

Media Professional's Awareness of Various Information Sources and their Diversified Information Needs: A Case Study

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Abstract

The study explores the awareness of various information sources used by media professionals to meet their diversified information needs. A structured questionnaire was prepared and it was distributed to 350 media professionals in 14 different newspaper agencies including print and digital media agencies situated in Delhi-NCR. The different standard statistics methods and tools were used to analyse the data. The findings of the study reveals that the 'Internet' is one of common source for media professionals to get their required data and information.

Keywords: Media professionals, Information seeking behaviour, Information needs, Information sources, Mass media, Media libraries, Newspaper journalists

1. Introduction

Information received through media is regarded as credible source of information by the society. It is defined as all facts, data, knowledge and imaginative ideas of mind which are communicated formally or informally in any format of reference sources. Thus, information means the communication of knowledge. It is also considered a key resource for the development of a nation. Effective and efficient utilization of information has contributed in a big way, towards the progress of the society. It is playing an important role in all spheres of human's activities.

Mass Media

Mass media is one of the superlative slogan in the today's ICT World. It keeps huge importance in the information exchange, and it has actually changed the whole world into an "Information society". Mass media has made its place in our day to day life and has penetrated each and every aspect of our life. It has made the life of people very easy and comfortable. Mass media serves the information needs of the people both on individual basis and collective basis. It also serves the need for the individuals with some special needs such as sports, politics, serials, entertainment, dance, plays, music, news, movies and reality shows etc. Different people have different choices, some may like news channels some may have interest in politics, while some people like to watch only movies or some entertainment shows. In simple words, Mass media is an assorted collection of media technologies that reach many of the masses in a short duration of time through mass communication. These communication media technologies are mainly combined with broadcast media and print

media. Basically, broadcast media conveys the information electronically and includes television, radio, movies, taped music, mobile, internet etc. whereas print media use a physical object for the retrieval and public exposure of the information such as newspapers; magazines pamphlets, etc.

Media Professionals

Media professionals are the main force behind publishing information in the newspapers and news channels, they gather information from different sources on various aspects of the society and provide the relevant information. They are information consumers as well as communicators, who channel their energy to provide information to the masses.

Significance of Mass Communication and Mass Media

Mass communication caters to the mass audience by taking a message to various media or communication channels. For instance, the news media is the main source of information for the masses. This not only keeps the people abreast of the latest developments in different spheres of life, but also helps them to build an opinion and formulate their voting strategies. The news media is one of the most important instruments used for the propagation of culture, idea and opinions.

2. Literature Review

To explore the real problem number of research studies have been conducted by the researchers to understand the concept of information seeking behaviour of media professionals. Media professionals depend on numerous information sources for news writing and in creative writing process.

Joseph, R. (1993) conducted a study on Indian journalists with the aim to know how Indian journalists use the libraries with special reference to media professionals from eight newspaper media house libraries located in Kerala with a sample size of 297 respondents. The findings of the study revealed that Kerala journalists used the library to get the background information, to obtain the specific items of required information, to write articles and news items & writing features, news editing and verification of the particular information. He further alluded to the fact that news magazines, press clippings and reference books were found to be mostly used information sources of the library. A startling revelation is that only 27% journalist visit libraries more than once a week with 21% journalists use library more than once in a day.

Campbell, F.'s (1997) study revolves around journalistic process with a focus on identification of issues and gathering background information which is used to prepare the news. The study reveals reporters construct news by interpreting the collected information. The operational rules that are used to collect relevant facts and background information, educational rules are used and related to organizational requirements. The study also reveals since time is very limited in preparing a news story the sources of information are very wide and varied which contains personal contacts as well as electronic databases. Libraries are also utilized for obtaining information and to fulfill the information needs of the users.

Millen and Dray (2000) conducted a study on Information sharing amongst journalists with special reference to online community. The study reveals that there is a general increase in

message activity over time with the discussion groups geographically dispersed. The major revelation is that one community of media professionals has a commitment to help others and sharing information through announcing shared information sources. On the basis of the result of the study it can be stated that a small segment of the journalist community interested in utilizing new technologies.

Anwar and Asghar (2009) in the study on Information seeking behaviour of Pakistani newspaper journalists reveals that the journalists utilize a variety of formal and informal sources of information. The journalists, mainly need information for news writing or preparation of news items and they give high significance to their personal collection of information sources; their day to day conversation and updated news dairy. They are highly satisfied with the internet sources; they utilize in house E- Libraries for gathering the ideas for storylines and background information. The authors revealed that the crucial difficulties in searching of the required information facing by the journalists are lack of training and in the accessing process of international sources of information.

