Users' Engagement and Disengagement with Malayalam Online Newspapers

Sanish M S
Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Calicut, Kerala, India
Dr. Muhammadali N
Dean, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Calicut, Kerala, India

Abstract

The study titled 'Uses and Gratifications of Malayalam Online Newspapers' is an attempt to analyse how online newspapers affect the reading habit of people and to find out the discrepancies between the levels of users' use and satisfaction with Malayalam online newspapers. In other words, the problem under study is to find the using pattern and the user's resultant satisfaction with the online newspapers.

Keywords

Uses and gratification, Online newspapers, Reading Habit

Introduction

Established newspapers are taking their online versions seriously and are investing huge amount on it these days. And so the following questions might have cropped up in your minds. Has online newspapers affected the reading habit of people? Are there any discrepancies between the levels of users' use and satisfaction with Malayalam online newspapers?

The study titled 'Uses and Gratifications of Malayalam Online Newspapers' is an attempt to address these issues. Besides it also explores the use pattern of Malayalam online newspapers by its readers.

The sample for the study was taken from the Calicut University campus. Purposive sampling was used for it, and the sample size was 120.

Statement of the Problem

The problem under study is to find the using pattern and the user's resultant satisfaction with the online newspapers in Malayalam. The title of the study is 'Uses and

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Correspondence: Email: sanishwyd@gmail.com

gratification of Malayalam online newspapers.' It also analyses whether the online reading has negatively affected the print version reading.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to know the using pattern of online newspapers and the users' satisfaction with Malayalam online newspapers. Specific objectives of the study are:

- To find out the frequencies of accessing Malayalam online newspapers by the users
- To find out the extent of users' expectations of Malayalam online newspapers.
- To find out the level of users' satisfaction with online Malayalam newspapers.
- To find out the association between users' expectation from and satisfaction with online Malayalam newspaper
- To find out how users' online newspaper use influences the readership of traditional newspapers.

Based on the objectives the following hypotheses were advanced to prove the tenability.

Hypotheses

H1. Online versions of Malayalam newspapers have negatively influenced the readership of print version.

H2. The users' expectation of the online newspapers is positively associated with their satisfaction with them.

Methodology

Survey research was used in the study considering the objectives and nature of the research work. Survey research is evaluated as the most effective method to find out the impact of certain projects. The important goal of any scientific research is to describe the nature of a population, i.e. a group or a class of subjects, variables, concepts or phenomena. Studying every member is not possible for all studies. So the usual procedure is to take a sample from the population. A sample is the subset of the population that is taken to be representative of the entire population. Taking the field manageability and other related matters, purposive samples were used for the present study. A purposive sample includes subject selected on the basis of specific characteristics or qualities and eliminates those who fail to meet these criteria.

The researcher purposively selected samples from people who read online newspaper. The selected samples were taken from Calicut University campus.

Data Collection Tool

As many as 120 questionnaires were handed out, and they were returned to the researcher. Later they were successfully coded and analysed.

The questionnaire consists of 21 questions of which questions 1-5 is related to demographic status such as name, gender, age, etc. Questions 6-9 aims to get information on the sample's using pattern of online newspaper, while questions 10-19 attempts to gather information on their expectation of and satisfaction with online newspapers. Question 20

gives an idea about the influence of online reading on print version reading, and question 21 gives an account of the respondents' favourite online newspapers.

Data Collection Procedure

Researcher directly approached the subjects who browse Malayalam online newspapers, and collected the information. Most of the variables were collected from the answers provided in the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Researcher used a five-point scale to measure the expectation of and satisfaction with online Malayalam newspaper. The five-point scale used was –strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, and strongly disagree. This measurement was used to collect survey responses.

Microsoft Office Excel software was used for the initial data entry and analysis. Student's *t* test was used to test the hypotheses.

Student's *t*-Test

Student's t-test is used to compare the means of two samples. It is named after "Student," which was the pseudonym of William Gosset. It can be used to determine if two sets of data are significantly different from each other, and is most commonly applied when the test statistic would follow a normal distribution if the value of a scaling term in the test statistic were known. The t-test assumes that the observations within each group are normally distributed and the variances are equal in the two groups (Jr, 1979).

