

News Reading Habits of Women, Especially of the Political Beat: A Study on English Daily Newspapers

Shreshtha Manbasi^a Angela Nayak^b

^aMedia & Communications, Hope For Today, Hyderabad, India

^bAssistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication at St. Francis College for Women, Begumpet, Hyderabad, India

Abstract

The present study “**News Reading Habits of Women, especially of the Political Beat: A Study on English Daily Newspapers**” is warranted to gain understanding of the news reading habits of women, especially of the political beat, against the backdrop of the English Daily newspapers. The major objectives of the study are to examine and evaluate news reading habits of women, especially of the political beat and why. The Questionnaire Method was used for the study. Respondents included women between the age group of 18 and above from Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The study revealed that women spend a considerable amount of time reading newspapers; they also spend a considerable amount of time reading specifically the political beat; even if not in-depth, at least for want of ‘awareness’ at its most; and are impacted by political news.

KEYWORDS-Women. Young Adults. Broadsheet. Supplement. Scan. Skim. In-depth.

Introduction

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. With a decline in their status from the ancient to medieval times, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have held high offices including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Leader of the Opposition, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers and Governors.

Women in India now participate fully in areas such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology, etc. Indira Gandhi, who served as Prime Minister of India for an aggregate period of fifteen years, is the world's longest serving woman Prime Minister. The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), and equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d)).

In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)), and also allows for provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. (Article 42).

Literacy Rate of Women in India

Education is regarded as a key instrument for the empowerment of women. Education changes their worldview, improves their chances of employment, facilitates their participation in public life, and also influences their fertility. Several studies indicate that

educated women have, on an average, fewer children and they take good care of their socialization.

Although considerable progress has been made with regard to literacy and education, the overall picture still remains unfavorable to women in India. At the beginning of the 20th century, the country as a whole was largely illiterate with just 5.3 per cent of the population counted as literate. Only 0.60 per cent women were then literate. In 1951, the first Census taken four years after independence, the picture was not much better.

The female literacy rate stood at 7.93 per cent, as compared to 24.95 per cent for men. The 2001 Census suggests a 65.38 per cent literacy rate for India, with 75.85 per cent for males, and 54.16 per cent for females. Literacy is not evenly spread throughout India. There are 12 states and Union territories that are below the national average for female literacy.

The states of Bihar and Jharkhand have the lowest female literacy rates (33.57 and 39.38%, respectively). These data suggest that nearly half of India's female population is still illiterate. This is not a small number. A massive programme is needed to make nearly 240 million women literate.

It is also to be noted that most of these women are located in rural and tribal areas. Another point to remember is that most of the women included in the literate category have not had education beyond the primary level. The number of women goes down as we move to higher levels of education. However, women are to be found in all professions, including medicine and engineering

In this regard, the following programmes undertaken by the government are:

1. MahilaSamakhya: Started in 1989, this scheme uses education as a tool for empowerment. This scheme is being carried out in 8,000 villages in 53 districts in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh.

2. SarvaShikshaAbhiyan: This is a campaign to universal primary education, as part of the international programme of Education for All (EFA). It is inspired by UNESCO's regional programme called APPEAL – Asia Pacific Programme of Education for All.

In addition, there are other programmes of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, which also cover women's education. These include Operation Blackboard, Non-Formal Education, District Primary Education Programme, National Literacy Mission, NavodayaVidyalaya, and Vocational Education.

In the state of Rajasthan, which has low rates of literacy among rural and tribal women, an innovative programme called LokJumbish was launched with financial assistance from the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) in 1992. This programme was, however, closed down in 2004.

Telangana Literacy rate

According to the 2011 census, Telangana's literacy rate is 66.46%. Male literacy and female literacy are 74.95% and 57.92% respectively. Hyderabad district is leading with 80.96% and Mahabubnagar district at the bottom with 56.06% in Telangana state.

Importance of Political News in India

Compared with other democratic countries, India has a large number of political parties. It has been estimated that over 200 parties were formed after India became independent in 1947.

Some features of the political parties in India are that the parties are generally woven around their leaders, the leaders actively playing a dominant role, and that the role of leadership can be transferred, thus tending to take a dynastic route. The two main parties in India are the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Indian National Congress, Indian National Congress dominates Indian politics. On the left-right political spectrum, the Indian National Congress is a welfare-heavy, centre-left party, whereas the BJP is a fiscally conservative, Right-wing party.

