Periodic Research

What drives the Feature Story Reader? A study of preferences, perceptions, and contextual influences that affect the readership of feature stories appearing in Print Media

Abstract

Feature stories appearing in newspapers are one of the quintessential ingredients of the newspaper content as they fulfill the readers' need to connect with the humane ramifications of the news events. From providing informative trivia alongside a news report to a stand-alone heart warming survivour story or a personal experience feature, the subject matter and themes of feature stories are varied. It is interesting to analyze how the readers make a choice from the vast variety of subject matter and what are the factors that influence these choices. The present paper explores the themes that are most popular and preferred by the feature readers. Based on the theories of selectivity, the paper makes an attempt to outline the associations between the demographics and psychographics of the feature readers and their reading preferences. The paper also explores the affect that the internal and external context of reader has on the reading preferences. The findings show that News Features, Lifestyle Features, Art and Culture Features, Review Features and Health Features are the most preferred categories. Demographics and Psychographics are closely associated with the reading preferences and the internal and external context affects the readers' preferences.

Keyword: Feature story, Reader preferences, text, context, reader.

Bhavneet Bhatti
Assistant Professor
School of Communication Studies
Panjab University, Chandigarh

Introduction
Feature Story: The Soul of Journalistic Writing

Newspapers for centuries have satiated the need for information, analysis, surveillance, debate and discussion. While the news reports perform the function of keeping the reader abreast with the latest happenings in the society, the reader's need for emotional gratification is undoubtedly fulfilled by the feature stories that appear in the newspaper. Be it a sidebar giving interesting trivia about an event, a utility feature providing tips and techniques that help the reader or the heart warming stories of triumph and tragedy; feature stories with their multi hued subject matter and vibrant writing style fulfil the reader's need to delve into the humane ramifications of an event.

Providing a human-interest slant to the newspaper content the feature stories have today become a quintessential ingredient of the newspaper content. Although the heart of media content is said to be the news story that relates to the who, what, when, where, why and how of the current events; the soul of mass media content is believed to lie in the feature stories that explore the emotional and humane dimensions of reality.

Elaborating the vital role that feature stories play for the newspaper is an observation by Lord Northcliffe, the British newspaper tycoon and one of the early pioneers of tabloid journalism.

"It is hard news that catches the readers. Features hold them".

Lord Northcliffe (as cited in Harrower, 2010, p.113)

According to him, feature stories are the essential newspaper content that holds the attention of the readers. Several researchers and journalism experts have interpreted Northcliffe's observation. For McKay (2013) while hard news is much the same wherever you read, features create a unique tone and character and thus satiate the need of the reader to understand and relate to the event. Metzler (1986) believes that a good feature story is a creative work of art. According to him, what makes the feature story stand out is the fact that a feature writer controls the facts by

Periodic Research

selection, structure and interpretation rather than facts controlling the writer as in the case of a news story. Gorney (as quoted in Harrower, 2003, p.113) mentions the very essence of feature writing is passionate interest in the subject. For her a feature writer's most essential quality is a crazed curiosity and a desire to know everything about the subject, about five times more than what is going to be used in the story. Citing an extension of a popular definition of news,

Harrower says

An anonymous editor once observed that when a dog bites a man, that is *news.* How fast the dog was running is s*ports.* The litigation that results is *business.* How the man tastes when the dog bit him, and why dog attacks are on the rise, and first-aid tips for treating dog bites...those are *features.* (Harrower, 2003, p.112).

Various interpretations and definitions show that a feature story can be understood as a form of journalistic writing that covers a selected issue in depth. It is based on facts like a news report but uses slant and style of writing that may resemble a piece of fiction with use of appeals like emotion, suspense and humour. Feature stories however do not exist in isolation, they are affected by the socio political events and take form and shape in response to the same.

