Impact of Covid-19 on the Indian Print Media

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Abstract

A major change has been noticed through this study, consumption of health-related news has increased double fold while entertainment, education and politics related news has reduced. COVID-19 pandemic affected news consumption,16.6% displacement of the readership, print to the newspapers also observed. TV news consumption has increased as before COVID 19 it was 68.5% and during lock down TV news consumption is 72.5%. Usage of social media and the online news has also increased during lockdown. 56% respondent stopped getting the newspapers, 23% due to fear of coronavirus infection through the newspapers, 14% respondent says hawkers are not coming. 21% says they were already reading the online version of the newspaper before the lock down so now they are not getting printed versions they are reading just online newspapers. News reading habits many times in a day has increased as earlier only 38.5% respondents were reading or viewing the news but during the lockdown it has increased to 60%. 76% respondent say they are getting the breaking news through the television.

Keywords: Reading Habits during Covid 19, Online Newspaper, News via Social Media, displacement of the readership, Print Media.

Introduction

Print media is one of the oldest forms of mass communication. Usually, we include newspapers in print media, while it also includes weekly, magazines, monthly and other forms of printed magazines. Newspapers publish daily events and investigative news, they are also published in the evening, which we also call evening newspaper, in the last few years the trend of online media has increased, today every newspaper has its own online edition.

Information technology has changed a lot in recent times in countries around the world. With the proliferation of digital, social and mobile media, the total supply of information sources has expanded significantly and today print newspapers are under increasing pressure. Today the media industry is facing tough competition, today the media industry of the whole world is no longer dominated by the old big media group (Chadwick 2017; Prior 2007; Van Aelst et al. 2017).

The COVID-19 outbreak severely hit most of the population of the world. The loss of health due to the COVID-19 pandemic is accompanied by a direct economic loss to the newspaper industry, as well as a reduction in the number of readers of their newspaper.

The spread of the novel coronavirus disease has increased rapidly around the world and is seriously affecting the life, in 2019 the disease spread from Wuhan, China to other countries. The COVID-19 outbreak spread worldwide within days, as of Jul 15, 2020, more than 13 million people have been affected by this disease (Anwar et al., 2020). India's media industry was already fighting due to the economic slowdown, due to the arrival of covid, India's media is seen to be in deep trouble. Media groups began cutting jobs and salaries on a large scale, and many organizations closed their bureau offices and editions (Priyadarshini, 2020).

On the auspicious occasion of Navratri, on March 19, The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi gave a message to a nation to counter the challenge of Covid-19, in which he urged the citizens to impose Janata Curfew on March 22 from 7:00 to 9:00. No one will be allowed to leave the houses, except people associated with essential services. The Prime Minister also appealed to the citizens not to fall prey to misinformation and said that at this time it is important for us to ensure that humanity wins and India wins (Tewari, 2020).

After the COVID-19 newspapers in India are going through a huge economic crisis. Most of the media houses in India cut their salaries to manage the crisis. Even big media houses like Bennett Coleman & Co Ltd (BCCL), which owns Times of India, Economic Times, Mirror, Nav Bharat Times, Maharashtra Times, Vijay Karnataka, etc., The Indian Express, The Tribune Publication, The Business Standard, Amar Ujala, India Ahead News, Patrika, The Hindu, NDTV, JaiHind TV and The Caravan magazine announced deferring of increments, restructuring of salary and salary cuts (Sam, 2020).

This research is an attempt to understand the role of news brands (TV, radio, newspapers) and the currently popular Internet-based media and social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. As media plays an important role in the prevention of deadly disease, COVID 19 is an infectious disease, awareness plays a very important role to control it. This research work is being done to study what changes have come in newspapers and what will be the future of print media.

Literature Review

Althaus (2002) reported that in the week following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America's Twin Towers, television network viewership doubled. Some more research also confirms that people turn to news in times of crisis (Boomgaarden and de Vreese 2007; Casero-Ripollés 2020; Westlund and Ghersetti 2015). Some facts also suggest that digital news sources and search platforms such as Google also saw a sudden increase in visitors after the September 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers of US (Wiggins 2001; Pew Research Center 2002).

Most people want to know more about the coronavirus pandemic, how dangerous the virus is and the immediate dangers it is having on our society (Bento et al. 2020).

During crisis, both online and print media can be expected to be used more and this can be seen as a positive (Westlund & Ghersetti, 2014). For example, Lu (2017) found that people turned to traditional newspapers and web news to get additional information when an earthquake struck China.