Analysis and Findings

The study titled 'Uses and Gratification of Malayalam Online Newspapers' focuses on the variables that determine the relationship between the use pattern of and the resultant satisfaction with Malayalam online newspapers. The conceptual frame work of the study rests on the uses and gratification theory. The data was collected from 120 respondents using survey method based on purposive sampling.

The data was collected from the campus of University of Calicut in June, 2013 using a questionnaire which was meant to elicit information on respondents' demographic variables, communication behaviour, and their use and satisfaction pattern of Malayalam online newspapers.

The fundamental inquiry of the study was to test if any significant association existed between the use pattern of Malayalam online newspapers and the resultant satisfaction. A detailed account of the sample in terms of these variables is given below.

Sample profile

The total sample comprised of 120 respondents from Calicut University Campus. The gender-wise distribution of the sample is given in the Table No. 1.

Table 1: Sample by gender

Gender	Frequency
Male	81 (67.5)
Female	39 (32.5)
Total	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

As per the data in the table above, a lion share of the respondents belongs to male category with 67.5%. Females constitute only 32.5% of the sample.

Table 2: Sample by age

Age groups	Frequency
Lower age	38 (31.67)
Middle age	58 ((48.33)
Upper age	24 (20)
Total	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

Based on age, the sample was divided into three categories – lower age, middle age, and upper age. 'Lower age' comprises of respondents having age below 30, 'middle age' is 30-45 years old, and 'upper age' is age above 45.

As per the date in table 2, 'middle age' was the largest segment with 48.33%. The share of 'lower age' and 'upper age' were 31.67% and 20 % respectively.

Table 3: Sample by qualification

Qualification	Frequency
UG	44 (36.67)
PG	60 (50)
Above PG	16 (13.33)
Total	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

Respondents were divided into three categories based on their qualification – UG, PG, and Above PG where 'UG' is graduate, 'PG' is Post Graduate, and 'Above PG' is qualifications higher than PG.

Post Graduates are higher in number (50%) than graduates (36.67%) and above PG category (13.33%).

Table 4: Sample by occupation

Occupation	Frequency
Employee	97 (80.83)
Student	23 (19.17)
Total	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

The respondents were divided into two categories – employee and student. From the table 4, it is quite clear that the segment 'employee' enjoys a clear majority (80.83%) over segment 'student' (19.17%) in terms of reading online newspapers.

Use pattern of newspapers

Table 5: Use pattern of newspapers wise distribution

Frequency of use	Frequency
Daily	96 (80)
2-4 days	17 (14.17)
Once in a week	7 (5.83)
Total	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

The frequency of newspaper reading was categorised into three – daily, 2-4 days a week, and once in a week. Of all these categories, 'daily' showed a higher frequency with 80%. '2-4 days' category comes second (14.17%), and 'once in a week' category is negligible (5.83%). (See Table 5)

Use pattern of Malayalam online newspapers

There were three categories made for assessing frequency of Malayalam online newspaper use. They are daily, 2-4 days a week, and once in a week.

Table 6a: Gender wise distribution of respondents

Gender	Daily	2-4 Days	Once in a week	Total
Male	29 (24.17)	32 (26.67)	20 (16.67)	81 (67.5)
Female	12 (10)	21 (17.5)	6 (5)	39 (32.5)
Total	41 (34.17)	53 (44.17)	26 (21.67)	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

'Males' under the category of '2-4 days in a week' were the group which use Malayalam online newspaper the most (26.67%). Next comes the 'males' under 'daily' category with 24.17%. 'Females' under '2-4 days' are more in number (17.5%) than 'females' under 'daily' category (10%). In both gender, the 'once in a week' category has the lowest frequency.

Table 6b: Age wise distribution of respondents

Age groups	Daily	2-4 Days	Once in a week	Total
Lower age	11 (9.17)	16 (13.33)	11 (9.17)	38 (31.67)
Middle age	23 (19.17)	23 (19.17)	12 (10)	58 (48.33)
Upper age	7 (5.83)	14 (11.67)	3 (2.5)	24 (20)
Total	41 (34.17)	53 (44.17)	26 (21.67)	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

The 'middle age' under 'daily' and '2-4 days in a week' category has the majority with 19.17% each. 'Upper age' under 'once in a week' category has the lowest frequency of 3. 'Lower age' under '2-4 days a week' is the second major category with 13.33%.