Feature Story Reader and Contextual Influences

As the socio political context gives way to a multi hued subject matter for the feature stories, it is interesting to analyse the choices that feature story readers make while choosing the most preferred content from within the feature story content of the newspaper. Here it becomes pertinent to understand the term context, specifically with reference to present study. Context can be understood as the set of all entities or situations in which a message is conveyed and received. While the internal context of an individual refers to the current mental state, within which the individual's behaviour is generated, external context refers to the physical and social environment that influences the choices, behaviour and decisions of an individual, in turn influencing how he receives and interprets any information. The internal and external context of the reader can be seen as an important factor that influences the choice of the feature story reader. Coupled with the demographic and psychographic profile of the reader, these contextual influences help understand what drives the feature story reader's preferences and perceptions.

Review of Literature

Several works across time and around the world show a close connection between the mass media consumption and the factors that influence this consumption. Schwartz (1980) reports significant differences in newspaper consumption in different segment of readers. According to him, both the demographics and psychographics of the readers have a significant association with the newspaper use. Wang (1982) looks at the perception of readers towards a newspaper that carries only soft news and feature stories. Undertaking a survey of 202

subscribers of *Min Shun Bao* (The People's Living Daily) he reported that the newspaper was not as successful as the publishers had hoped it to be. One half of the total respondents rated the content of the paper as fair and only one-third said it was quite good. Mings (1997) reports the gratifications sought from print newspapers and later compares them to online newspapers. The work becomes relevant to present study as it undertakes to explore the gratifications people seek from reading feature stories.

Several impact studies conducted by Readership Institute North-Western University look at the correlation between newspaper content and consumer satisfaction, the reading habits of individuals and the gratifications sought by reading variety of content in newspapers. The important findings of the study show that a typical U.S. newspaper – regardless of the size- offers a story mix emphasizing sports, politics/government/war, police/crime, health /home /food /fashion /travel and business stories. These five categories take up almost 75% of the typical weekday newspaper's space, while the other 25% is a mix of entertainment, science, arts and disasters, etc.

An impact study conducted by Readership Institute, North-Western University (2001**)** measures newspaper content, consumer reaction and looks at the correlations between the two. The content when seen vis-à-vis consumer satisfaction showed that content practices relate to consumer satisfaction. The study concluded that changing content can increase satisfaction-and that satisfaction has the potential to translate into higher readership. Another study by the Readership Institute (2004) establishes a connection between the newspaper text and the reader experience. The study suggests that readers not only want to see people like themselves but also want to see the life around them reflected in their local daily newspaper.

Thus the research so far shows a close connection between the reader profile and their reading experiences. The studies also show that the reading experiences can help shape better content for the newspapers. However the studies so far look at the readership of the entire newspaper content, the present paper is an attempt to focus on the readership of feature stories as they are believed to be the humane form of journalistic writing that has an intimate relationship with the socio cultural events.

Theoretical Perspective

'Although we are besieged at every moment by impressions from our whole sensory surface, we notice so very small a part of them.'
William James (As cited in Barrett,1961, p.84)

As the present paper deals with the study of reader preferences and perceptions, it becomes essential to understand the theoretical foundations that underlie the choice that readers make while consuming the newspaper content

Reader Preferences and Perceptions vis-à-vis Theories of Selectivity

The concept of selectivity puts forth various factors that come into play when a reader makes a

Periodic Research

choice to pay attention to a specific part of the content amongst the flood of information he is exposed to. These factors also explain and describe various kinds of information that people look for in the mass media and the uses that they make from this information. Consistency Theories, Utility Theories and Theories of Selective Influence together help understand the factors that could be governing the choices that a feature reader makes while reading the feature stories.

Consistency Theories

Based on a premise that an individual is beset by numerous conflicting forces and strives to achieve an internal equilibrium, the consistency theories believe that a person has capabilities of selecting the media content that help him attain this equilibrium. According to Davison, James and Yu (1982), individuals consciously and subconsciously, select from the flow of communications those ideas that fit in with their attitudes and values and are consistent with their existing values and beliefs about the world. At the same time, they ignore, miss out or forget communications that would be 'dissonant' or that do not 'fit in'. The approach holds significance to the present study as it can help understand the choice of themes and subject matter by the readers.