This pandemic has affected the world. We fully expect that there will be an increase in news usage in each country, media usage has increased in the first phase of the COVID 19 crisis. A survey by the Reuters Institute found that television news consumption and some online news consumption also increased, a survey data shows TV news consumption in England increased significantly in April 2020, then decreased, there was an increase again in September 2020 (Effects of Covid-19 on TV Viewing, 2020). As per the survey TV viewing in England increased by 28%, from this research work, we can guess that news consumption may have increased in other countries as well. (Porter 2020).

In previous studies it has been found that people rely on the media whenever crisis strikes, for example television radio and online news sources (Westlund and Ghersetti 2015). Newman et al. (2020) suggested that live television news has played an important role during the COVID-19 pandemic as political leaders addressed the nation directly. An example of this can also be seen in India, when the Prime Minister Shri Narinder Modi addressing the nation and announced the lock down (Tewari, 2020).

Studies by Westlund and Ghersetti (2015) indicate that the use of contemporary media, for example social media and new media-based news sources, will also increase significantly in times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a huge demand for delivering COVID-19 information globally, which has led to an increase in the use of the Internet and social media (Effects of Covid-19 on TV Viewing, 2020).

Kalogeropoulos et al. (2019) found that traditional news media tend to have more trust, while social media and online media are also viewed negatively (Castro et al. 2021).

Theories

Whenever something strange happens it prompts for more information. This need for information is related to the "Need for Orientation' (NFO) concept, used mostly in agenda setting research (Matthes 2006). McCombs and Weaver (1973) postulated that all people have some need for orientation to understand their social environment, but the perceived relevance and uncertainty of a situation can motivate this need. For example, some people believe that the election is very important (high relevance), but cannot decide who to vote for (high uncertainty), are expected to seek more information in the news and therefore the media. for greater sensitivity. (agenda setting) Influence (Maths 2006) compared to people who do not view the election as important (less relevance) or know who to vote for (less uncertainty).

Media System Dependency theory shows that whenever there is a crisis, the desire to see personal news media increases (Lowery 2004); Hu and Zhang 2014; Towers et al. 2015). Wilson Lowrey mentioned in his pilot study to examine dependencies on media after the September 11 terrorist attacks (Lowery 2004)."During a severe social

disruption there is an unusually high need for information and sense-making by individuals. According to media systems dependency theory, the mass media are generally perceived to best satisfy these needs, as they offer speed of transmission and structural connectedness to "expert" sources of information"

The NFO concept is mostly studied in the context of elections when a voter is making up his mind regarding a political candidate. There is concern about a healthy crisis and economic consequences during the time of COVID 19, but some scholars also point out that during crisis there can be uncertainty which people can reduce by getting information (Lachlan et al. 2016).

Methodology

I have chosen an e-survey for my study, because surveys are powerful research tools through which we collect valuable information. Moreover, e-survey helps in taking large sample and is less costly. Large information This increases the quality of research, so we have chosen e-survey for this research work.

In this study the respondents participated from all over India, those who were getting the newspapers before the lockdown. The questionnaire was prepared in English and Hindi, to measure the reading habits both before and after the outbreak of the pandemic. The questionnaire was sent through the google form on the various groups of WhatsApp and shared on Facebook and Instagram.

The questionnaire WhatsApp on the 300 groups around India in the month of April 2020 and May 2020 to get maximum respondents. 429 people filled the questionnaire. The sample was selected from all over India, the sample size was not big but even then, it represents the whole country. I have used SPSS to frequency of received samples. The initial goal of this survey was to study the changing reading habits of Indian print media readers due to lock down.

Following questions were asked to the respondents:

1. Which was the preferred news reading source before lockdown?

2. Which sources do you rely on for the news during lockdown?

3. How are you accessing the newspaper during Lockdown?

4. How much time were you devoting for the news update before lockdown?

5. How much time are you devoting for news updates during lockdown?

6. How are you accessing newspapers on the Internet?

7. Preferred newspaper reading source on the internet.

8. How were you receiving breaking news before lockdown?

9. How are you receiving breaking news during lockdown?

10. How would you like to read the newspaper after lockdown?

11. Most Preferred News before Lockdown and after Lockdown.
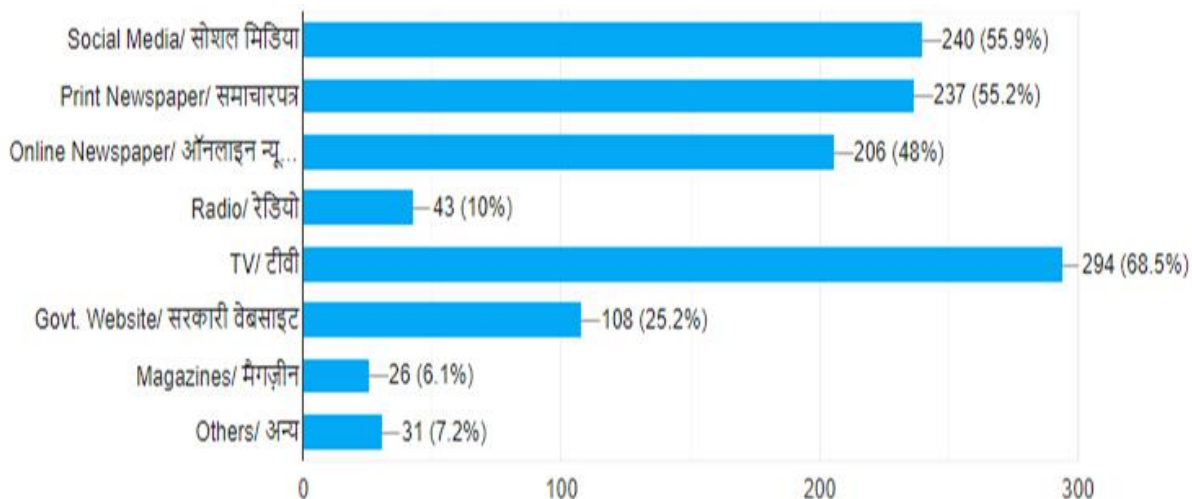
Findings

Table 1 Which was preferred news reading source before lockdown?

As per the table number 1 before the lock down most of the people (68.5%) were getting news through the television, while 54.9% respondents say they were getting news through the social media and 55.2% relying on the print newspapers, 48% through the online newspapers, 25% through the government website, 10% to the radio respectively.
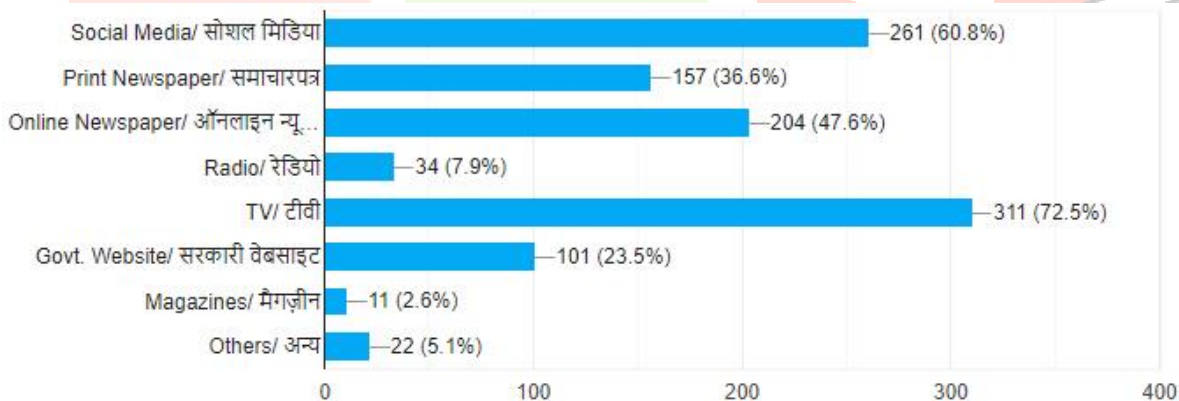

Table 2 Which sources you are relying for the news during lockdown?