Review of Literature

The way people engage in reading—be them books, magazines, novels—have been a subject of interest right from early times and so many researchers attempted to study such reading patterns. In the beginning scholars from the disciplines of Sociology and Social Psychology conducted studies related to media effects and influence. The development of research methods and tools in these areas paved the way for media research.

Where Men and Women Differ in Following the News

Pew Research Center (6th February, 2008). The study examines that a look at the public's news interests over the past year shows continuing differences between women and men in the types of news stories that they follow very closely. Women consistently express more interest than men in stories about weather, health and safety, natural disasters and tabloid news. Men are more interested than women in stories about international affairs, Washington news and sports. At the same time, men and women often express comparable levels of interest in the top news stories of the day. For example, the presidential campaign attracted only modestly greater interest among men than among women. In five weekly news interest surveys in 2008, 37% of men and 32% of women said they followed campaign news very closely.

News Paper Reading Habits among the Students of Arts Colleges in Madurai, Tamil Nadu: A Study

K.S.M. Swaminathan (June 2017). In this paper it has been discussed about the newspaper reading habits among the Arts College students in Madurai. A total of 220 questionnaires were administered to the students, and 174 were received the response rate was 79%. From the analysis it was discovered that majority of respondents reading newspaper daily (66.09%) and time spent less than 30 minutes are 92 (52.87%) using library for newspaper reading.

Political Visuals Dominate in the Vernacular News Papers: A Content Analysis of Front Page Political Visuals of Leading Indian Newspapers

Pradeep Kumar Tewari (26th October, 2014). This study examines the representation of political visuals from the leading English Newspapers and vernacular Newspapers in

2011 on the front page. In the process of this study, 355 political visuals out of the 2,394 total visuals from the 336 front pages (editions) of eight selected newspapers of Chandigarh editions were examined.

The results of the study indicated that vernacular newspapers published more number of political visuals as compared to English newspapers in India and there was a greater significance attached to visuals in Language press/vernacular newspapers.

Is Print Readers Declining? A Survey of Indian Online Newspaper Readers

Dr. Pradeep Tewari (10th July, 2016). An online study was conducted among 3,183 online newspaper readers of India. The study reveals that majority of the online news consumers (90 percent) were still reading printed newspapers. It was found that online newspapers have not much affected the print newspaper circulation. But print has start losing young readers. As per the study 18 percent of 15-20 age group, 12 percent of 20-30 age group and 8 percent of 30-40 age group readers have reduced their interest to read print newspapers, they prefer to read online newspapers. The displacement effect of online media is very low. The older generation above 50 years read both the media equally, while 3 percent readers of 40-50 age groups have reduced use of print newspaper. While gender wise young male (15-20) readers have reduced interest on print media more than women readers, 21 percent by male and 14 percent by women readers. Popup ads are the most irritating thing on the online newspapers

Women know less about politics than men worldwide

Economic & Social Research Council (2nd June, 2013). The study reveals that women know less about politics regardless of gender equality. The report focused on ten nations, both developed and developing, where men and women were asked questions about domestic and international news. Despite the diversity of the ten sample countries – Australia, Canada, Colombia, Greece, Italy, Japan, Korea, Norway, the UK, and the US – women answered fewer questions correctly than men in every country.

Age is also a factor in women's interest in political affairs. The study found that women acquire political knowledge much later in their lives than men, regardless of a country's gender equality status. This could be because women have less time to keep up with current affairs in their 30s and 40s as they spend most of their leisure time looking after family and doing housework. Meanwhile, men in advanced democracies steadily acquire political knowledge as they grow older.

Aim and Objectives

The primary aim of the study is to examine and evaluate the news reading habits of women, especially of the political beat in English daily newspapers, for which the study was undertaken with the following objectives:

- 1) To examine news reading habits of women.
- 2) To examine and evaluate their approach in reading the newspapers.
- 3) To assess their choice of reading various news beats.
- 4) To especially examine political news reading habits of women.
- 5) To examine and evaluate their approach in reading the political news beat.