Utility Theories: Uses and Gratifications Approach

According to uses and gratifications, approach people pay attention to, perceive and remember information that is purposive and consciously select messages that fulfill their needs. Thus, the Uses and Gratifications approach becomes significant for the present study as it can help understand the reasons behind readership of feature stories and the effect these feature stories have on the reader.

Theories of Selective Influence

Theories of selective influence introduce the concept of limited effects or the fact that mass media has unique and non-uniform effects on the audiences depending upon the individual differences in terms of socio psychological factors, the social differentiation and the social relationships. This can help examine how reader's internal context i.e. socio psychological traits and external context i.e. belongingness to different social groups affects their choice of features read.

Thus, the theoretical framework helps establish a link between the variables of text, context and reader. It helps understand the various factors that could be the driving force behind the choice of content, the preferences and the perceptions. The theories also provide an insight into the role that the internal and external context of the reader could play in shaping the reader choices.

Aim, Objectives and Rationale
Aim of the Study

The aim of the present paper is to analyze the preferences, perceptions and contextual influences that affect the readership of feature stories. The paper aims to explore the preferences with respect to the subject matter/ theme of the feature stories, the demographic and psychographic profile of the readers and the associations if any with the reader preferences and their demographic and psychographic profile. The paper also furthers into exploring the reasons for the choices and preferences that readers make by studying the effect of the internal and external context of the reader on their reading preferences.

Objectives

1. To identify the readers and non-readers of feature stories and ascertain the reasons for non-readership.
2. To study the reading preference of respondents vis-à-vis subject matter/ types of feature stories.
3. To determine the demographics (Age, Gender, Socio-Economic Status) and the psychographics (Self-Esteem, Sociability, and Locus of Control) of the respondents and analyze the association (if any) with subject matter preferences.
4. To analyze if the feature reading is driven by the internal and external context of the readers.

Rationale

The present study is relevant as it can help understand the factors that govern the reading preferences. These can help the newspaper industry in formulating content policies and serving its reader in a better way. It can also help the feature writers draw a better connection with their reader as they become familiar with the factors that govern the choices of their readers.

Methodology

The research method used was descriptive and analytical cross sectional survey of the newspaper readers. Probability sampling procedure and area sampling method was used for the study. The population for the survey were the residents of Tricity – Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula. The total sample size was 500. The population of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula was in the ratio of 1.88: 1.76: 1. (Census 2011). The sampling unit was one individual per household.

Results
The Results of the study are as follows
Readers, Non- readers and reasons for non-readership

Before engaging into the study of trends in reader preferences, the readers and non- readers of feature stories were identified and the reasons for non-readership were ascertained. The respondents were asked to select the newspaper they had been reading and were further asked if they read feature stories in the newspaper. It was found that 92% of the total respondents (n=460) read feature stories while only 8% (n=40) did not. The present objective also entailed finding out the reasons for non-readership of feature stories. Amongst the 40 non-readers, maximum number of respondents (52.5%) chose 'Feature reading being time consuming' as the reason for non-readership. Perhaps it can be understood that the readers have less time to spend on reading matter beyond hard news. 'Lack of interest in feature stories' was the reason chosen by next highest number of respondents as 25% of the non-readers said that feature stories did not interest them. Perception of

feature stories being non-serious matter (15%) and low credibility of feature stories (7.5%) were the other two reasons cited by non-readers.

Reading preference of respondents vis-à-vis subject matter i.e. types of features preferred by the readers.