As per the table number 2 during the lockdown Readership of print newspapers has reduced to 36.6 %, while television and social media has increased their demand during the lockdown 72.5% were getting news through the television and 60.8% through the social media. Radio 7.9% and Government website 23.5% also reduce their presence.
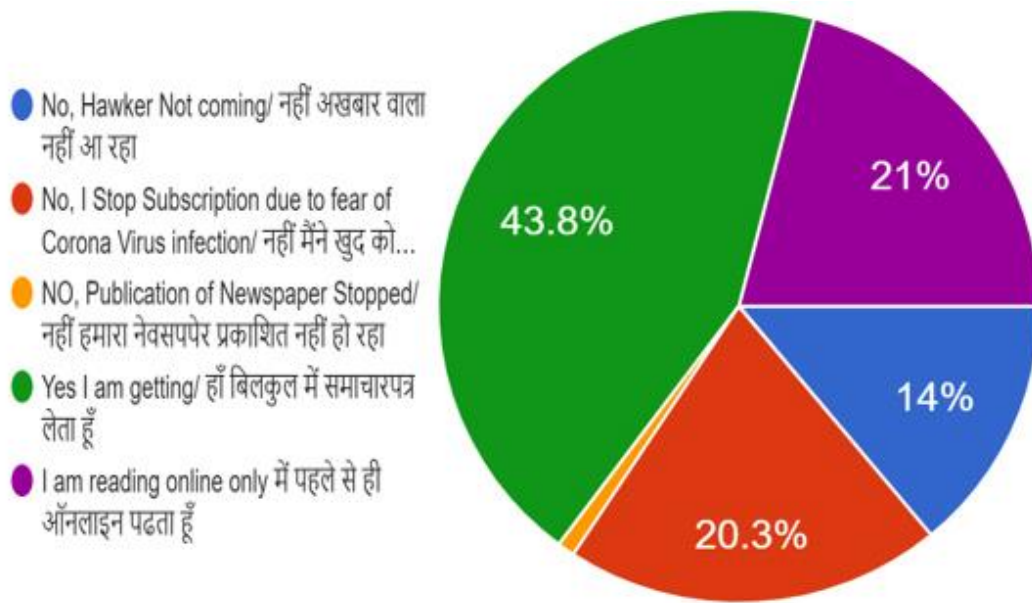
- ● No, Hawker Not coming/ नहीं अखबार वाला नहीं आ रहा
- ● No, I Stop Subscription due to fear of Corona Virus infection/ नहीं मैंने खुद को...
- ● NO, Publication of Newspaper Stopped/ नहीं हमारा नेवसपेपर प्रकाशित नहीं हो रहा
- ● Yes I am getting/ हाँ बिलकुल में समाचारपत्र लेता हूँ
- ● I am reading online only में पहले से ही ऑनलाइन पढता हूँ

Table 3: How you are accessing newspaper during Lockdown?

Table 3 indicates that 43.8% respondents were getting the newspaper even the during lockdown period while, while 21% respondent says they were already reading online news and 23% respondent says they have stop subscription due to fear of coronavirus infection through the newspapers, 14% respondent says hawkers not coming.
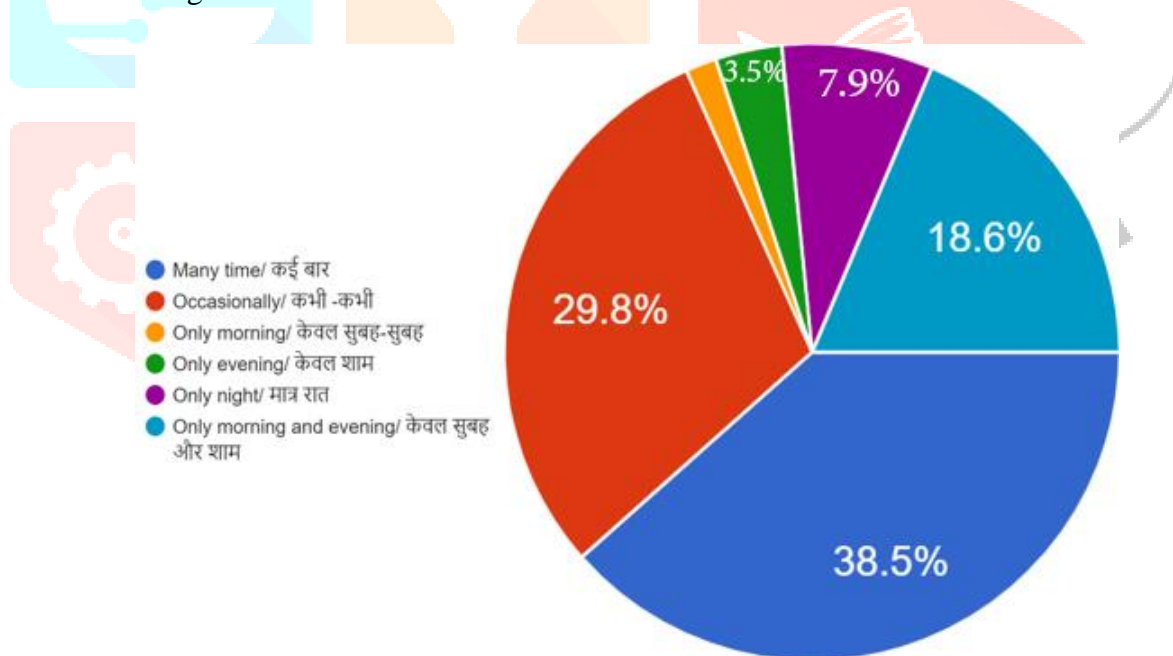

- ● Many time/ कई बार
- ● Occasionally/ कभी -कभी
- ● Only morning/ केवल सुबह-सुबह
- ● Only evening/ केवल शाम
- ● Only night/ मात्र रात
- ● Only morning and evening/ केवल सुबह और शाम

Table 4: How much time were you devoting for the news update before lockdown?

