

## A STUDY OF SCIENCE NEWS READING HABITS

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### Introduction:

Reading is one very important human activity. It plays main role in building and development of personality of a person. The subject material and time given for reading are main factors in achieving the success by a person. Reading is generally associated with academic life of a person. But it is much more beyond that. This activity has become a normal part of routine life of people in any literate society. We get information, knowledge, motivation, entertainment and many other things through it. Infact, modern technologies have even increased this reading practice among people. It helps in fulfilling many practical requirements of our lives.

Mass media are among most important means which provide very important reading materials to people. The modern technologies have also played a great role in providing various kinds of useful reading material to common people. In spite of all these, traditional newspapers, in printed form, remain the most preferred mass media for reading. It is the only medium which provides latest all kinds of important updated information about various events which can be read in a convenient way.

Science is an important subject among various reading materials. There are several newspapers and magazines published from all over the world which contain science pages. Many magazines are also published in science subjects.<sup>1</sup> Science news is available not only in newspapers and magazines, but also on various websites. Many of these websites are totally devoted to science news. For example- Science news<sup>2</sup>, Science Daily<sup>3</sup> are such websites. Science India is one such magazine which is totally devoted to science news for youths in India.<sup>4</sup> All these materials are now available at global level. The need of scientific information in society is beyond any doubt. Science and technology have indeed proved a boon to human life.<sup>5</sup> They are important not only for knowledge but also for living a very healthy and well mannered and smooth social life.

Newspapers play a very important role in disseminating scientific information and developing scientific temperament in society. In spite all technological changes in mass media; newspapers cover a wide audience group of the society.

The youths are the most suitable community of the society who are expected to adopt scientific knowledge and practice in their lives in a more convincing manner in comparison to other groups of the society. India is a land of the youth with more than sixty percent of the population of 1.1 billion falling under the age of thirty-five years.<sup>6</sup> They constitute an important target segment for the policy makers and their

Views have to be taken into consideration before framing and implementing a policy by the government, which may affect them both directly and indirectly.

The educational system provided to them has a responsibility to see that they are groomed well and are well prepared to meet the challenges that may be posed to them in tomorrow's world.<sup>7</sup> The mass media have its own role and science news reading habit of youths decides a lot in developing a new life style in society.

### Importance of the Study:

Nowadays, India is experiencing a widespread diffusion of science communication activities. Public institutions, non-governmental organizations and a number of associations are busy in spreading scientific knowledge not only via traditional media but also through all media and through specific forms of interaction with a varied public. For the past two decades or so, science communication activities have gained momentum in India. Efforts have been made from both governmental and non-governmental platforms to enhance the public understanding of science. The idea is to help science and a scientific culture penetrate India's socio-culturally diverse society, and to transform it into a nation of scientifically thinking and scientifically aware people.<sup>8</sup> As already discussed, the dissemination of scientific information in the society is very important. Science news reading habits play a very important role in fulfilling above described role. This habit can tell us a lot about the inclination of youth to science subjects. How is the science news reading habit among youths at present? A study on such types of subject can give us useful information for effective science news reporting. There are several other questions related with science news reading habits. The findings of such studies can give us various useful information in this reference. It can be used for the effective presentation of scientific information.

### Literature review:

A large number of literatures are available on the reading habits. The literature review reveals that there are several studies on reading habits among various groups of the society. The earlier studies have been done on the habit of book and newspapers reading. Recent studies have been concentrated on on-line news reading habits.<sup>9</sup> Seminars have also been organized on reading habits<sup>10</sup>. Many studies have been done on the media habits of youths.<sup>11</sup> There are also studies on the use of modern technologies like i-phone for reading habit. John Wait and Enlie Wang (2010) found that people use such technologies for reading technical books.<sup>12</sup> There is a articles on blog reading habits. Study also tell that it has become a habit of people to read blog just like reading e-mail.<sup>13</sup> There is also report that reading trend in youth are declining<sup>14</sup>. However, there is not any recent study on science news reading habits. In such case, the present study to know the science news reading habit of youths may give new information.

### Objectives of the study:

The main objective of the study is to know the science news reading habits of the youths and know the popularity of science news among them. The Following points have mainly been considered –

- What is popularity of science news among youths?
- Is there any regularity in reading science news?
- Which kinds of science news do they like most?
- The important factor for attracting science news among youths?
- The suitable language for reading science news.
- The role of graphic and page design in attracting science news.
- It is also the attempt of this study to know if there any specific character of science news reading habit among the youths.

**Methodology of the study:**

The study is based on survey methods. Kanpur city in UP state is the geographical area of study. Kanpur is the tenth most populous city in India and the largest within the state of Uttar Pradesh. It is the second largest city of the Hindi-speaking belt after Delhi. It remains one of the oldest industrial townships of North India, although it has not kept pace with IT industry growth in the rest of India due to political indifference. It has a metropolitan area of over 1,640 square kilometres (630 sq mi) and a city area of around 829 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of approximately 5 million, 15

A total 223 samples have been taken for the collection of data. They are within the age group of 18 - 25. All the respondents are either in Graduate or in Post Graduate classes. Purposive sampling method has been adopted for the selection of units. All the respondents belong to higher academic institutions like university and colleges. A questionnaire has been developed for collection of data. It contains structured and non structured questions. Structured questions contain both open and closed end questionnaire. The non-structured questions have been framed for the collection of other kinds of information not covered in the questionnaire.

**Data analysis and discussion of the result:**

Respondents were asked various questions about their reading habits. The responses given by them have been analyzed accordingly in a quantitative manner. It is not possible to discuss in detail all kinds of information provided by the respondents. A brief analysis has been presented here.