An analysis of preferences vis-à-vis subject matter, showed that news features, Lifestyle features, Art and culture features and Health features were some of the popular categories of features (Fig 1.1). News features were the most popular and preferred amongst the feature readers as 23.48% (n=108) of total feature readers (n =460) said they preferred reading features on current issues and news related events as compared to other feature types. Side-bars, reaction pieces, interview features on political issues were the most preferred news features. The next most preferred type of features was Lifestyle Features. About 12% (n=57) of the total feature readers show preference for subject matter like food, fashion, travel, relationships and other lifestyle-oriented subjects. Art and Culture Features are the next most preferred type of features. Including detailed and descriptive pieces on a variety of art forms, cultural trends, these are preferred by 9.13%(n=42) of the Feature readers. Reviews and health related issues form the next category of most preferred subject matter with 8.7% (n=40) respondents voting for each. While movie reviews are the biggest category under the review features, these also include reviews of various forms of art, food and gadgets etc.

While subject matter to do with Science and Technology is next on the preference list with 7% (n= 32), Utility Features and Problem Features are close with 5.8% (n=27) and 5.6% (n=26) respondents preferring to read these respectively. Business features score least on the preference list with only about 4.5% (n=21) respondents choosing this category of features as their most preferred type of feature in the newspaper. 'Others' a category of features that includes personal experience features, middles, commemorative features, historical, philosophical, photo features, etc is preferred by 8.26% (n=38) of the respondents. Within this category, middles score the highest percentage.
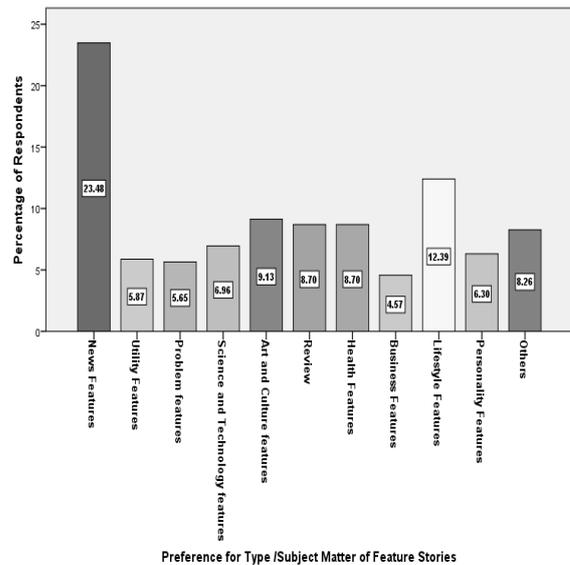

Fig 1.1 : Reader Preferences vis-à-vis Types of Features

Thus, different types of features were preferred by different number of respondents. The statistical significance of the this difference was calculated using Chi square test and the differences in number of respondents preferring to read different types of features was found to be statistically significant. [Chi sq. 138.591, df=10, p value <0.01].

Associations between the reading preferences and demographics (Age, Gender, Socio-Economic Status) of the respondents

The study aims not only at analysing the reading preferences of the respondents in terms of subject matter, it also goes further to analyse if these preferences have an association with the demographics and psychographics of the respondents. As the two shape the context in which the feature story is read, the objective also helps establish a connection between text, context and the reader. This objective entailed determining the demographics of the respondents and finding out whether the gender, age, and socio economic status influence the choices readers make regarding the types of features they read in the newspapers.

Table 1.1 Preference for Types of Features vis-à-vis Gender

Preference for subject matter	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
News features	**86**	**22**	**108**
Utility features	17	10	27
Problem features	20	6	26
Science and Tech features	26	6	32
Art and Culture features	18	24	42
Review	26	14	40
Health features	30	10	40
Business features	18	3	21
Lifestyle features	**26**	**31**	**57**
Personality features	23	6	29
Others	30	8	38
Total	320	140	460

While males prefer reading news features that focus on issues and events that are news oriented and

