



PRINT-MEDIA: CONSUMER PREFERENCES AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic has left no sector unturned from its impact. The industrial behavior is related to the consumer preferences which has changed as a result of this pandemic. Print-Media is one of these industries. The paper seeks to examine the impact of Covid-19 in print-media industry in India. The onset of Covid-19 has led to a transformation in the way people consume media. Consumer behavior and preferences saw a significant change and this paper seeks to examine the same in detail. The analysis will be in the form of primary survey of 300 respondents comprising 60 from each age groups- Youngsters (18-23 years), Working youth (24-30 years), Middle aged people (31- 40 years) and older adults (40 and above) keeping in mind the demographic profile of people living in various parts of Delhi NCR. Our basic proposition will include studying the time spent by different consumers on different sources of media for news and information. Studying the same data distribution, we will form analysis reports on the increasing/decreasing use of print media. Our focus will be to identify the changes in consumer behavior relating to media consumption, analyze the nature and magnitude of the shift in preferences from print media to alternative sources and finally to explain the reasons behind this. The survey will consist of both qualitative and quantitative questions relevant for forming a comparative analysis of their time spent on reading print media with that of different digital equivalents and other sources.

KEYWORDS: Covid-19, Digitalisation, Changing Preferences, Print-Media, Newspaper.

INTRODUCTION

An article by Dr. Shashi Tharoor in 2017 talks how newspapers seem to be facing imminent extinction due to increase in Internet usage, thus limiting its circulation and a collapse in their advertising revenue all around the world except India. But Covid-19 Pandemic has left no sector untouched. Fears that the newspapers will carry the virus have led to housing communities across the country blocking service delivery. Some newspapers even suspended production 2020 March, shortly after the ban. The circulation went down and the advertising disappeared. As the incidence of COVID-19 decreases, anti-delivery blocks continue in group housing communities in many cities. Ten months after the onset of the delivery problem, PDF versions of newspaper and magazine articles are still being sent free of charge to underprivileged readers across the country.

HT Media Ltd has reported net loss of Rs.51.95 Cr in the quarter ended June 2020. The total revenue is down by 59% YoY. The total revenue stands at Rs.239.84 crore in the quarter ended June 2020 against Rs.588.27 Cr in the previous quarter. In the print business, HT Media reported 77% decline in Ad revenues and 37% drop in circulation revenues in Q1 June 2020. According to IRS data, Hindustan's Times average issue readership fell 21 percent over the first two quarters of last year to 1.46 crore, AmarUjala's dropped by 4.8 percent in the same period, Malayala Manorama's by eight percent and many more. Only four newspapers in the country- Dainik Bhaskar, DaikyThanayu, Times of India, Lokmat saw their readership grow in the third quarter, though only marginally.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The newspapers we see and read today come from afar, for the first time since BCE. Significant events mark various changing areas in the evolution of newspapers first such as pamphlets, or paper sheets with small books and unfamiliar schedules. Gradually the newspaper industry changed as more and more people took part, recognizing their popularity and need as a means of communication for current events, news, and entertainment. As the newspaper changed, people and companies began to change trying to keep up with the times, while they also continued.

Newspapers have gone through drastic changes from use to what they are now. From Penny Press which sells for one cent and 8,000 is still distributed, so far more than 56 million newspapers are sold daily, and more on Sunday. Compared to where they started, that's a significant improvement, but hard copy papers are still considered a decline. People used to read the newspapers every day when they were distributed, but now there is an increase in them. Many newspaper companies are no longer able to compete with the easy and fast access to the internet that people offer. Although popular today, we see less people reading newspapers, compared to their phones. A research paper on A Survey about Readership of Newspapers in the Digital Age by Fourzianaz, University of Karachi focuses on people's reading habits and their attitude towards content of newspaper. The study concluded that Newspaper was one of the most preferred media in convenience to consume. The paper was also age based defining purpose of newspaper readership.



The research paper on Death of Newspaper Industry in Digital Age and Covid-19 Pandemic by Supdiyanto shows a drastic fall in consumer base and print-media revenues. Talking about economy and business this paper beautifully relates the two things into account that how the economic conditions of the country change the business expectations and brings out the actual results one of them was fall in advertisement media.