Table 4 shows that, 38.5% respondent says they were reading newspapers many times before the lockdown period whereas 29.8% says they read news occasionally and 18.6% says they read news only morning and evening, 7.9% say they read in the night and 3.5% only in the evening.
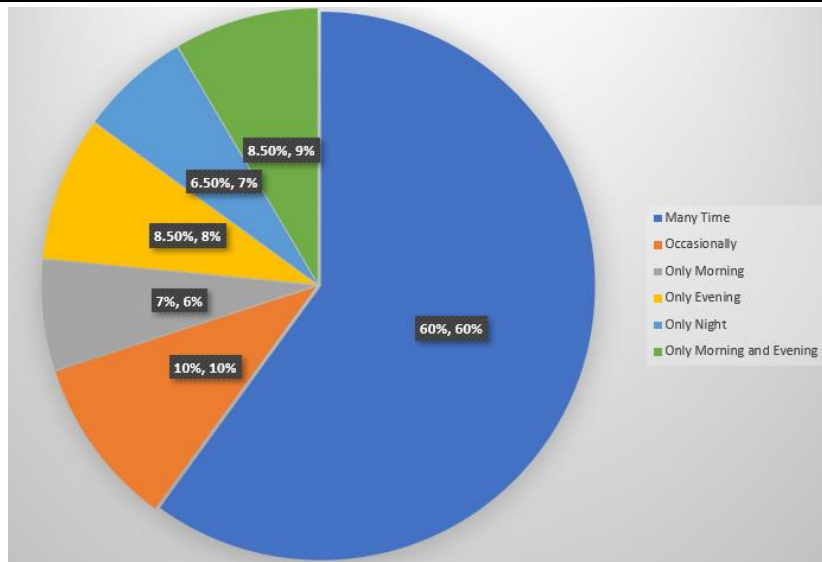
Table 5: How much time are you devoting for news updates during lockdown?

During the lockdown period people have started checking the news many times in a day as per the study 60% respondents check the news many times a day, while 10% says the check occasionally and 8.5% in the morning and evening 8.5% only in the evening and 7% only in the morning.
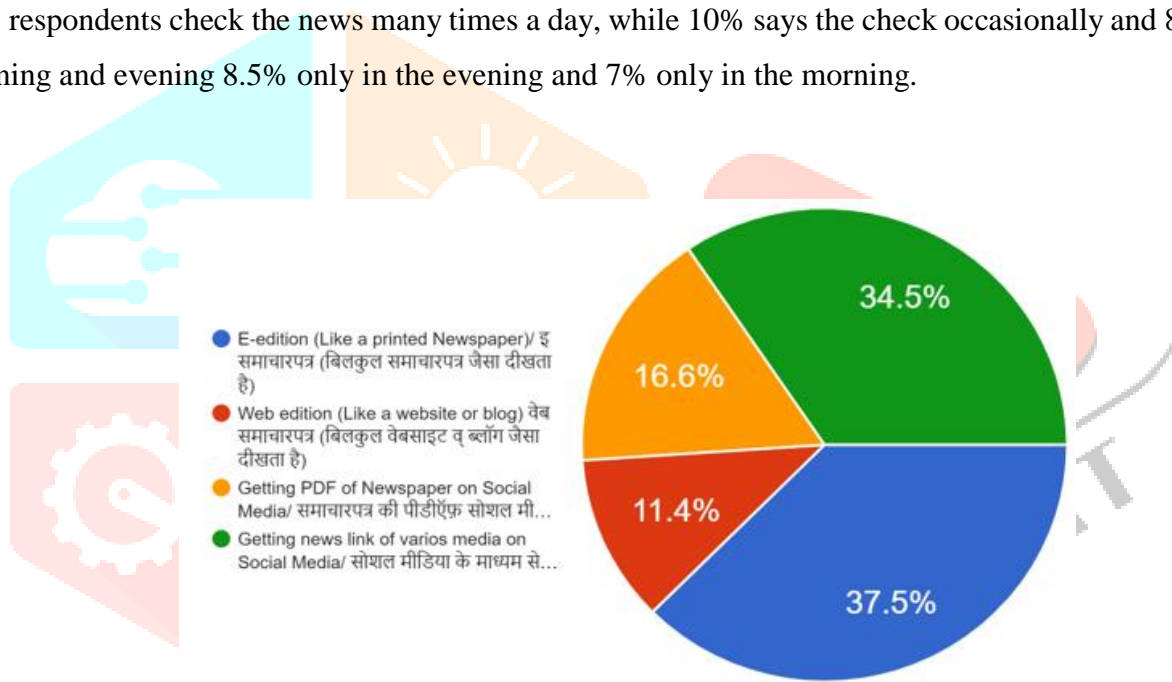