Significance of the Study

Women are voracious readers, they like to read novels, many other books and often enjoy it. But do they read newspapers; if yes, how often; what is their approach to reading

newspapers, and do they especially read the political news beat; if yes, how often and their approach to it—i.e., their reading patterns and whether they find it interesting/important or not and why.

There is a dearth of empirical lists on such news (and political news) reading habits and patterns women follow, although extensive research has been undertaken on why women read more than men; how women know less about politics than men, etc. For this purpose, the present study “News Reading Habits of Women, especially of the Political Beat: A Study on English Daily Newspapers” is undertaken; it is warranted to gain understanding of the news reading habits of women, especially of the political beat against the backdrop of English daily newspapers.

The major objectives of the study are to examine and evaluate news reading habits of women, especially of the political beat and why.

Methodology

A survey was conducted to study the news reading habits of women, especially the political beat in English daily newspapers. Numbers of respondents were 50 women between the age group of 18 and above. The survey sample included college-going students, employed, self-employed women and homemakers. All respondents were from the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, Telangana. The tool of Data Collection was Questionnaires.

Limitations

The research is limited to the cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The respondents involved are between the age group of 18 to 69 years only. Since this study seeks only to evaluate the news reading habits and especially of Political news beat among women, in-depth qualitative methods of research were not adopted. The findings have to be understood against these limitations.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Figure 1.1: Indicating in total percentage, age of women.

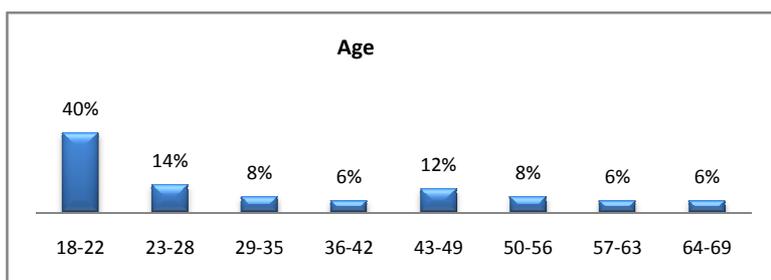


Figure 1.2: Indicating in total percentage, occupation of women.

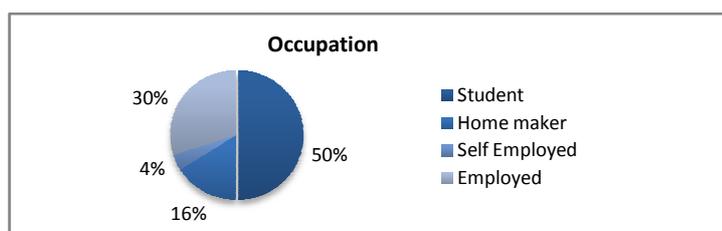
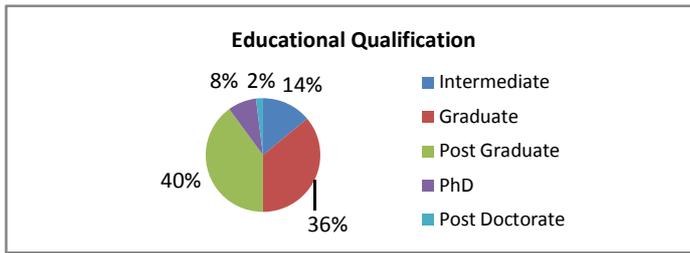
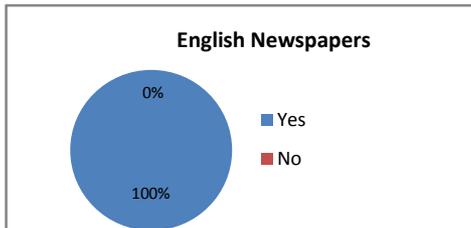


Figure 1.3: Indicating in total percentage, educational qualification of women.



In total, 40% of the respondents were between the age group of 18-22, followed by 14% 23-28, 12% 43-49, 8% each for 29-35 and 50-56, and 6% each for 36-42, 57-63 and 64-69, indicating that most of the respondents are between age group of 18-22 and 23-28 and can be categorised as young adults. Next, in total, 50% of the respondents were students, followed by 30% employed, 16% homemaker, and 4% self-employed, indicating that most of the respondents are students followed by employees. Further, in total, 40% of the respondents were Post Graduates, followed by 36% graduates, 14% intermediate, 8% PhD and 2% Post Doctorate, indicating that all the respondents are educated.