Table 1.2 Preference for Types of Features vis-à-vis Age Groups

Types of Features	Age				Total
	30 to 40 years	40 to 50 years	50 to 60 years	60 and above	
News features	3	29	36	40	108
utility features	2	2	15	8	27
Problem features	1	1	13	11	26
Science /Tech features	0	6	15	11	32
Art and Culture features	1	11	19	11	42
Review	1	8	9	22	40
health features	1	0	11	28	40
business features	1	1	13	6	21
Lifestyle features	20	12	13	12	57
Personality features	0	6	8	15	29
others	3	1	5	29	38
Total	33	77	157	193	460

topical in nature, females seem to prefer feature stories with subject matters to do with food, fashion, interior decor, travel, shopping destinations etc. In addition, while a good percentage of females chose to read features that are do with vivid descriptions of art forms and cultural subjects, males on the other hand prefer more health and science/ technology oriented subjects. **The association between gender and preference for type of features read was found to be statistically significant** [Pearson chi-square 44.465, p-value < .01]

Association between the **preference for subject matter and the age** of the respondents was also determined (Table 1.2). It was found that preferences for types of features were different in different age groups. Thus, lifestyle features were preferred by maximum respondents in the youngest age group and in all other age categories news features remained most popular. The second most popular category however was different in all age categories, it was lifestyle features in the first two age categories, art and culture in the third age group category and health features in the senior citizens. **The association between age of the respondent and the reading preference was found to be statistically significant**. [Pearson chi-square 155.345, p-value < .01]

Further, the **socio-economic status** of the respondent also showed an association with the reading preferences as choice of features read differed in different socio economic status sections (Table 1.3). One could see that baring the low income group, news features remained the most popular types of features in all sections. But the second most popular type differed in these categories, with an increase in socio economic status this preference changed from lifestyle features in low to medium,

problem features in middle to high and Personality features in High section. **The association between socio-economic status and reading preferences was found to be statistically significant** [Pearson chi-square 63.60, p-value < .01]

Table 1.3
Preference for Types of Features vis-à-vis Socio Economic Status

Types of Features	Socio Economic Status Total Score				Total
	Low	Low to Medium	Medium to High	High	
News features	3	61	21	23	108
Utility features	0	13	7	7	27
Problem features	2	9	11	4	26
Science /Tech features	1	13	11	7	32
Art and Culture features	5	23	8	6	42
Review	4	27	8	1	40
Health features	2	26	3	9	40
Business features	0	11	6	4	21
Lifestyle features	1	45	8	3	57
Personality features	0	10	9	10	29
others	0	23	7	8	38
Total	18	261	99	82	460

Associations between the reading preferences and psychographics (Sociability, Self-esteem, and Locus of Control) of the respondents

An analysis of sociability levels and preference for subject matter showed, that respondents with different levels of sociability showed significant differences in their choice of subject matter. (Table 1.4)

Table 1.4 Preference for subject matter * Sociability

Types of Features	Sociability				Total
	Low (Q1)	Low to Medium (Q2)	Medium to High (Q3)	High (Q4)	
News features	13	27	67	1	108
Utility features	2	1	21	3	27
Problem features	7	5	14	0	26
Science /Tech features	7	3	21	1	32
Art and Culture features	6	10	23	3	42
Review	10	6	23	1	40
Health features	10	9	18	3	40
Business features	3	5	12	1	21
Lifestyle features	22	5	30	0	57
Personality features	8	6	12	3	29
Others	6	7	25	0	38
Total	94	84	266	16	460

The results show that in the low sociability quartile, lifestyle features are the most popular with 23.4% respondents choosing to read lifestyle

features, followed by news features, chosen by 13.8% of the respondents. Art and culture fedatures and Health features are also popular, each read by 10.6% of the respondents in this quartile. In the low to medium quartile, news features were read by maximum number of respondents (32.1%) , followed by Art and culture features chosen by 11.9% of the respondents. In the medium to high sociability quartile, maximum respondents (25.2%) chose to read news features, however the second most popular theme was lifestyle features with 11.3% respondents choosing it as most preferred. In the high sociability quartile, results were mixed. While Personality features, Art and culture features, Utility features and Health features were preferred by a larger percentage of respondents (18.8% each) , science and technology features, Review features, News Features , business features were liked by only a few respondents. The sociability level did influence the choice of features read. **The association between the two was found to be statistically significant**. [Pearson chi square = 54.89, p value < 0.05]

An analysis of preference for subject matter amongst the respondents with different **self esteem** levels also showed differences (Table 1.5).