Another paper named "Is Print Readers Declining? A Survey of Indian Online Newspaper Readers" written by Dr. Pradeep Tewari, Ph.D. Senior Photo Journalist, The Tribune, Publication, Chandigarh, India focuses on analysing the growth of online news readers. This research attempts to investigate the online newspapers popularity, frequency of the Internet usage for online news and what kind of news readers prefer the most. This paper discusses about the gap between the same as a considerable issue for the betterment of the online media.

Indian newspapers grew by relying on advertising, a trust that began to decline before the epidemic struck. The Dailies were closed and journalists lost their jobs. Renew their luck, they now — belatedly — are trying to make money from digital.

Epidemics can accelerate change in performance. By 2020, Covid-19 became the catalyst for a rapid and brutal media revolution in its effects.

Covid-19 has given a decisive decision in a move that has accelerated since Jio's arrival in 2016. Jio's login has greatly expanded the global network of internet users and removed a generation of media buyers from the spreadsheet to the smart phone. And then in the first quarter (April-June) of the 2020-21 financial year (Q1FY21), the Indian newspaper market declined sharply due to fears of a door-to-door transmission of the virus. Industrial finances were also disrupted due to the disappearance of commercial advertising (in itself as a result of disruptive circulation and economic downturn resulting from closures).

Indian newspapers are unlikely to receive their numbers anytime soon, if possible. For readers who have lost online translations, many will never return to printing. It is also questionable whether the print will get new readers because for millennials it gets their news and information online.

The newspaper industry was unprepared for the digital acceleration introduced by the epidemic. The issue of 2020 at that time was that of bloodshed, financial woes as advertising fell, hundreds of journalists suddenly became inactive, newspaper programs were banned across the country, and the apparent danger of landmarks in the country's major news media.

OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on Print-Media by deriving the relation b/w the preferences and the actual behavior of consumers
- To study the percentage of shift from newspaper to other sources and the weightage of each reason.
- To check the hypothesis if the newspaper industry will revive in post-pandemic era.
To study the change in consumption pattern of news and information by using the change in meantime of consumption.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE (Priya M., 2016)

The Innovation-Decision Process Theory

The innovation-decision process theory is based on time and five distinct stages i.e., Knowledge, Persuade the merits, decision to adopt the innovation, implement the innovation and finally confirm the success of the adoption.

Individual Innovativeness Theory

The individual innovativeness theory is based on who adopts the innovation and when.

Theory of Rate of Adoption

The theory of rate of adoption suggests that the adoption of innovation is best represented by S-curve on a graph. The theory holds that adoption of an innovation grows slowly and gradually in the beginning. It will then have a period of rapid growth that will taper off and become stable and eventually decline.

DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.05.107>

1. Theory of Perceived Attributes

The theory of perceived attributes is based on the notion that individuals will adopt an innovation if they perceive that the innovation has the following attributes.

- ❖ The innovation must have some relative advantage over an existing innovation or the status quo.
- ❖ It is important the innovation be compatible with existing values and practices.
- ❖ The innovation cannot be too complex.
- ❖ The innovation must have trial ability. This means the innovation can be tested for a limited time without adoption.
- ❖ The innovation must offer observable results.

STRATEGIES FOLLOWED BY PRINT HOUSES DURING COVID-19 (as per the interview conducted)

1. Circulating pdf versions of newspaper and news magazines through WhatsApp.
2. Some print houses were distributing e papers at nominal subscriptions also (like ₹50 for a month).
3. Print houses also used sanitizers on machines for ensuring people that newspapers are safe to use as this will encourage their readers to continue readership.
4. Some production houses were temporarily closed down due to covid-19 as they were planning to reopen as soon as COVID-19 comes to an end.
5. Some print houses have moved some parts of their newspaper to online mediums and others are planning to expand their reach on online sources as due to COVID-19 and the increasing use of online platforms have made them expand into this arena.
6. Salary cuts, work from home and decreasing the number of pages of newspapers (for cutting cost), were also adopted by the print houses in order to survive through this pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

The research is a mixed study (both qualitative and quantitative) of data collected from primary survey and is based on Delhi NCR region. Using the data collected, the authors analyse the change in consumer preferences towards newspaper as a source of news and information during COVID-19 pandemic and the future scope of this change. The data was collected taking age-groups as the base which are as follows-

- 18-23 years
- 24-30 years
- 31-40 years
- Above 40 years

The scope of change in behaviour according to the authors include spread of COVID-, toxic journalism (increasing number of cases and deaths that could affect the mental well-being), people's perception of nothing significant happening around except COVID-19, income cuts due to job losses and salary cuts.

