

Trends in the Purchasing Pattern of News Papers among Students of Higher Learning in the Klang Valley, Malaysia: A Case Study

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Abstract. An interesting sensational headline is a factor that attracts students of higher learning particularly the students in University Technology MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam, which is situated in the Selangor region, Malaysia, when buying the newspaper. 39 percent of the respondents agreed that they would buy newspapers that have interesting headlines while 60 percent agreed that they really care about the newspapers' content because the content gave certain impact to their lives. One interesting finding of the study is that most of the respondents read newspapers that carry less governmental issues. They prefer reading newspapers that have more sensational elements. The research design of this study is quantitative and data is analyzed using SPSS software.

Keywords: Purchasing Pattern, Newspapers Selection, Students of Higher Learning.

1. Introduction

People read newspaper for various reasons. According to John McIntyre (2010), people read newspaper because first, they enjoy the medium's portability where they can take it wherever they go and second, they say the medium contains information they cannot get from source- information. Newspaper also can give such an impact to their viewers or their readers by using their power to give influence to the public. Media actually have such a big power to influence or to change mind set of people (Lynette, 2002; pg. 50). Thus the quality, quantity and topics of information, analysis and opinion from news providers influence what people do to the environment. This means that, people would be automatically aware about the news around them and what is the latest news that happening around.

The first newspaper in Malaysia, begun by the British in Penang in 1805 was the Prince of Wales Island Gazette. In the 1930s under British control, the country develops restrictive policies towards the press because it feared the spread of communism. Despite the threat of communism in the 1930s, the Malay vernacular press flourished in that decade.

In Malaysia, there have three types of newspaper which are mainstream newspaper, alternative and tabloid. There are the differences between these two newspapers. And each of this newspaper has its own values that make people want to purchase it. Alternative usually published weekly or every other week that avoid from comprehensive coverage of general news example The Rocket. Alternative newspapers are published in tabloid format. Tabloid is a half page size than mainstream newspaper that focuses on local interest stories and entertainment, sometimes distribute free of charge examples The Sun and Malay Mail.

The dominant publishing company for generations has been Straits Times Press, Ltd., founded in 1834 and now the owner of seven newspapers which together reach approximately 75 percent of the nation's adult's population. Its principal papers is the well- edited, establishment- oriented Straits Times, which is air lifted also to Bangkok, Hong Kong and Jakarta (C. Merrill, 1983; p.128).

The political parties control the major newspaper in Malaysia. The *Utusan Melayu* Group publishes three Malay language dailies and has strong ties with Prime Minister's party which is UMNO. In addition, The Star is owned by the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) control all the Tamil newspaper. These three political parties have a strong influence toward purchasing pattern of newspaper (Advmeq. Inc, 2010).

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However, different people have different ways or different patterns on choosing the newspapers. This study, aims to see the factors that influence the students on how they choose newspapers where depends on their purchasing power of newspaper selection toward mainstream or tabloid.

2. Problem Statement

In Malaysia the political parties control the major newspapers. Hence it will give a high impact on the mindset of the public for they seem to be enamoured by the information that is provided in the newspapers. Choosing a right newspaper will helps the public particularly for this study the students of higher learning to manage themselves to know and understand whatever news content they would like to perceive.

Generally, each type of newspapers would bring different ways and purposes of writing. If each of the newspaper offers different style of writing, readers will miss some of the important facts in the news. The interesting content will grab and hold their attention to purchase the newspaper. Some of the newspapers do not give a highlight on the most prominent news. They focus on the other types of news. The information that the public will get can help them to manage and protect themselves. It will make the buyers know what the most important news they should read is.

Some major newspapers also have broadened their content, giving more attention to world news; and papers generally have been encouraged to criticize the daily working of government (C. Merrill 1983; p.127). However, at times, a newspaper tends to be biased and reflect ideologies or values, which tend to be slanted towards home cultures and personal politics (Mitchell, 2010; p.32).

Based on these perspectives, the researcher feels that an empirical study is crucial to determine several factors on how students of higher learning choose and get information from the newspapers. What sort of newspapers that this category group of the public select to get their latest news on the various development and issues in the country? What sort of content that these students prefer to read and why as these people are the new generation of Malaysia. Young generation is always noted to being attracted to get something sensational sort of information rather than the serious angled content. This sort of study is important in giving an outlook on how the new generation buy and read newspapers as each of these types of newspaper is published in different ways of writing. A mainstream newspaper is related to the major political parties in Malaysia and therefore, the content of the newspaper is more to the government news. This situation makes the researcher want to know whether the content of the newspaper gives effects toward these peoples' buying behaviour. Content of the newspaper will shape their mind because they trust with the newspaper that they choose to read.