Table 1.5 Preference for subject matter * Self Esteem

Types of Features	Self Esteem			Total
	Low	Low to Medium	Medium to High	
News features	13	88	7	108
Utility features	1	20	6	27
Problem features	3	21	2	26
Science and Technology features	0	23	9	32
Art and culture features	1	35	6	42
Review	11	24	5	40
Health features	0	30	10	40
Business features	1	17	3	21
Lifestyle features	3	48	6	57
Personality features	0	24	5	29
Others	5	30	3	38
Total	38	360	62	460

In the first quartile of self-esteem i.e. low self esteem individuals, news features were the most popular and read by 34.2 % of the respondents, followed by Review features read by 27.5 % of the respondents. In the second quartile i.e. low to medium self-esteem while news features remain the most popular type of feature chosen by 24.4% of the respondents followed by lifestyle features chosen by 13.3 % of the respondents. Art and culture were also a popular subject matter with 9.7 % respondents choosing it as their most preferred. Others a category including various types of features is also preferred by

9.7% of the respondents in this quartile. In the third quartile i.e. medium to high self-esteem, health features were the most preferred with 16.1 % respondents choosing it as the most preferred, followed by science and technology features chosen by 14.5 % of the respondents. News features take the third slot here with 11.3% of the respondents. There were no respondents in the high self-esteem quartile.

Thus, the results implied that readers with low self-esteem choose to read about topical events but also prefer reading review features, perhaps in an attempt to add reassurance to their judgements. Those in low to medium continue to prefer news features but also read about lifestyle trends, art, and culture, philosophy, astrology, historical features i.e. a wide variety of themes. Respondents in medium to high self-esteem quartile show different trends as subject matter on health and fitness becomes their most preferred subject matter. The association between **self-esteem levels and reading preference vis-à-vis choice of subject matter was found to be statistically significant**. [Pearson chi-square 52.32, p value < 0.01]

The study of association between **locus of control** of individuals and the choice of features read showed that locus of control did influence the choice of feature read. Respondents falling in the first quartile i.e. exhibiting high internal control had mixed preferences. News features, science, and technology, Health, Lifestyle and Business were some of the preferred themes. The total number of respondents in this quartile was very few. In the second quartile that also reflected an internal control, news features turn out to be the most preferred type of features chosen by 25.6% of the respondents. Lifestyle features are the next most popular with 12.4% of the respondents choosing them. Reviews, Art and Culture, Health are some of the other preferred themes.

Those in the third quartile i.e. depicting an external control show preference for health feature as 15.3% of the respondents chose them as the most preferred. News features and Art/Culture features are equally popular with 13.8% respondents choosing to read each. Utility Features and a category called 'others' that includes philosophical features, astrological features, historical features are also a preferred subject type in respondents with an external locus of control. The fourth quartile has only 10 respondents i.e. 2.1% of the total respondents, these also show mixed preferences with Lifestyle features, news features and Art and culture features as some of the preferred themes.