Figure 2: Indicating in total percentage, women who read English newspapers.



In total, 100% of the respondents read English daily newspapers, indicating that all the respondents read English daily newspapers.

Figure 3.1: Indicating in total percentage, how often women read newspapers.

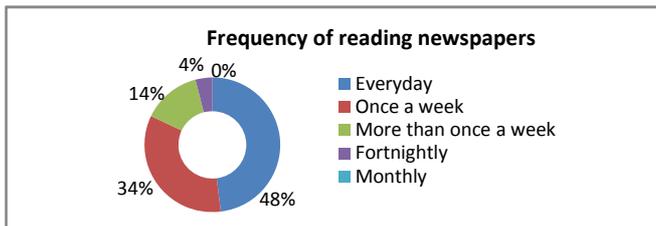


Figure 3.2: Indicating in total percentage, time of day women most read newspapers.

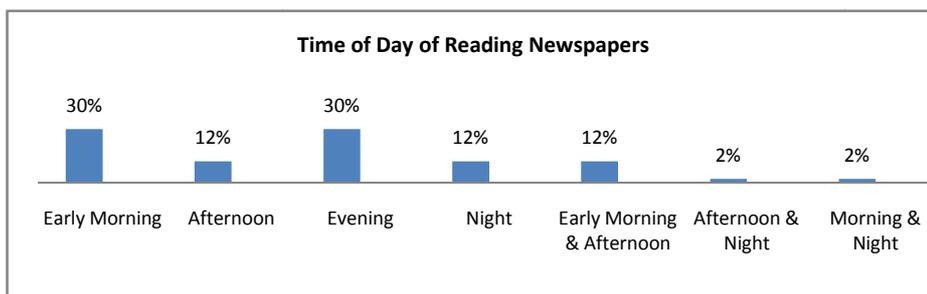
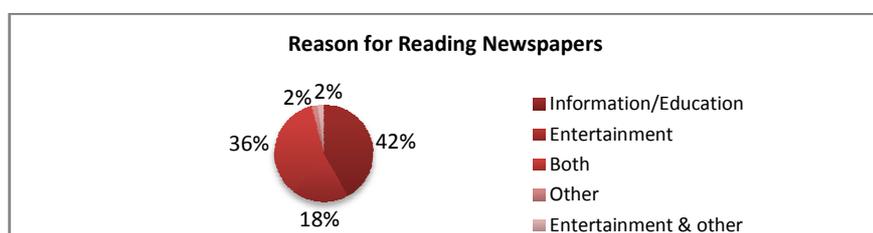
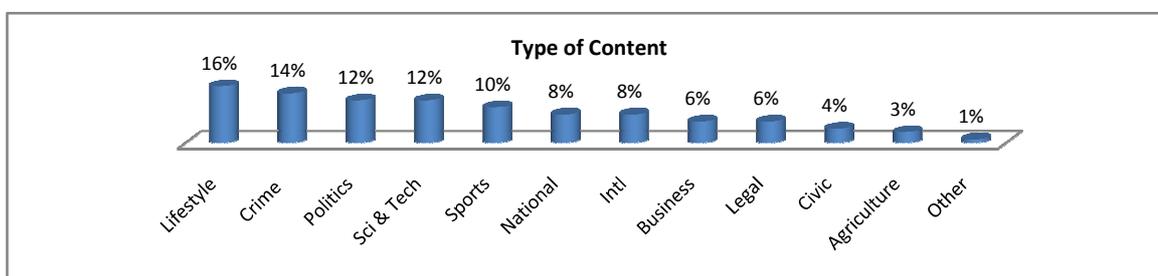


Figure 3.3: Indicating in total percentage the main reason why women read newspapers.