After circulating the questionnaire in the form of Google Forms, 147 responses were recorded which after data-cleaning came down to 88 responses- 40 responses (from 18-23 years), 13 responses (from 24-30 years), 9 responses (from 31-40 years) and 24 responses (from above 40 years). The data was recategorized due to multiple responses to questions. The analysis includes use of two software- Excel and STATA. Analysis includes the following-

- Hypothesis Testing to check the status of newspaper industry in post pandemic era.
- Hypothesis Testing to check the mean time difference in consumption of news and information before and during the pandemic with different sources of news consumption.
- Hypothesis Testing to check what was the majority platform of shift
- Using tables, what did people prefer during the pandemic- hardcopy newspaper or preferred to shift to other sources.
- Through bar chart, representation of the different sources people shifted to and the reasons for same.

Qualitative studies were conducted to back up the primary research. It includes interviewing an editor of a renowned print-media house.



RESULTS

1. HYPOTHESIS TESTING IF NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY WOULD REVIVE

H_0 = Newspaper industry will revive after COVID-19 PANDEMIC (or $p \geq 0.81$)

H_1 = Newspaper industry will not revive after COVID-19 PANDEMIC (or $p < 0.81$)

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{\hat{p} - p}{\sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{0.59 - 0.51}{\sqrt{\frac{0.51(1-0.51)}{88}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = -5.263$$

$$z_{\text{crit}} = -1.65$$

$-0.375 > -1.65$ at $\alpha=0.05\%$ (at 95% level of significance)

Null Hypothesis is rejected which means we don't have enough evidence to say that newspaper industry will revive in future.

2. HYPOTHESIS TESTING TO EVALUATE THE DISPRECENCY IN TIMESPENT BY CONSUMERS OF NEWS AND INFORMATION ON NEWSPAPERS V/S ALTERNATIVE SOURCES (PRE-PANDEMIC V/S DURING PANDEMIC RESPECTIVELY)

H_0 = No mean time difference, $t=0$

H_1 = Mean time difference, $t \neq 0$

$$\bar{t} = -3.92045, \hat{\sigma} = 30.29974$$

$$\text{Standard error} = \frac{\hat{\sigma}}{\sqrt{n}} = 9.381$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{\bar{t} - t}{\hat{\sigma}/\sqrt{n}} = \frac{-3.902045 - 0}{9.381} = -0.41595$$

$$-1.96 < -0.41595 < 1.95$$

Therefore, null hypothesis cannot be rejected which means no change in mean time to consume news and information.

3.HYPOTHESIS TESTING OF MAJORITY PLATFORM SHIFTED TO

H_0 = Majority of people have shifted to search engines (or $p \geq 0.51$)

H_1 = Majority of people haven't shifted to search engines (or $p < 0.51$)

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{\hat{p} - p}{\sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}}$$

DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.05.107>

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{0.49 - 0.51}{\sqrt{\frac{0.51(1-0.51)}{88}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = -0.375$$

$$z_{\text{crit}} = -1.65$$

$-0.375 > -1.65$ at $\alpha=0.05\%$ (at 95% level of significance)

Null Hypothesis is not rejected which means we have enough evidence to say that majority have shifted to searchengines.

H_0 = Majority of people have shifted to Youtube (or $p \geq 0.51$)

H_1 = Majority of people haven't shifted to Youtube (or $p < 0.51$)

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{\hat{p} - p}{\sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{0.19 - 0.51}{\sqrt{\frac{0.51(1-0.51)}{88}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = -6.004$$

$$z_{\text{crit}} = -1.65$$

$-6.004 < -1.65$ at $\alpha=0.05\%$ (at 95% level of significance)

Null Hypothesis is rejected which means we don't have enough evidence to say that majority have shifted to youtube.