Table 6: How are you accessing newspapers on the Internet?

37.5% respondents were accessing the newspapers through the E-edition of the printed newspapers whereas 34 5% people are getting link of various media on the social media platforms, 16.6 people were getting PDF of newspapers on social media and 16.6% accessing the news through the web edition of various newspapers.
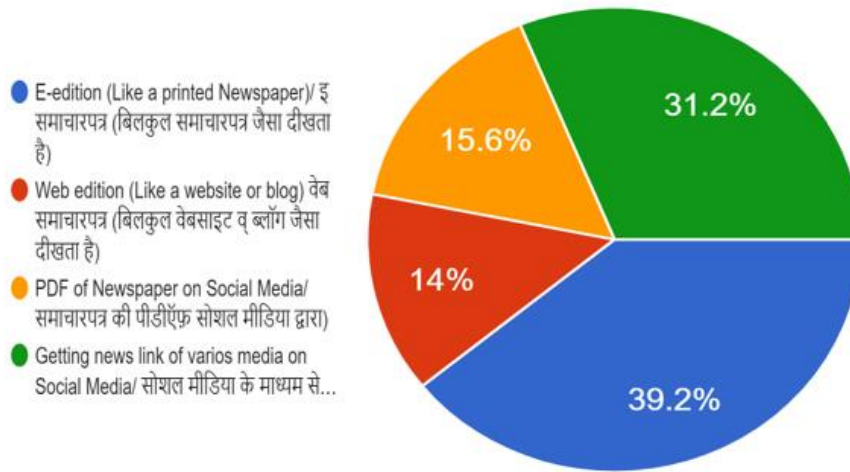
Table 7: Preferred newspaper reading source on the internet.

39.2% respondent accepted that e-edition of the printed newspapers is the preferred online reading source, while 31.2% getting news links of various media on social media, 15.6% says PDF and 14% says web edition of various newspapers is preferred online source for the news.
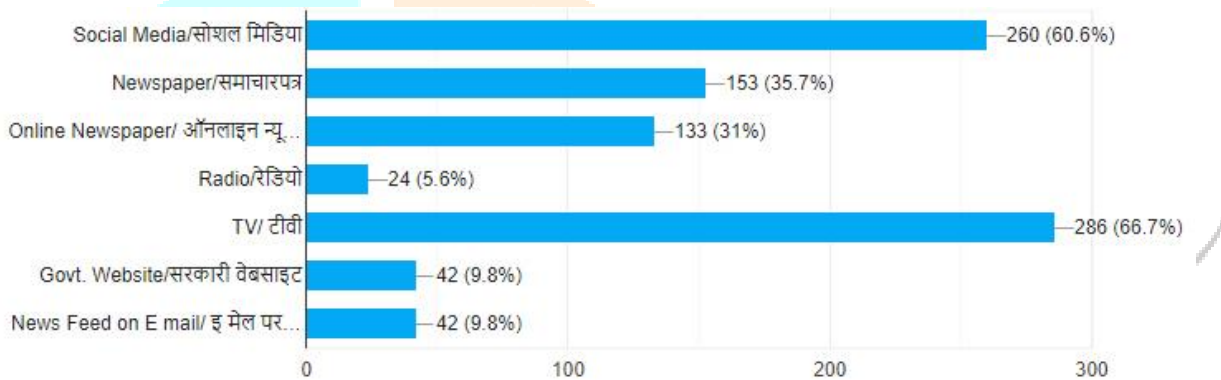

Table 8: How you were receiving breaking news before lockdown?