Nasreen, A. and Zuberi, A. (2010) conducted a study and investigated the use of information channels and libraries among media persons and awareness about information sources by media professionals in Karachi. The study reveals that the Library was often used by the media persons and newspaper clipping service, background information from library servers, information about previous telecast stories are found high in demand. Use of Internet by the newspaper professionals was found high as compared to Radio and T.V media persons. It was also found that the use of the libraries among radio practitioners was found to be very low.

Dan's (2011) study entitled "Model Analysis in information behaviour" explores several theoretical models of information behaviour and information seeking behaviour with special reference to representative models which were used in Western Countries. Among the various models Ellis, Wilson and Kuhlthau's models related to the information seeking behaviour and their process seems to be very useful.

3. Objectives of the study

The objective of the study is to examine the process that explains the sources from where the media professionals are aware of the existence of various information sources.

4. Research Methodology

Survey method was used for data collection. The data was collected through self - administrated questionnaire. 350 questionnaires were distributed between the two types of media professionals (175 media professionals from newspapers and 175 media professionals from news Channels) working in 14 different media agencies situated in Delhi-NCR region. The questionnaire was distributed personally at their work place. Most of the questionnaire were distributed at the time of their personal visit into the library and some questionnaire were distributed with the help of the library professionals.

5. Analysis, Findings and Interpretation

In order to determine the information seeking behaviour of professionals from the media house a detailed frequency distribution, descriptive analysis, independent sample t-test were done. The analysis findings and interpretation of the study are discussed below:

Media professional’s awareness of various information sources and their diversified information needs

In mass communication a source can be a person, publication or other documents and records that gives timely information This section includes the detailed analysis of the study. The frequency distribution of the collected responses from media professionals has been given in Table1.

Table 1: Frequency distribution for various information sources

Information sources (To Know about the existence of various information sources)	Least Preferred	Less Preferred	Slightly Preferred	Highly Preferred	Extremely Preferred
Discussion with the fellow media professionals	5 (1.4%)	25 (7.1%)	67 (19.1%)	95 (27.1%)	158 (45.1%)
Through Internet	11 (3.1%)	15 (4.3%)	28 (8.0%)	95 (27.1%)	201 (57.4 %)
Discussion with the library staff	39 (11.1%)	68 (19.4%)	80 (22.9%)	88 (25.1%)	75 (21.4%)
Review articles in journals and periodicals	23 (6.6%)	56 (16.0%)	84 (24.0%)	101(28.9%)	86 (24.6%)
From Library i.e. Library catalogue	12 (3.4%)	72 (20.6%)	142 (40.6 %)	104 (29.7%)	20 (5.7%)

It can be interpreted from the frequency distribution given in Table 1, that majority of the media professionals i.e. 57.4 percent with the mean score of 4.31 extremely prefer internet for availing the required information about the existing sources of information about a particular news or information. The reason behind this is that Internet provide latest, updated, speedy and accurate information related to all walk of human's life and with the help of the internet, media professionals can get worldwide information from any place of the world. The other sources which are also extremely preferred sources by the media professionals are ‘discussion with the fellow media professionals’ with the mean score of 4.07, is to know about the existing sources of information about a particular data and information. as in the field of mass media, experience is consider as ‘wisdom’, experienced professionals know all the technical and non-technical aspects related to any broadcast and published news. Experienced people from media profession are supposed to know the problem solving techniques i.e. how to browse the news, how to manage the information of news, how to create a good and attracted news. Therefore, media professionals extremely prefer the ‘discussion with the fellow media professionals.

Results of the study, also indicate that 24.6 percent of total media professionals prefer the ‘review articles in journals and periodicals’, to know about the existing sources of information about a particular news or information. These kinds of review articles outline the current state of understanding of a particular subject. Close to 25.1 percent of total media professionals prefer the ‘discussion with the library staff’, to know about the existing sources of information about a particular news or information. It was also found in the study that ‘library catalogues’ are least preferred by media professionals in order to know about the existing sources of information about a particular news or information.

Overall, it can be said that majority of the media professionals prefer the ‘internet’ with the mean score of 4.31, for availing the required information about the existing sources of information about a particular news or information while ‘library catalogues’ with the mean score 3.14, are least preferred by media professionals in order to know about the existing sources of information about a particular news or information.