H_0 = Majority of people have shifted to Television News (or $p \geq 0.51$)

H_1 = Majority of people haven't shifted to Television News (or $p < 0.51$)

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{\hat{p} - p}{\sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{0.64 - 0.51}{\sqrt{\frac{0.51(1-0.51)}{88}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = 2.439$$

$$z_{\text{crit}} = -1.65$$

$2.439 > -1.65$ at $\alpha=0.05\%$ (at 95% level of significance)

Null Hypothesis is accepted which means we have enough evidence to say that majority have shifted to televisionnews.

H_0 = Majority of people have shifted to Digital Newspaper(or $p \geq 0.51$)

H_1 = Majority of people haven't shifted to Digital Newspaper(or $p < 0.51$)

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{\hat{p} - p}{\sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{0.33 - 0.51}{\sqrt{\frac{0.51(1-0.51)}{88}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = -3.377$$

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$$z_{\text{crit}} = -1.65$$

$$-3.377 < -1.65 \text{ at } \alpha=0.05\% \text{ (at 95% level of significance)}$$

Null Hypothesis is rejected which means we don't have enough evidence to say that majority have shifted to digital newspaper.

$$H_0 = \text{Majority of people have shifted to Radio (or } p \geq 0.51)$$

$$H_1 = \text{Majority of people haven't shifted to Radio (or } p < 0.51)$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{\hat{p} - p}{\sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{0.03 - .51}{\sqrt{\frac{0.51(1-0.51)}{88}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = -9.006$$

$$z_{\text{crit}} = -1.65$$

$$-9.006 < -1.65 \text{ at } \alpha=0.05\% \text{ (at 95% level of significance)}$$

Null Hypothesis is rejected which means we don't have enough evidence to say that majority have shifted to radio.

$$H_0 = \text{Majority of people have shifted to Magazines (or } p \geq 0.51)$$

$$H_1 = \text{Majority of people haven't shifted to Magazines (or } p < 0.51)$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{\hat{p} - p}{\sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{0.06 - 0.51}{\sqrt{\frac{0.51(1-0.51)}{88}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = -8.443$$

$$z_{\text{crit}} = -1.65$$

$$-8.443 < -1.65 \text{ at } \alpha=0.05\% \text{ (at 95% level of significance)}$$

Null Hypothesis is rejected which means we don't have enough evidence to say that majority have shifted to magazines.

$$H_0 = \text{Majority of people have shifted to News and Information Apps (or } p \geq 0.51)$$

$$H_1 = \text{Majority of people haven't shifted to News and Information Apps (or } p < 0.51)$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{\hat{p} - p}{\sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{0.33 - 0.51}{\sqrt{\frac{0.51(1-0.51)}{88}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = -3.377$$

$$z_{\text{crit}} = -1.65$$

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$-3.377 < -1.65$ at $\alpha=0.05\%$ (at 95% level of significance)

Null Hypothesis is rejected which means we don't have enough evidence to say that majority have shifted to apps.

H_0 = Majority of people have shifted to Social Media Platforms (or $p \geq 0.51$)

H_1 = Majority of people haven't shifted to Social Media Platforms (or $p < 0.51$)

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{\hat{p} - p}{\sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = \frac{0.34 - 0.51}{\sqrt{\frac{0.51(1-0.51)}{88}}}$$

$$z_{\text{obs}} = -3.189$$

$$z_{\text{crit}} = -1.65$$

$-3.189 < -1.65$ at $\alpha=0.05\%$ (at 95% level of significance)

Null Hypothesis is rejected which means we don't have enough evidence to say that majority have shifted to social media platform.

4. AGE-GROUP WISE ANALYSIS

In the first group of 18-23, 40 responses were recorded where the majority chose other media and information than the newspaper. Although participants tend to be on a variety of platforms but the most popular platforms for collecting news and information were search engines and the reason for this was the speed with which these platforms are updated with all the daily news details.