Table 8 indicates that 66.7% respondents were getting the breaking news from the television before the lock down while 60.6% says they were getting breaking news from social media, 37.5% getting from the newspapers and 31% from the online news portals, only 5.6% say they get the breaking news from radio.
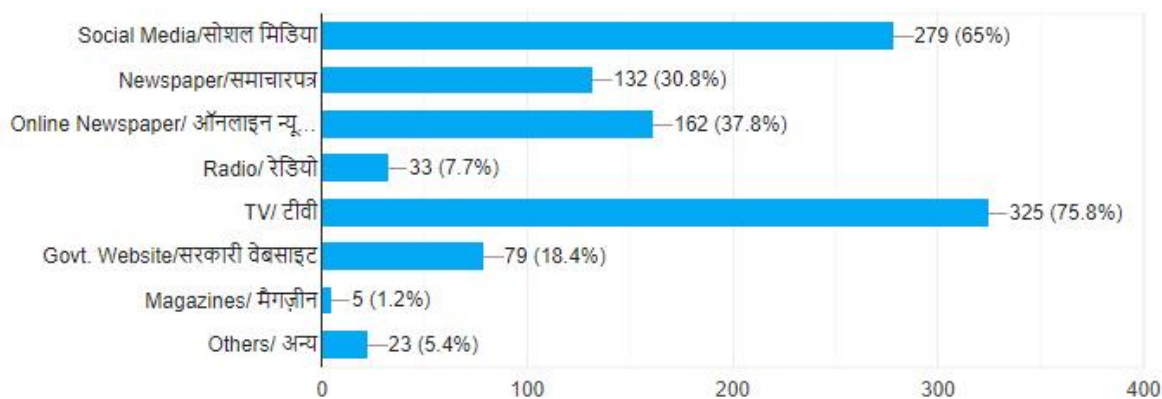

Table 94: How you are receiving breaking news during lockdown?

As per the table number 9 during the lockdown 75.8% people were getting breaking news from the television, while 65% says they are getting news from the social media, 37.8% gets from online news portals,

30.8% from the newspapers and 18.4 % from the government websites and only 7.7% gets the breaking news during lockdown through the radio.
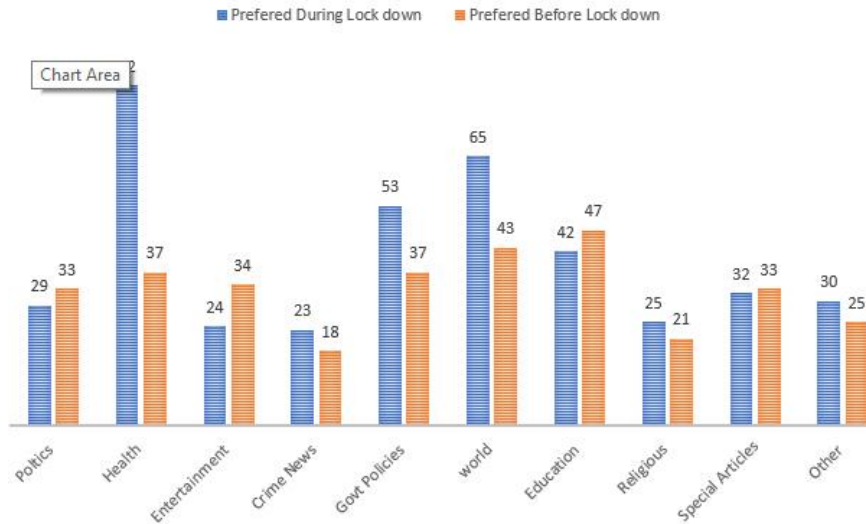

Table 10: Most Preferred News before Lockdown and after Lockdown.

