	315	.52		
	Total		600	1.00		

Source: Primary data

\*Significant at 5 per cent level of significance

From the above table it is very clear that, 67 per cent of the respondent do not read editorial of a newspaper, but at the same time, 68 per cent of the respondents are reading sports news in a newspaper, and they are statistically significant ( $P=000<0.05$ ). In the case of classified advertisement and display advertisement, 62 and 61 per cent of the respondents do not read these items. As a whole, all the items published in the newspaper are significant except investigative report, entertainment news, cultural news and employment news.

**Importance of various factors while buying a newspaper**

There are a number of factors and features, which influence the buying of a newspaper by a potential reader of newspaper. For the purpose of analysis, a total of eleven

factors are selected. The importance given to these factors are identified and ranked on the basis of the mean values and standard deviations. The following table shows the details of the analysis.

**Table 8. Ranking of various factors while selecting a newspaper**

Factors/features	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Importance of reliability of news	4.6100	.59595	1
Importance of brand name	3.9767	.95620	5
Importance of price	3.2717	.85190	9
Importance of the availability of newspaper	4.0750	.79189	4

Importance of secular stand of the newspaper	4.1150	.76774	3
Importance of quality of printing paper	3.8083	.86381	7
Importance of the news coverage	4.4800	.69311	2
Importance of colour and lay out	3.6083	.79958	8
Importance of offers and gifts	3.0450	.72837	11
Importance of political affiliation of the newspaper	3.2383	.86763	10
Importance of font size of the news paper	3.8317	.81102	6

Source: Primary data

As per the mean table of the different factors influencing the purchase of newspaper, importance to reliability of news has the highest mean score of 4.6100 with a standard deviation of 0.59595, which got the first rank in terms of importance. Importance to the news coverage has a mean value of 4.4800 with a standard deviation of 0.69311, which comes to the second position. In the order of importance, the third factor is secular stand of the newspaper, with a mean score of 4.1150. Availability of news papers at the right time and place is the fourth factor, which recorded a mean score of 4.0750. The mean score of brand name is 3.9767 with a standard deviation of 0.95620 occupies the fifth rank as regards importance. The mean score of the Font size of the newspaper, quality of printing paper and colour & lay out are 3.8317, 3.8083 and 3.6083 respectively, and their rank positions in the order of importance are sixth, seventh and eighth. The mean value of the factor price is 3.2717, and that of political affiliation is 3.2383. The least importance is goes to the factor offers and gifts.

### V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The following are the important findings from the study.

1. It is identified that the reader category which spends the highest time to read newspaper is the govt. servants. The average time spends to read by the group of students, self employed, and professionals are 36.48, 36.81 and 36.89 minutes respectively, whereas people belong to the privately employed group is 38.51. It is statistically proved that there is no significant difference in the time spend by newspaper readers to read newspaper on the basis of the reader category ( $P=0.512>0.05$ ).
2. It is found that the readers in the age group of 15 -30 is spending least time in reading newspapers (34.97mts). But in the case of readers in the age category of 31 -45 and 46 -66, it is 39, and 39.33 minutes respectively. Analysis of variance reveals that there is significant difference in the time spends on reading newspapers on the basis of age of the newspaper readers ( $P=0.011<0.05$ ). It also reveals that young readers are

spending comparatively less time for reading news papers.

3. The most important factor, which is to be considered while purchasing a newspaper, is reliability of news (Rank 1). The second and third ranks go to news coverage and secular stand of the newspaper. Availability of newspaper at the right time and place, and the brand name of the newspaper is the fourth and fifth important factors. The least important factor while purchasing a newspaper is offers and gifts of the newspapers.

### VI. SUGGESTIONS

The following are the important suggestions of the study

1. It is revealed that the young readers are not spending much time to read traditional printed newspapers. Therefore newspaper organizations should take necessary steps to attract the young generations towards the print media by incorporating various items interested by the youth.
2. The major source of revenue of a newspaper is its advertising revenue. It directly depends on the circulation of newspapers. Therefore every newspaper, as far as possible, should give more importance to establish new editions in unexplored areas. It will help them to increase the circulation and thereby readership.
3. Readers are giving more importance to the reliability, coverage and secular stand of the newspaper than the offers and gifts. So the newspaper organization should not compromise on the reliability of the news items, and should ensure a secular stand on various issues.

### VII. CONCLUSION

The newspaper industry is an important industry in Kerala, in terms of income generation and employment opportunities. The major sources of revenue of a newspaper organization are revenue from circulation and revenue from advertisement. Both the sources of revenue were directly related to the readership of newspaper. The readership of a newspaper is related to marketing orientation efforts undertaken by the newspaper organization. The study reveals that readers' were moderately marketing oriented and a better understanding of the readers' perception about the newspaper will help the organization to frame an effective marketing orientation strategy.

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