Descriptive Analysis

The media professionals’ awareness about the existence of information came from different sources such as discussion with friends, seniors, domain experts, library personals etc. In order to ascertain that fact in this study, the descriptive analysis has been done using mean score, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. The results of descriptive statistics have been given in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of the information sources

Sources from where Media professionals came to know about the existence of information sources	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Discussion with the fellow media professionals	4.07	1.027	-.868	-.104
Through Internet	4.31	1.006	-1.663	2.336
Discussion with the library staff	3.26	1.298	-.213	-1.069
Review articles in journals and periodicals	3.49	1.208	-.390	-.813
From Library i.e. Library catalogue	3.14	.923	-.100	-.340

Comparative Analysis of Different Sources of Information by News Channels and Newspapers Media Professionals

There are different types of sources such as fellow colleagues, domain experts, library catalogues, internet etc. which helps newspapers and channels media professionals in understanding the presence of different information required available to them. These different kinds of sources provide the information as per the requirement of different types of media professionals (newspapers and news channels). In the current research, the respondents of the study have been divided into two categories namely, news channel’s media professionals and newspaper’s media professionals. Due to the various information needs of the different type of media professionals, various sources are being used by these professionals. In the study, the comparative analysis is done on the basis of descriptive statistics i.e. Mean score and standard deviation. Independent sample t-test has also been applied (Table 3 & Figure 1) in order to study the significance difference in the use of different information sources if any between the two types of respondents (newspapers and new channels). In the independent sample t-test the two different categories of respondents are considered as independent samples. Their mean scores are compared in the hypothesis testing process. The level of significance is assumed to be 5 percent. The null hypothesis of the independent sample t test is mentioned below:

H_{a1} : *“The media professionals know about the existence of various available information sources”*

Null hypothesis (H_{o1}): *“There is no significant difference in the ways of learning of media professional to know about the existence of various information sources”*

Table 3: Results of t-test

Sources from where Media professionals came to know about the existence of information sources	Newspapers Media professional n (175)		News Channels Media professional n (175)		T Statistics (p value)	Hypothesis Acceptance or Rejection
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Discussion with the fellow media professionals	4.12	1.018	4.03	1.036	0.832 (.406)	Accepted
Through Internet	4.01	1.189	4.62	.658	-5.896 (.000)	Rejected
Discussion with the library staff	2.96	1.131	3.57	1.383	-4.484 (.000)	Rejected
Review articles in journals and periodicals	3.88	1.089	3.10	1.197	6.398 (.000)	Rejected
From Library i.e. Library catalogue	3.23	1.004	3.04	.826	1.977 (.049)	Rejected