**Popularity and priority of science news:**

In general, people like to read science news. 52 percent respondents say that they like to read science news whereas 43 percent said that they liked science news partially or to some extent. There are only 5 percent respondents who say that they don't like science news. This means there is a general orientation towards reading science news among new generation.

**People do not have their first priority for science news.**

Though there are 52 percent respondents who said that they liked science news but the science news was not in the first priority for reading. There are only a little more than 2 % respondent who say that science news is their first priority in newspaper. But, it is encouraging that more than half (52 percent) respondents give second priority to science news. While one third of all respondents' gives third priority to science news, whereas nearly 12% respondents gives fourth priority to science news.

**Media priority for science news and newspapers**

TV is most suitable media for science news. There is more than 62 percent respondent in favour of it. Newspaper is second choice in reference to suitable media for science news. There are 33 percent respondents who say that newspaper is the most preferred media for science news. 12 percent respondents said that they liked web media for reading science news, Radio media was not given any special preference for science news listening.

No specific choice of newspaper for reading science news. There is not any specific choice of newspapers for reading science news. Youths read science news wherever it is available. Generally, the newspaper available at home is the most important newspaper

source of science news. 88 percent respondents are of this opinion. The next important newspaper is one which is available at the libraries of their college and university. In student life, the students can not be expected to go anywhere else for reading newspapers.

**Role of design of newspapers in reading of science news**

The design of news and other kinds of materials affect the reading of science news in newspapers. The graphic, photographs, colour and other elements of design helps reader in reading science news. They not only attract the attention of the readers for reading science news but also help in better understanding the subject.

**Regularly in reading science news.**

Reading of science news is not a regular activity of the youths. It depends on the availability of science news. 48% youths said that they read science news regularly while 52 % said that they read it occasionally or when they get time for it. This means that there is not any deliberate attempt on behalf of youths to get science news.

**Purpose and choice for reading science news-**

Around 26 percent respondents read science news as normal news. They do not have any intention of gaining knowledge from it or any other. But 17 percent said that read for gaining knowledge. There are more than 57 percent of the respondents who read science news with having mixed purpose.

**Most important factor of attraction in science news**

35 % students say that headlines are the most important factor for being attracted to read science news. 12 percent said that photographs are the most effective factor for reading science news. While 40% said that the subject is the most important factor in the attraction of the news. There were 12 percent such readers who for whom merely the content of science news is the important attracting factor.

**Hindi is popular language for reading science news**

78 students say that Hindi is the most appropriate language for science news as they feel convenient in understanding it. However 22 percent respondents are of the different view and they feel easy in understanding science news in English language. In this way the mother language is the preferred language for reading science news. It shows that the respondents who have studied through English medium or have studied science preferred to read science news in English language.

**Presentation of science news is not satisfactory.**

Most of the readers are not fully satisfied with science news. They feel certain types of imperfections in news. They have given different reasons for their dissatisfaction. They want to read more about the contents given in the news. 29 percent are fully satisfied and 21 percent are not satisfied. 50 percent are partially satisfied they said that they want to know more about the subject which has been described in the newspaper.

**Curiosity for reading science news and use of reference material**

Majority of the reader have curiosity for reading science news. They want to read science news. This number is about 72 percent of the total number of the respondents. 22 percent respondents say that they read science news but feel some hesitation in reading it as they consider science subject to be subject which is for intelligent people.

Similarly, 54 percent respondents say that they take help of other references for further understanding of science news in detail. But it is not a very regular activity. There are 46 percent respondents who don't take help of reference of any other materials for reading science news. Popular format of presentation of science information News is more preferable format for reading science news. Nearly 29 percent respondents expressed opinion in favour of news, More than 26 percent each favoured article format and interview formats..19 percent opined in favour of photograph. They use to see science photographs with great curiosity. It are a mixed response. Though they like all format of presentation of science news.

#### Discussion of the result .

From the above findings, it is clear that science is a subject of interest among youths. They read science news published in newspapers. It could still not become a very popular subject for which they would have a great curiosity. On the other hand, the reporting part of science news is also very poor. This is also among several reasons for low popularity of science news. Though all of them do not have their first choice for reading science news. The design of news presentation has a positive effect on news reading habit. It motivate readers for reading news. However the awareness towards reading science news is not satisfactory.

#### Important findings conclusions and suggestions.

Followings are important findings and conclusions of the study-

- The data analysis reveals that science is one important subject of study among youth.
- The respondents in general like to read science news but it is not in their first priority.
- Though they read newspaper but TV is the most popular media for science news among them.
- The design of newspaper play important role in attracting science news.
- Different respondents have variety of choice in science subject.
- Mother language is more popular for reading science news.
- The present quality and quantity of scientific material given in newspaper is not satisfactory.
- Youths have curiosity for science news reading and read news more than once and take help of other references if necessary for better clarification of the news .
- For them, Science reading is little different than the reading of other subject and they want to read it in a more reserved manner.
- There is not any tendency of collection of material by the most of the respondents.
- Most of the respondents are not very habitual of reading any magazine or science journals .

#### Limitations of the study

The present study has following limitations--

- This study has been done among college and university youths of Kanpur city.
- It is based on survey methods taken questionnaire as a tool.
- The background of respondents has not been considered in the analysis of the Data.

#### Suggestions for further study-

Following suggestions are being given for further study-

- This study can be done among the person of other age group of society.
- Such study can be done in reference to other media specially magazines and web media.
- Present study can be done in a more microscopic manner.
- How does reading habits differ in reference to the youth of rural and urban cities?

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