In total, 48% of the respondents read newspapers Everyday, 34% read Once a Week, 14% More than Once a Week, 4% Fortnightly and nil Monthly, indicating that most women read newspapers Everyday. Next, in total, 30% of the respondents each read at Early Morning and Evening, followed by 12% each at Afternoon, Night and Early morning & Afternoon and 2% each Afternoon & Night and Morning & Night, indicating that most women read newspapers at Early Morning and Evening times. Further, in total, 42% of the respondents said they read newspapers for Information/Education purpose, followed by 36% for Entertainment, 18% for both Information/Education and entertainment purposes and 2% each for Other and Entertainment & Other purposes, indicating that most women read newspapers for Information/Education and Entertainment purposes.

Figure 4: Indicating in total percentage, type of content most read by women.



In total, 16% of the respondents mostly read Lifestyle related news followed by 14% Crime, 12% each for Politics and Science & Technology (Sci & Tech), 10% Sports, 8% each National and International (Intl), 6% each Business and Legal, 4% Civic, 3%

Agriculture, and 1% Other, indicating that women read Lifestyle content more than any other, followed by Crime, and Politics and Science and Technology news content.

Figure 5.1: Indicating in total percentage, order of reading broadsheet and supplement by women.

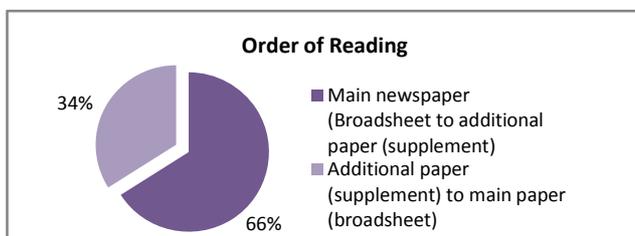
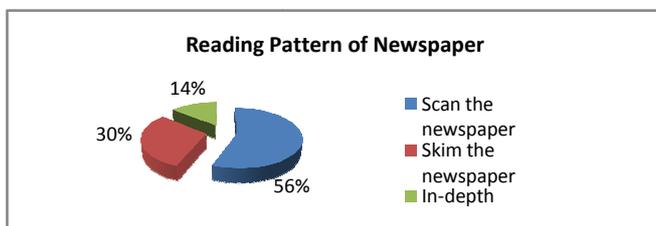


Figure 5.2: Indicating in total percentage, reading pattern of women.



In total, 66% of the respondents read the main newspaper (broadsheet) first and then the additional newspaper (supplement), and 34% of the respondents read the additional paper (supplement) before the main paper (broadsheet), indicating that most women read the broadsheet first and then the supplement. Next, in total, 56% of the respondents scan the newspaper meaning they read headlines and photos, 30% of the respondents skim through the newspaper meaning they read briefly points of the content and 14% in-depth, meaning they read the news in detail, indicating that most women scan through the newspaper.

Figure 6.1: Indicating in total percentage, political news read by women.

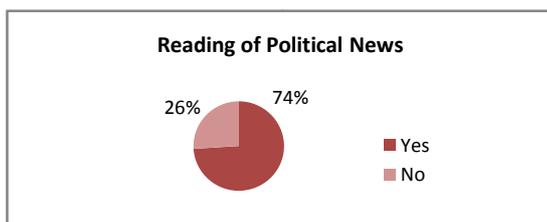


Figure 6.2: Indicating in total percentage, frequency of reading political news by women.

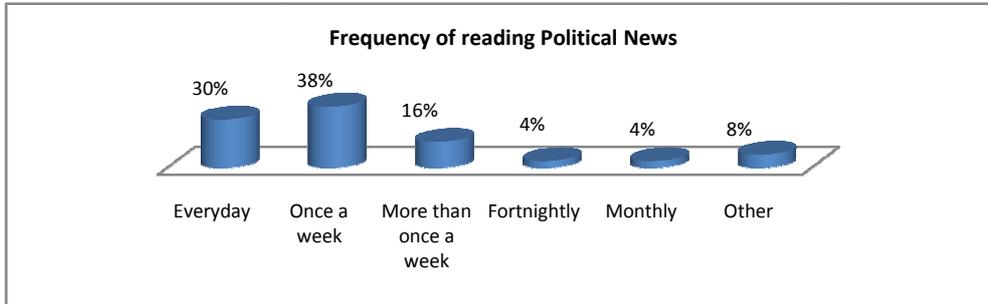


Figure 6.3: Indicating in total percentage, factors that motivate women to read political news.