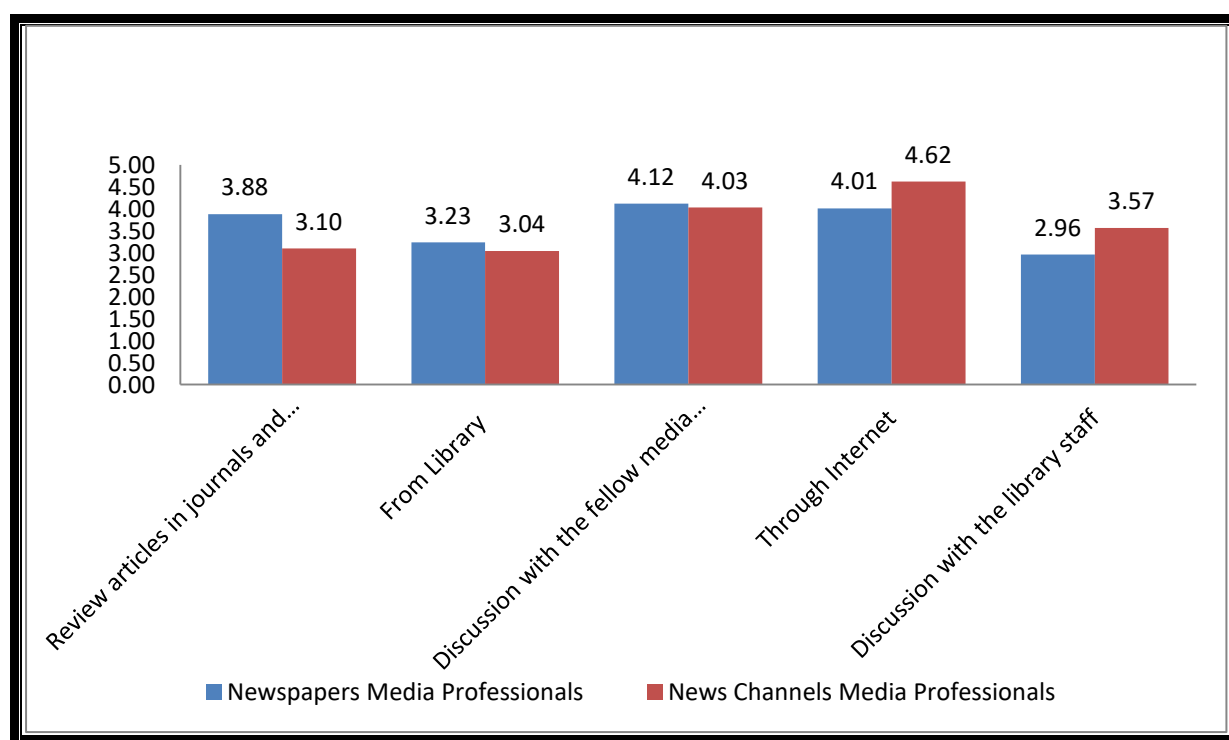


Figure 1: Comparative analysis of different sources of information by news channels and newspapers media professionals

It can be interpreted from the results of independent sample t-test (Table 3 and figure 1) that the mean value for 'Discussion with the fellow media professionals' was found to be 4.12 for media professionals working with newspapers while it was found to be 4.03 for media professionals working with News channels. The value of t-test was found to be 0.832, at a p-value of 0.406, which indicates that there is an insignificant difference in the mean values between these two groups of professionals. Thus, null hypothesis got accepted in the study,

which states that there is no significant difference in the ways of learning of media professional to know about the existence of various information sources, through 'Discussion with the fellow media professionals/ Discussion with the domain or subject experts'. It shows that media professionals in newspapers mainly consider the Discussion with the fellow media professionals/ Discussion with the domain or subject experts' as an important source to know about various information sources.

The mean value for 'Internet' was found to be 4.01 for media professionals working with newspapers while it was found to be 4.62 for media professionals working with news channels. The value of t-test was found to be -5.896, at a p-value of 0.000, which indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean values of 'Internet' among media professionals working in newspapers and news channels. Thus, null hypothesis gets rejected in the study, which states that there is a significant difference in the ways of learning of media professional to know about the existence of various information sources, through 'Internet'. It shows that media professionals working with news channels mainly consider the 'Internet' as an important source to know about various information sources compared to the media professionals working at the newspapers.

The mean value for 'Discussion with the library staff' was found to be 2.96 for media professionals working with newspapers while it was found to be 3.57 for media professionals working with news channels. The value of t-test was found to be 0.-4.484, at a p-value of 0.000, which indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean values of 'Discussion with the library staff' among media professionals working in newspapers and news channels. Thus, null hypothesis gets rejected in the study, which states that there is a significant difference in the ways of learning of media professional to know about the existence of various information sources, through 'Discussion with the library staff'. It shows that media professionals working with news channels mainly consider the 'Discussion with the library staff' as an important source to know about various information sources.

The mean value for 'Review articles in journals and periodicals' was found to be 3.88 for media professionals working with newspapers while it was found to be 3.10 for media professionals working with news channels. The value of t-test was found to be 6.398, at a p-value of 0.000, which indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean values of 'Review articles in journals and periodicals' among media professionals working in newspapers and news channels. Thus, null hypothesis gets rejected in the study, which states that there is a significant difference in the ways of learning of media professional to know about the existence of various information sources, through 'Review articles in journals and periodicals'. It shows that media professionals in newspapers mainly consider the 'Review articles in journals and periodicals' as an important source to know about various information sources.

The mean value for 'Library catalogue' was found to be 3.23 for media professionals working with newspapers while it was found to be 3.04 for media professionals working with news channels. The value of t-test was found to be 1.977, at a p-value of 0.049, which indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean values of 'Library catalogue' among media professionals working in newspapers and news channels. Thus, null hypothesis gets rejected in the study, which states that there is a significant difference in the ways of learning of media professional to know about the existence of various information sources, through 'Library catalogue'. It shows that media professionals in newspapers mainly consider the Library catalogue' as an important source to know about various information sources.

6. Conclusion and Suggestion

Overall, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the usage of various information sources to know the existence sources when it comes to news gathering, except 'Discussion with the fellow media professionals' seems to be on the higher. The study clearly shows that media professionals working in newspapers mainly consider this source very important when compared to the media professionals working with news channels.

For remaining four information sources, both types of media professionals gives equal importance to know about the existence of the source. It is evident from the research that majority of the media professionals make use of online resources of information, thus all the media libraries should be fully equipped with the online sources of information. It is also suggested that discussions with experts is an important source of information thus, media libraries should conduct some special sessions where media professionals can come, meet and share their experiences or knowledge with the newly joined media professionals. Media professionals always seek support from library staff in finding some information sources, thus the library staff should be an expert who can give expert guidance to the media professionals.

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