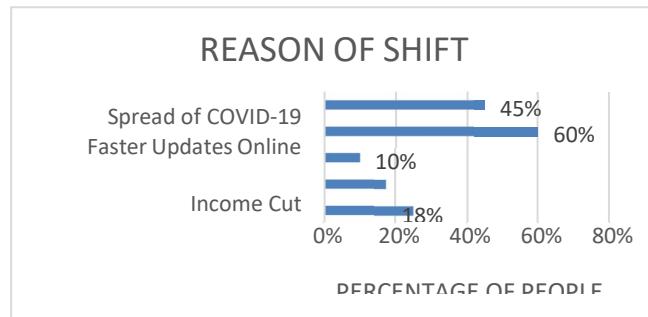
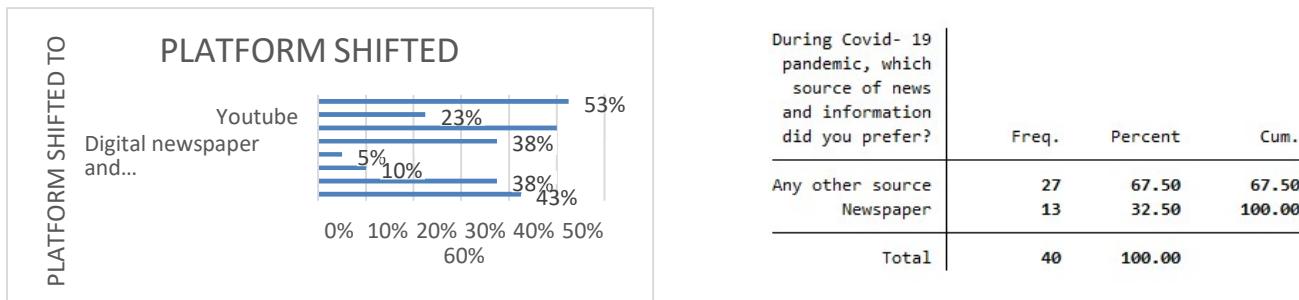
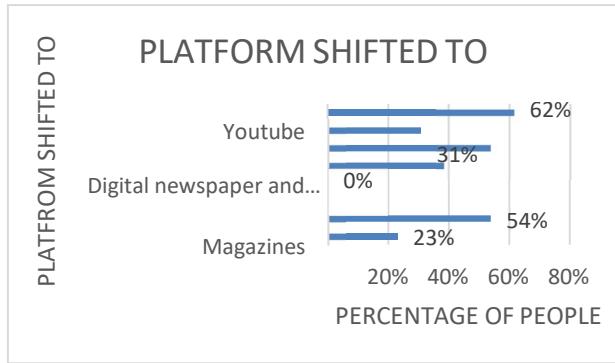


Fig (i) – Shift among the age group of 18-23
 (a) Preferred source for news and information during Covid-19.
 (b) Towards different platforms (YouTube, magazines etc)
 (c) Reasons behind the same

DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi.org/2022/11.05.107>

In the second group, 24-30 years, 13 responses were recorded.

Under this group people's preferences were equally biased in newspapers and other sources as well (this could be because of less responses). Although participants were inclined to various platforms but Search engines came out as the most widely used platform by this age group. Although there were several reasons behind this change but the main reason behind this is the spread of the Covid-19 virus.



During Covid- 19 pandemic, which source of news and information did you prefer?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Any other source	7	53.85	53.85
Newspaper	6	46.15	100.00
Total	13	100.00	

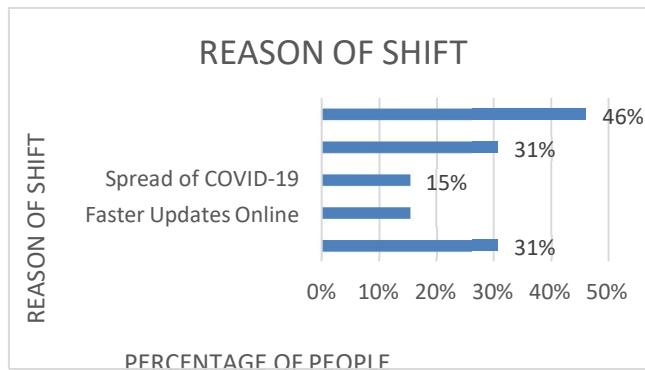
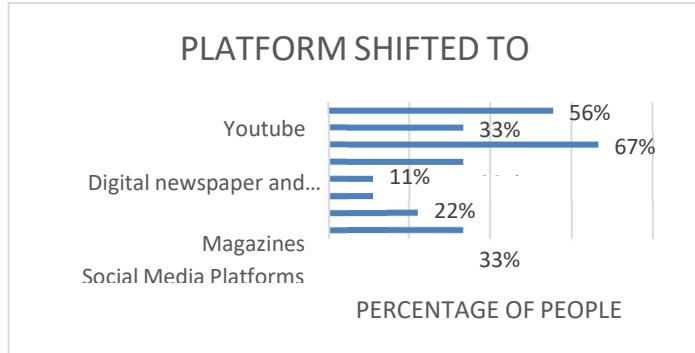