Table 1.6 Preference for subject matter * Locus of Contro

Types of Features	Loc Quartiles				Total
	17 to 34	34 to 51	51 to 68	68 to 85	
News features	2	95	9	2	108
utility features	1	18	8	0	27
Problem features	0	23	3	0	26
Science and Technology features	2	26	3	1	32
Art and Culture features	1	32	9	0	42
Review	1	35	2	2	40

Health features	2	27	10	1	40
business features	0	19	2	0	21
Lifestyle features	2	46	6	3	57
Personality features	2	21	6	0	29
others	2	28	7	1	38
Total	15	370	65	10	460

Thus, readers in extreme internal and external locus of control quartiles have mixed preferences. Those falling in the second and third quartile show differences in their preferences. Those with an internal control prefer to read about topical issues and lifestyle trends, while those with external locus of control prefer to read about health and topical issues. The **association between Locus of Control of readers and the choice of subject matter was however not found to be statistically significant** [Pearson chi square = 33.43 and p value > 0.05] Thus, sociability and self-esteem of readers was associated with the choice of subject matter they preferred to read, the locus of control did not influence their reading preference.

Feature Reading and the affect of internal and external context of the reader

As reader preferences and choices guide the trends in mass media content, a deeper understanding of what drives the reader preferences was essential for the present study. Therefore the present paper entailed a study of the affect that the internal and external context of the reader has on his readership While internal context of the reader was defined by the state of mind, needs, beliefs and values of the reader; the external context was shaped by his physical and social environment. Feature readers were asked to respond to a series of statements that reflected the influence of internal and external context of the readers on their reading preferences, while answers in affirmative showed that feature reading was context driven, negative answers showed that context did not influence the reading of features.

The results from close ended questions revealed that a higher proportion of respondents agreed to the feature reading being driven by their internal and external context (Table 1.7).

The **internal context** of the readers comprised of various factors. Mood or state of mind was an important parameter that could influence what the respondents choose to read in newspapers. The

same was reflected in the survey results as 75% of the respondents admitted that their feature reading was influenced by their current mood that could vary from happy, sad, stressed, angry, bored etc. Besides the mood of the respondent, another factor that was a part of the internal context of the reader was their need/desires/motives that varied from basic and primary needs to hierarchy of other higher needs. The feature readers were asked if their need/ desires influenced their reading of features or the choice of subject matter and 70.7% (n=325) of the respondents agreed. Another factor that formed an important part of the internal context of the reader was the beliefs, values, and attitude of the reader. The respondents when asked if their value systems, beliefs, and attitude towards life had any influence on their reading preferences had a mixed response .

Closely associated with the internal context of the reader was his physical and social environment that made his **external context**. The study of external context included the affect of placement of a reader on his choices. Where the placement of the reader was concerned 60.8% (n=280) of the respondents said that they read more feature stories of their choice when they were alone and had leisure time at hand rather than in a group situation. The next factor was affiliation to a political, religious or social group. For 73.9% (n=340) of the respondents, their group affiliations became a major factor in their feature reading preferences, one of the prime reason being the interests of the individuals being guided by the group they belonged to. Another factor that was believed to be influencing the choice of feature reading of the respondents was the events of importance in the vicinity of the respondent. Amongst the total number of feature readers, 72.8% (n=335) said that the events of importance in their vicinity influenced their feature reading.

Using the binomial test, the results were found to be statistically significant for both internal and external context statements. Thus, one could say that the number of respondents whose feature reading was driven by their internal and external context was significantly higher than the proportion of respondents who believed otherwise.

Table 1.7 Feature reading vis-à-vis internal and external context of the reader.

Internal and External Context of the Reader	Category		N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
The choice of features I read is influenced by my current mood	Group 1	Yes	345	.75	.50	.000
	Group 2	No	115	.25		
	Total		460	1.00		
My choice of feature reading depends on my current needs	Group 1	No	135	.29	.50	.000
	Group 2	Yes	325	.71		
	Total		460	1.00		
My choice of feature reading is influenced	Group	No	190	.41	.50	.000

Periodic Research

by my beliefs	1					
	Group 2	Yes	270	.59		
	Total		460	1.00		
The choice of features i read is influenced by if i am in group or alone	Group 1	No	180	.39	.50	.000
	Group 2	Yes	280	.61		
	Total		460	1.00		
The features i chose to read depend on my group affiliations	Group 1	Yes	340	.74	.50	.000
	Group 2	No	120	.26		
	Total		460	1.00		
My choice of feature reading gets influenced by the political/social environment	Group 1	Yes	335	.73	.50	.000
	Group 2	No	125	.27		
	Total		460	1.00		

Thus, it was found that more readers admit that their internal and external context influenced their reading of feature stories. The results were found to be statistically significant in both cases.