Based on the factors about, the objectives of the study is as follow:

1. To identify the selection of newspaper among students of higher learning.
2. To analyze whether the content of the newspaper is a factor that influences the purchasing pattern of buying newspaper among students of higher learning.
3. To explain what type of news in the chosen newspaper is most preferred by students when reading.

3. Literature Review

The reasons why people read a daily newspaper can generally be divided into two, though not necessarily exclusive, categories. The first group and the major one consist of those who read the daily newspaper "to keep up with the news". The second group is made up of those who read the newspaper primarily as a means of relaxation. It is not, however, always easy to assign readers to either group exclusively (Gerald Wilkinson, 1972).

Kerry (2004) argued that the newspapers were written in a way that mostly gives impact to politicians rather than citizens. He founded that newspapers play an important role to politicians because it gives the current information about what they did and what happened in the country. Kerry (ibid.) added that mainstream newspapers are related to the major political parties and many politicians use newspapers as a medium to get the information on opponent parties.

Meanwhile, Mitchell (2010) points out that newspaper has a power to enlighten countries and public opinion domestically and abroad. However, at times, newspaper tends to be biased and reflect ideologies or

values, which tend to be slanted towards home cultures and personal politics. Content of the newspaper will shape the people mind because they trust with the newspaper that they choose to read.

For local research, a study by Hamzah (2009) found that there are internal and external factors that influenced the selection of the newspapers. The internal factors that affect the newspaper selection are character and journalist ability, courage authoring, consideration and professionalism. The external factors are the constraints of law, government control through regulatory agencies, the response of particular party, commercial factors and campaigns, festivals and events popular. These challenges are urging the owners of newspaper companies to start looking for changes in ensure the sustainability of their newspaper.

Hamedi (2006) asserted that, the emergence of new media has an impact on the printed media. This scenario causes the younger generation are lazy to read, think and make the analysis and rely solely on technology. Journalist should think positively and make it as a competition. In newspaper, there is more information that we can trust rather than others various media. Also as the technology has change, they can manipulate the information in others medium especially internet. Newspaper tends to cover a wider range of themes than other media studies.

Zaheril (2006), in the other hand, found in his research that news not only report the event but also a medium that give influence to people as well as giving opportunity to media especially newspaper a power in the society.

4. Methodology

The research design that is used for this study is quantitative methodology. Its purpose is to gather information in numerical form or descriptive statistics. According to Wimmer & Dominick (2006; p. 50) this methodology is to ensure that research meet the standard of trustworthiness. The methodology also attempts to describe and explain why the situation exist (Wimmer & Dominick, *ibid*; p. 179). Variable will be examined to investigate the research questions.

5. Findings

Out of 120 respondents aged between 21 to 23 years old, only 105 respondents participated in this study. 40% of the 105 respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they only read the newspaper that has sensational elements rather than political news.

60% of the respondents agreed that they really care about the newspaper content that they are reading. This is because the newspaper content gave impact to their lives. To them the newspaper can change their life because the newspapers' role is to give information and to educate them.

46.7% of the respondents do not know whether the content that they are reading is good or bad but they believe that the content in the newspapers has positive impact and that is why it is printed in the newspapers. Finding also found that they just buy a newspaper when they feel like buying it because to them the newspaper they choose to buy has interesting content. They also do not survey the newspaper's content before buying it. 50.5% of the respondents said that they just grab a newspaper they came across especially a newspaper that is able to hold their attention particularly on sensational issues. Such issues make them want to read more rather than political news.

Really care about newspaper's content

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	8	7.6	7.6	7.6
Disagree	20	19.0	19.0	26.7
Agree	63	60.0	60.0	86.7
strongly agree	14	13.3	13.3	100.0

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	Disagree	20	19.0	19.0	26.7
	Agree	63	60.0	60.0	86.7
	strongly agree	14	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