Fig (ii) – Shift among the age group of 24-30 (a) Preferred source for news and information during Covid-19.

(b) Towards different platforms (YouTube, magazines etc)

In the third group of 31-40 years, 9 responses were recorded where the majority preferred other mediaand information than the newspaper during the pandemic. Although participants were inclined to various platforms but Television news is emerging as the most popular platform for this age group.

Although there were several reasons behind this change but two outstanding reasons after this includethe spread of the Covid-19 virus and rapid updates by online sources.



During Covid- 19 pandemic, which source of news and information did you prefer?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Any other source	8	88.89	88.89
Newspaper	1	11.11	100.00
Total	9	100.00	

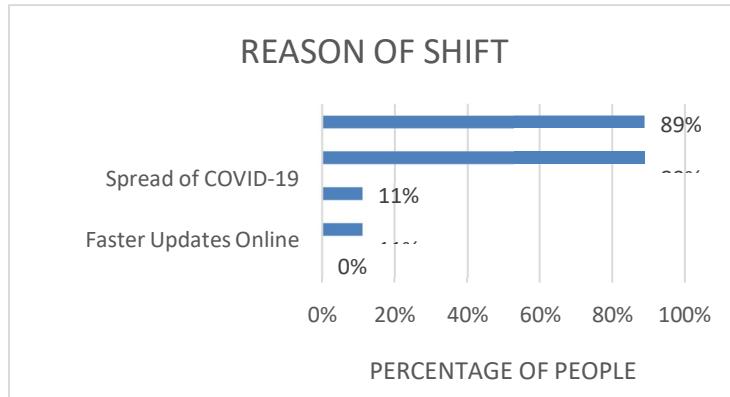
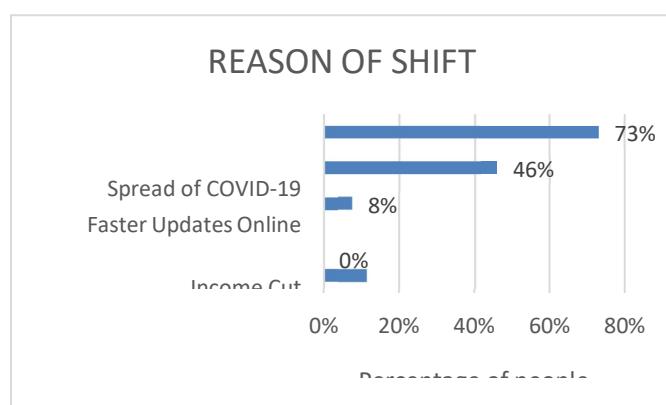
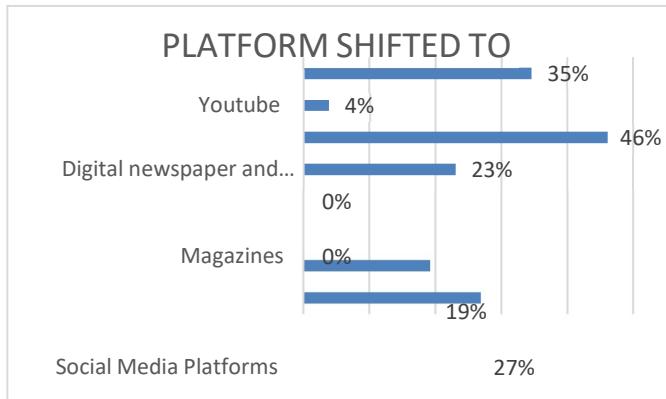