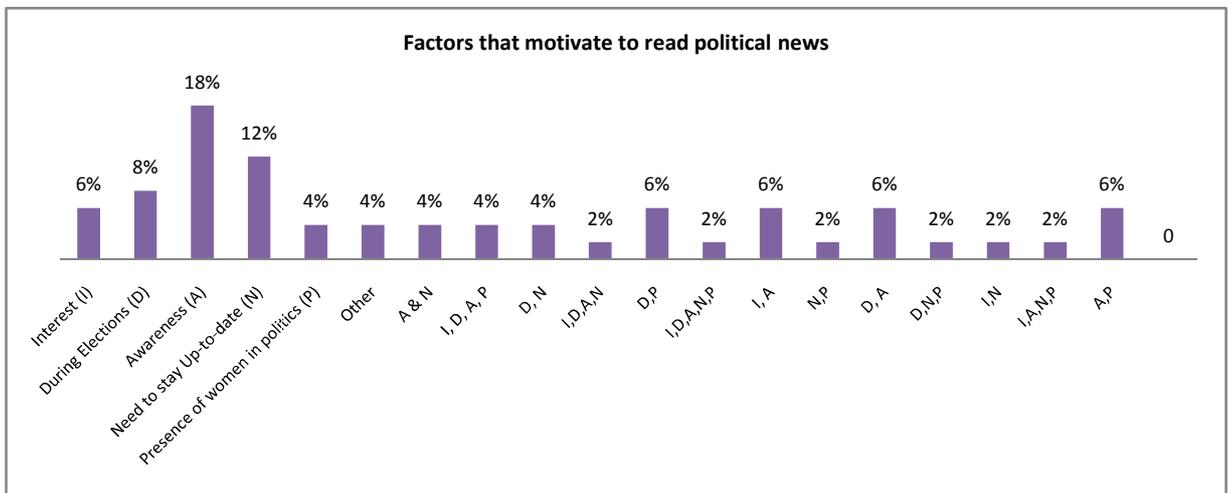
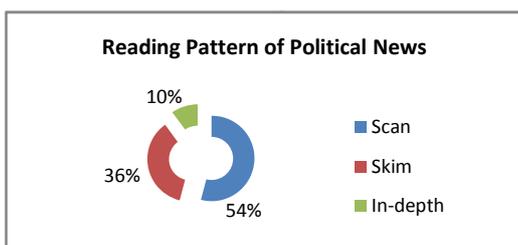


Figure 6.4: Indicating in total percentage, reading pattern of political news by women.



In total, 74% of the respondents read political news while 26% didn't read political news, indicating that that most women read political news. Next, in total, 38% of the respondents read political news Once a week, followed by 30% Everyday, 16% More than once a week, 8% Other and 4% each, Fortnightly and Monthly, indicating that most women read newspapers Once a week and Everyday. Next, in total, 18% of the respondents were motivated by the Awareness factor to read newspapers, followed by 12% for the Need to stay Up-to-date, indicating that women are most motivated to read political news because of the 'Awareness' and the 'Need to stay up-to-date' factors.

Further, in total, 54% of the respondents Scan political news meaning they read headlines and photos, 36% of the respondents Skim through political news meaning they read briefly points of the content and 10% In-depth, meaning they read the news in detail, indicating that a more number of women mostly scan through political news.

Figure 7.1: Indicating in total percentage, interest level of political news by women.

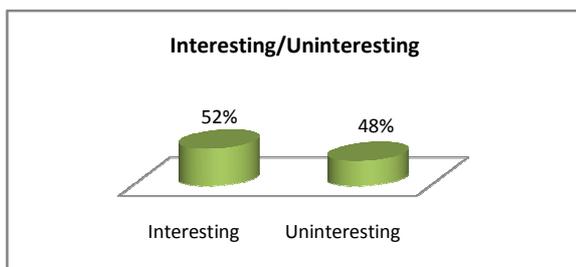
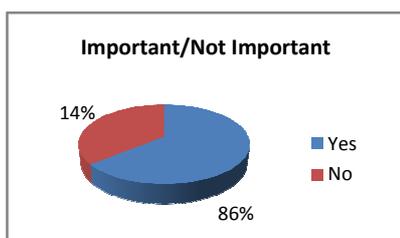


Figure 7.2: Indicating in total percentage, importance level of political news by women.