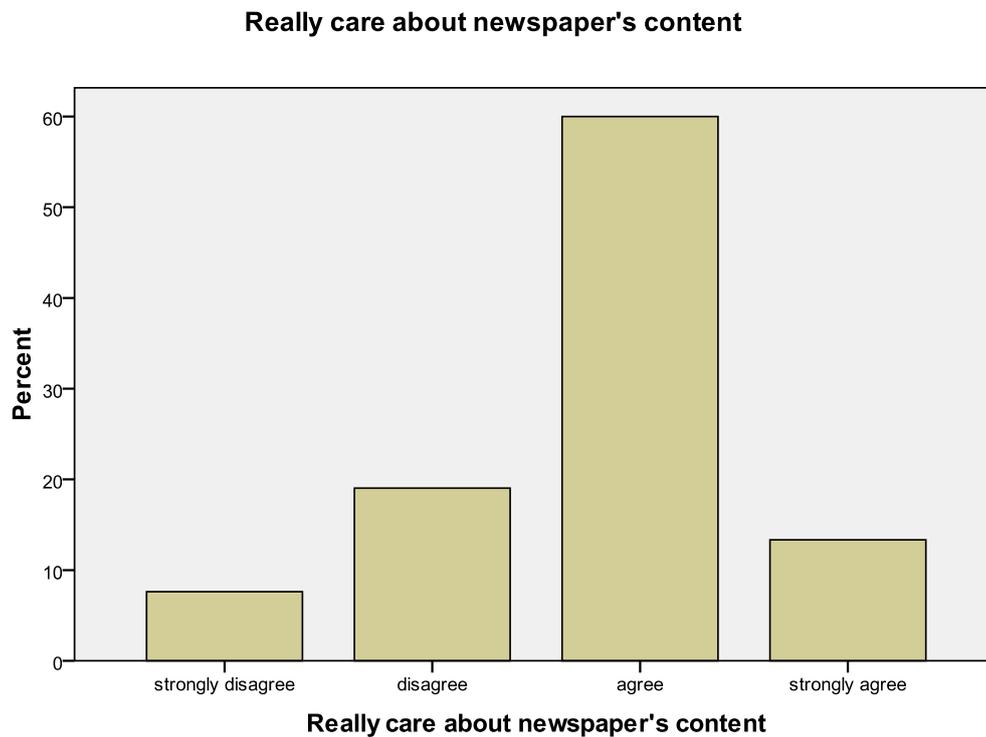


Fig. 1: The Impact of Newspaper Content towards Student's Purchasing Pattern

Findings also found that every respondent has their own interest in choosing what type of news they want to read. Most of the respondents favour reading sports news which has the highest percentage (82.9%) than general news which is 75.2%, business news (43.8%), editorial news (50.5%), entertainment news (59%), while international news (69.5%).

43.8% agreed that interesting newspaper content will make them purchase the newspaper even though they never buy that newspaper before while 41% of respondents agreed they only read the newspaper that has sensational content. The researcher can see that the content of newspaper that has sensational elements will attract the readers to buy and read those newspapers.

6. Conclusion

The young generation seems to be more attracted to buy and read newspapers that carry less governmental issues. This scenario is the main factor of the existence of sensational newspapers in Malaysia.

6.1. Social Issues the Preferred Choice of Reading

Criteria of choice of reading the newspapers is more on getting to know on social issues that happened in the country, crime issues that is more or less important to be noted as crime rate has increased due to many factors, sports news besides the international scenario than is of concerned to the young generation. Political insights seem to be not of their interest. Another perspective to be noted is that the study indicates that the respondents in this study are active users of the media. Respondents buy newspapers in order to know on what is happening around them. They are evident seeking for new information.

6.2. Selection of Newspaper Depends on Own Choice

Another factor is that the selection of newspapers among respondents is also depends on the respondents' needs and desire. If long time ago buying the newspapers lies in the hands of the elders in the family, nevertheless as for today, it has become one of the responsibilities of the younger generation to get their own perspective of news in order to know what is current. 42.9% of the respondent disagreed that they only buy the newspapers that they and their family has been buying for long time. Students of higher learning of today take responsibility on what they want to know themselves for they are good enough to think which newspaper is the best for them to buy and read without follow anybody's opinion.

Based on this study it is evident that the readership of newspapers that carries sensational news as well as on news relating to social problems in Malaysia is increasing every year due to the support given by the young generation (for this research, they are students of the higher learning who studied in Universiti Teknologi MARA in Shah Alam). They preferred to read such news approach rather than news that focuses on politics. Most of them acknowledged that the political news is heavy subject for them and is boring for it does not give them any benefits.

Another reason why they like to read the sensational news which includes news on social matters is because the way the report is written is based on readers' demand. Such news reports also are evident to them that the coverage is around their areas and it alerts them on what is happening. Such reports in the newspaper are significant to them because it gives a lot of interesting news stories besides educating them while giving information.

In addition sensation news and social news gives more impact to the this category of readers specifically the young generation because it projects several vital elements in a news story such as human interest, impact, conflict, issues and problems in the community as well as trends that plays an essential part in this group of generation's life.

7. Discussion

This study has shown that the students of higher learning are exposed to the newspaper as a source of information. Nevertheless they are seen not to be interested in political or economic news. This is negative in the sense that they have to change their reading habits in order to be a thinking society. They have to be exposed to a variety of information to enable them to gain valuable knowledge to be prepared to be intellectual university students. They must change this attitude and to be more involved on what is happening in the political arena of the country and should not only read the light issues. This research also found that students still have a positive opinion on the printed media.

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