Fig (iii) – Shift among the age group of 31-40
 (a) Preferred source for news and information during Covid-19.
 (b) Towards different platforms (YouTube, magazines etc)
 (c) Reasons behind the same

Under the age group of over 40 years, 24 responses were recorded in which the majority preferred other media and information. Although participants were inclined to a variety of platforms but Television news is emerging as the most popular platform for this age group. Although there were several reasons behind this change but the main reason behind this comes out as the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

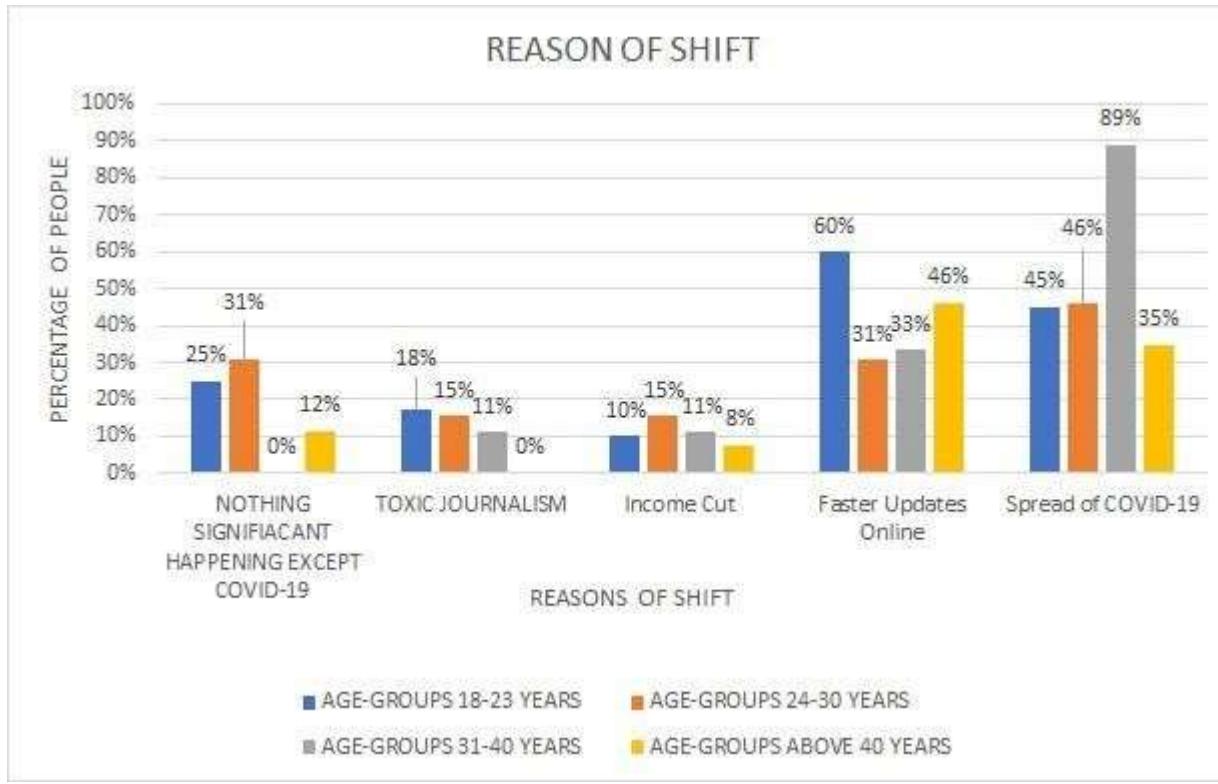


DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi/2022/11.05.107>

During Covid- 19 pandemic, which source of news and information did you prefer?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Any other source	20	83.33	83.33
Newspaper	4	16.67	100.00
Total	24	100.00	

Fig (ii) – Shift among the age group of Above 40 (a) Preferred sources for news and information during Covid-19.

- (b) Towards different platforms (YouTube, magazines etc.)
(c) Reasons behind the same



According to the observation, the preference shift among the age group of 18-23 years got more affected by the faster updates through online sources as they prefer to be updated with news and information.