In total, 52% of the respondents thought political news was Interesting and 48% thought it was Uninteresting, indicating that a greater percentage of women felt political news was interesting. Further, in total, 86% of the respondents thought political news as important while 14% didn't think it as important, indicating that most women considered political news as important.

Summary and Conclusions

The results of the survey through the following major observations establish the English daily newspaper reading habits of women especially of the political beat.

First, the finding that all women read English daily newspapers establishes the backdrop of the study, which is to determine the news reading habits of women especially of the political beat on 'English' Daily Newspapers.

Second, the findings that most women read newspapers 'Everyday', and mostly during 'Early Morning' and 'Evening' times, and mostly for 'Information/Education' and 'Entertainment' purposes, indicate that they spend a considerable amount of time reading newspapers; because all of the respondents are educated, and are mostly students and employees, and they find newspapers as their source of information, education and entertainment during their leisure time.

Third, the finding that women read more of Lifestyle content and stated the reason as 'Interesting' indicates that since most of them are young adults and are students & employees, they are more inclined to less serious topics as are in the lifestyle genre such as relationships, health, fashion, etc.

Fourth, the finding that most women read the main newspaper (broadsheet) first and then the additional newspaper (supplement), indicates that they give a considerable amount of thought to reading hard news stories over soft news; further, the finding that most of them scan the newspaper for headlines and photos versus in-depth reading is because most of them are studying or working and they have a quick glance at the headlines, latest news and weather updates.

Fifth, the findings that most women read political news, and mostly 'Once a week' and 'Everyday', indicate that they spend a considerable amount of time reading political news. Next, the finding that they were most motivated to read political news by the 'Awareness' and the 'Need to stay up-to-date' factors over 'interest', 'elections' or 'presence of women in politics' factors, and further the finding that they mostly 'scan' through political news and do not read in-depth is because most of the women are in the line of education and are employed and want to at most just be aware of what is happening on the political front and to be able to contribute to social conversations/discussions revolving around the topic.

Sixth, the findings that a greater percentage of women found political news to be 'Interesting', and 'Important' is because they said they were placed as major headlines in the newspaper's front page and implied importance, and also that they thought it presented the motives of political parties and gave an insight into the role of politics in nation development. Further, the finding that a little less than the greater found political news to be 'Uninteresting' and 'Unimportant' is because they said it was biased and manipulated; either ways, this does not undermine the finding that most women indeed do scan through political news for 'awareness' at its most.

References

Swaminathan, K.S.M (2017) News Paper Reading Habits among the Students of Arts Colleges in Madurai, Tamil Nadu: A Study. Available online at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320244860_News_Paper_Reading_Habits_among_the_students_of_Arts_Colleges_in_Madurai_Tamilnadu_A_study

Kumar Tewari, Pradeep (2014) Political Visuals Dominate in the Vernacular News Papers: "A Content Analysis of Front Page Political Visuals of Leading Indian News papers". Available online at <https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/political-visuals-dominate-in-the-vernacular-news-papers-a-content-analysis-of-front-page-political-visuals-of-leading-indian-news-papers-2165-7912.1000231.php?aid=33582>

Tewari, Dr. Pradeep (2016) Is Print Readers Declining? A Survey of Indian Online Newspaper Readers

Available online at <https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/is-print-readers-declining-a-survey-of-indian-online-newspaper-readers-2471-8726-1000177.php?aid=76877>

Visited Websites

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_India

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telangana>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_India

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_of_India#Dailies_in_India

<http://indianexpress.com/article/education/international-literacy-day-2016-all-you-need-to-know-about-indias-literacy-rate/>

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Literacy-rate-up-but-so-is-illiteracy/articleshow/50749744.cms>

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2013-07/esr-wwk070113.php

<http://www.firstpost.com/politics/where-are-the-women-political-power-is-still-a-male-domain-in-india-2816568.html>

<http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/09/26/part-3-the-role-of-newspapers/>

<http://www.pewresearch.org/2008/02/06/where-men-and-women-differ-in-following-the-news/>

<http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/essay/literacy-and-education-of-women-in-india/41348/>