Table Number 10 indicates that There is a drastic change in the news reading preference during the lockdown period as health news reading increases double fold and world news, government policies, religious, crime news consumption also increases, while consumption of reading entertainment, politics, education related news has reduced. As study shows that people were reading more education, Entertainment, politics, and special article before the lockdown.
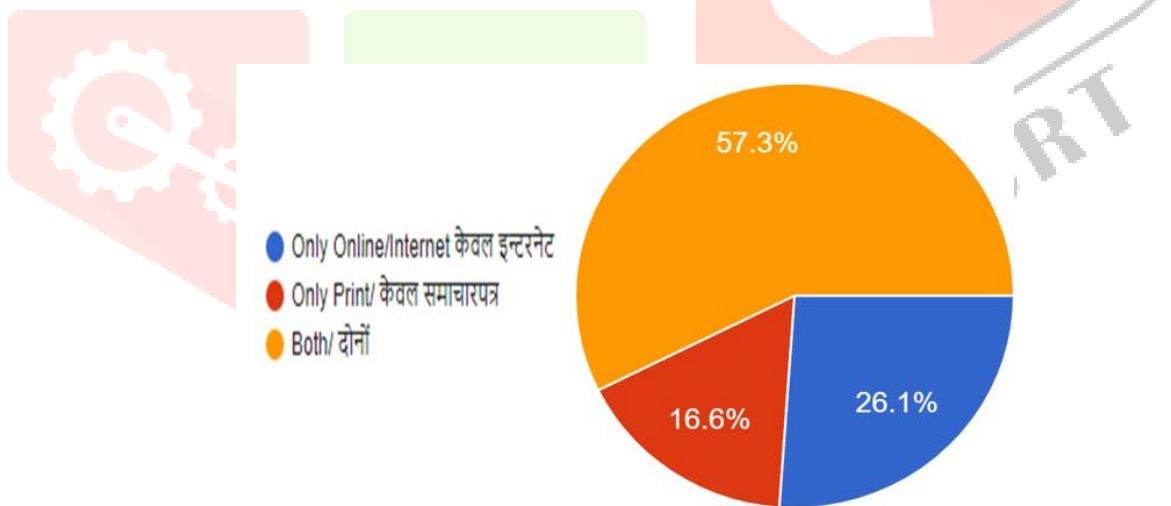

Table 5 : How you would like to read newspaper after lockdown?

Most of the respondent 57.6% says they will read both the medium online and printed version of the newspaper, whereas 26.1% says they will read news only online and 16.6% will stay to the printed version of the newspapers to consume the news.

Conclusion

This research work shows that there has been a huge increase in the use of digital media due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study indicates 68.5% of respondents who were getting the newspaper before the lockdown, their preferred news source is television, 55.2% relying on the print newspapers, 48% on the online newspapers and 55% getting the news from social media. During the lockdown period due to COVID-19 pandemic news consumption frequency through the television and social media has increased, while circulation of newspapers has decreased. 56% respondent says they are not getting the newspapers as 23% says they have stopped subscription due to fear of coronavirus infection through the newspapers, 14% respondent says hawkers are not coming. 21% says they were already reading the online version of the newspaper before the lock down so now they are not getting printed versions they are reading just online newspapers.

Study indicates that news reading habits many times in a day has increased as earlier only 38.5% respondents were reading or viewing the news but during the lock down period it has increased. Now 60% respondents check news many times in a day. Most of the respondents are accessing the newspaper through the e-edition and through the social media of the printed newspaper. It has also been found in this research that digital and social media are being used a lot in our daily life, in this time of crisis, most of the people have used digital and social media a lot.

During the lockdown period 76% respondent say they are getting the breaking news through the television earlier also 66.7% people were getting breaking news from the television. After the television, social media is the source of breaking news before and during the lockdown period. People are not considered newspaper as a source of breaking news.

A major change has been noticed through this study in the preferred news or best choice, as during the lockdown period health related news consumption has increased double fold, while entertainment, education and politics related news has reduced. Displacement of the readership is also noticed in this research as 16.6% percent respondent says now, they will read online news even after the lockdown. Rest of the readers says they will buy print and also consume news on the social media or other form of news on the internet

Suggestions

Whereas displacement of print media to online media is low, as in the beginning of lockdown some of the media experts thought there will be a big threat to print media due to COVID 19, as many papers were not printing and people were not ready to receive newspapers due to the COVID-19 pandemic threat. This study indicates that only 16.6% respondent says they will not buy the newspapers after the lockdown period.

Now newspapers should give value added news to the readers as most of the readers are not considering newspapers for the breaking news but they are ready to read it. To retain the reader's newspaper should give them investigative stories and in-depth news of breaking news. Many news portals and TV channels have started fact checking of viral messages, newspapers should also publish the fact check column of viral messages. Keeping in mind the research findings, newspapers should publish more health stories and world news as many people are now reading health related and world news.

Most of the readers are dependent on television for the breaking news, whereas all the major newspapers have started their online editions and are using social media platforms to disseminate their news. They should also flash breaking news on websites and social media platforms. This study also indicates that the reading habits change in the lockdown period now 60% of people say they are reading or watching the news many times, whereas before the lockdown only 36% were reading and watching news many times.

Newspapers usually publish spot news and breaking news on the internet edition immediately, keeping in mind that readers are ready to read and watch many times in a day, newspaper should publish some interesting stories frequently.

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