Under 24-30 years, the shift got affected by multiple factors but the dominant one amongst the all comes out to be the fear of spread of Covid-19 virus through newspapers.

For 31-40, their major factor or concern behind the shift was spread of Covid-19 virus through newspapers.



Under the Above 40 group, the primary and major concern was spread of Covid-19 besides this there was a certain percentage who considered this shift because of their inclinations towards faster updates through online sources.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

- Assuming that 81% of newspaper reading pre-pandemic population has to be retained for the newspaper industry to revive, it seems unlikely that the industry will revive in near future. However, the CVoter survey shows that people still consider newspapers to be a credible source. If, however, with innovation in the sources people consume more during pandemic and media houses could build credibility at the right time, there is a great tendency of less or avoidance of losses with future scopes of higher profits. This is because internet production involves less cost (mention the name of paper).
- No difference in mean time shows that people are indifferent to all the sources of news and information. However, it is also possible that people could spend equivalent time on other sources like television news, social media and search engines due to the lockdown which included online modes of education and work from home.
- According to our analysis, the younger generation age group (18-23 years) is more spontaneous to other sources and mostly use search engines for gathering news and information. This significant observed change can lead the newspaper industry to think more about their preferences and how they can bring them closer either with their digital transformed alternatives or through other new innovative solutions.
- While the later one i.e., the working youths between 24-30 years was observed equally inclined to using both as their source for getting news and information though their major concern for shifting to other source mostly to Search Engines was spread of Covid-19. So, there is tendency that this age group may shift back to the traditional newspaper in the coming future.
- As observed the 31-40 years age groups preferred other sources (Television news was the most popular one) for news and information. Their major concern behind this shift was spread of Covid-19 and faster updates through online sources.
- The majority of above 40 years age group peoples have also shifted to other sources for news and information. Television was observed as the majority choice. The primary and major concern was spread of Covid-19 besides this there was a certain percentage who considered this shift because of their inclinations towards faster updates through online sources. The major reason for shift among this age-group was the spread of COVID-19 while this group remain unaffected by toxic journalism which can be interpreted in two ways- either they have built a good mental health due to years of stressful experiences or they have never acknowledged their mental well-being which is quite a new phenomenon in India.
- From the hypothesis testing for finding the majority shift among the population, it was found that majority of people shifted to Television. According to census 2011, 88% of households in Delhi own television. This may imply that people have already been using television as a medium of news and information and due to this pandemic, they might have shifted to Television as the only source.
- As according to the observations (based on the recorded data that we have), people have shifted to different sources for news and information and this shift is going to be continuously evolving according to the convenience and comfort of the readers. So, for the above reason print media companies are required to carry out various innovations and should diversify their business expansion that is able to combine (synergize) print media, online media, and electronic media for reaching out to a larger audience through different mediums of communication.
- From the hypothesis testing for finding the majority shift among the population, we found that majority of people shifted to Search Engines as the source for news and information during COVID-19 pandemic. According to the report 'India Digital News Report 2019' published by the Reuters Institute is based on data from a survey of English-speaking, online news users in India. The survey found that almost a third access news mainly through search engines as their main source of online news. This is made possible partly because these platforms are emerging as the primary source of news for a significant number of news consumers.

SUGGESTIONS

- Researchers have speculated time and over again that the newspaper kingdom would only survive in modern society when they invest into taking care of their next largest and the most venerable group in different societies world over i.e., the young people "The Youth" (Priya M., 2016).
- Since television is an available source, the print-media houses could come up with the innovation of recording news in audio and visual format, section wise which most of the people prefer to keep up the reliability of the newspaper readers who still prefer the traditional newspapers but have to shift to other sources.



LIMITATIONS

1. Lack of knowledge on theoretical concepts: Another analytical method which could make the research better is multi logit regression model where we can study how the preferences of platform of news and information has changed due to various factors- gender, income and various reasons of shift. However, due to lack of theoretical knowledge, it could not be used.
2. Limited Demographical study - The study is restricted to only Delhi NCR region and hence, can only provide an expected image of other metropolitan cities but not that of other important states.
3. Lack of knowledge of some concepts - The back of some theoretical concepts, they could not be used in practice.

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