Conclusions and Discussion

The readership survey revealed that News Features, Lifestyle features, Art and Culture, Health features, and Review Features were some of the types of features preferred by most of the respondents.

The demographics and psychographics of the readers showed a significant association with the reading preferences. Lifestyle features were a preferred choice for respondents in young age groups and more females than males read trend stories about lifestyle subjects. News Features were a dominant popular category but with higher age groups. With respect to psychographics, sociability and self-esteem show a significant association with the choice of subject matter. While those in low sociability read more about lifestyle trends, those in medium to high sociability prefer to read about topical issues and events along with lifestyle trends. In the case of self-esteem levels those with low self-esteem read review features along with the topical issues, those in medium and high self- esteem read diverse themes and health features more than other types of features.

Another area of study was the influence of the internal and external context on the reading preferences and the change in feature stories. The survey results showed that state of mind, mood, inner desires, beliefs, attitudes along with the physical and social environment of the reader that includes his placement, his affiliations to different groups and events of importance in his vicinity all have a significant influence on the feature reading of respondents.

Thus one can conclude that feature stories that are an essential ingredient of the newspaper and the feature stories have varying preferences amongst the various types of features. These preferences show strong associations with demographics and psychographics of the respondents. Hence one can conclude that the demographics, psychographics and the internal and external context of the reader drives the choices that the feature reader makes from the available content.

Suggestions

Further studies can be conducted on other factors that could be affecting the reader preferences. Also an analysis of the affect of context on the reading preferences can be done in greater detail with respect to influence of the social, political events driving the content choices.

References

1. Barrett,W.F. (2011). *On the threshold of the unseen : An examination of the phenomena of spiritualism and of the evidence of survival after death.* Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
2. Davison,W.P., Boylan,J., & Yu, F.T.C. (1982). Mass media: Systems and effects. (2nd ed.).New York, NY: Holt Rinehart and Winston.
3. Harrower, T. (2003). Beyond breaking news. In *Inside Reporting: A practical guide to the craft of journalism.* (p. 113). Retrieved from http://books.google.co.in/books?id=1prJ52NSf2AC&pg= PA19&dq=Harrower+2003+%2B+Feature+Story&hl=en& sa=X&ei=rqhUdffNpGyrAel_oHoCw&ved=0CC4Q6AEwA A#v=onepage&q=Harrower%202003%20%2B%20Featu re%20Story&f=true
4. McKay, J. (2013). *The magazines handbook.* (3rd ed.). Retrieved from http://books.google.co.in/books?id=LrrnN2r7C_cC&pg=P R8&lpg=PR4&dq=Mckay+2006++%2B+the+Magazines+ Handbook
5. Metzler, K. (1986). *Newsgathering.* (2nd ed.).Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
6. Mings, S. M. (1997).Uses and gratification of online newspapers. *The Electronic Journal of Communication*, 7(3). Retrieved fromhttp://www.cios.org/EJCPUBLIC/007/3/007312.HTM L
7. Readership Institute, Media Management Center at Northwestern University. (2001). *Newspaper Content: What makes readers more satisfied.* Retrieved from http://www.readership.org/content/editorial/data/what_co ntent_satisfies_readers.pdf
8. Readership Institute. (2004). *Content and service : Current drivers of key experiences.* Retrieved from http://www.readership.org/new_readers/data/content_ser vice_drivers.pdf
9. Schwartz, S.H.(1980). A general psychographic analysis of newspaper use and life style. *Journalism Quarterly,* 57, 392-401.
10. Wang, G. (1982). A newspaper without news. *Journalism Quarterly*, 59(2), 393-411.