Table 6c: Qualification wise distribution of respondents

Qualification	Daily	2-4 Days	Once in a week	Total
UG	15 (12.5)	20 (16.67)	9 (7.5)	44 (36.67)
PG	17 (14.17)	26 (21.67)	17 (14.17)	60 (50)
Above PG	9 (7.5)	7 (5.83)	0	16 (13.33)
Total	41 (34.17)	53 (44.17)	26 (21.67)	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

The category which has the highest frequency is 'PG' under '2-4 days a week' (21.67%). There was zero frequency for above 'PG' under 'once in a week' category.

Table 6d: Occupation wise distribution of respondents

Occupation	Daily	2-4 Days	Once in a week	Total
Employee	36 (30)	42 (35)	19 (15.83)	97 (80.83)
Student	5 (4.17)	11 (9.17)	7 (5.83)	23 (19.17)
Total	41 (34.17)	53 (44.17)	26 (21.67)	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

The major share of occupation was held by 'employees' under the '2-4 days a week' category (35%). 'Students' under 'daily' category are the one who use online newspaper the least (4.17%). The students who use online newspaper 2-4 days a week was 9.17%.

Sample distribution by access point

There were four categories in accessing point – home, office/library, cafe, and other. It was a multiple choice question and there were 120 respondents.

Table 7: Distribution by access point

Access point	Frequency
Home	60 (50)
Office/Library	64 (53.33)
Internet café	4 (3.33)
Others	9 (7.5)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

As many as 53.33% people used online newspaper when they were in office/library, and it is the highest among different categories. 'Home' was behind it as 50% of people opted for it. The frequency of 'others' and 'internet cafe' were insignificant (7.5% and 3.33% respectively).

Sample distribution by devices used

Devices used were categorised into three – Desktop/Laptop, Mobile/Smart phones, and Tablet. It was a multiple choice question. There were a total of 120 respondents.

Table 8: Sample distribution by devices used

Devices	Frequency
Desktop /Laptop	104 (86.67)
Mobile /Smart phone	19 (15.83)
Tablet	8 (6.67)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

'Desktop/Laptop' captured the lion share with 86.67% respondents using it for accessing online newspaper. 'Mobile/Smart phone' category got 15.83% users, and 'Tablet' has few takers (6.67%).

Influence of online reading on print version reading

Graph 1: Nature of perceived influence
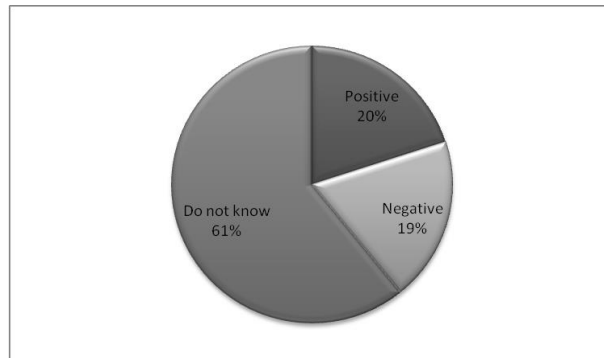
Majority of the respondents' (60.83%) print version reading was not influenced by online reading. Online reading has increased the print version reading of 20% respondents, and decreased it for 19.17%.

Table 9a: Gender wise distribution of respondents

Gender	Positive	Negative	Do not know	Total
Male	14 (11.67)	15 (12.5)	52 (43.33)	81 (67.5)
Female	10 (8.33)	8 (6.67)	21 (17.5)	39 (32.5)
Total	24 (20)	23 (19.17)	73 (60.83)	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

Online reading does not have any influence on the print version reading of majority of males and females (43.33% and 17.5% respectively). It has decreased for 12.5% of males and 6.67% of females. But it increased print version reading of 11.67% males and 8.33% of females.

Table 9b: Age wise distribution of respondents

Age groups	Positive	Negative	Do not know	Total
Lower age	6 (5)	8 (6.67)	24 (20)	38 (31.67)
Middle age	11 (9.17)	13 (10.83)	34 (28.33)	58 ((48.33)
Upper age	7 (5.83)	2 (1.67)	15 (12.5)	24 (20)
Total	24 (20)	23 (19.17)	73 (60.83)	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

As many as 28.33% of middle aged respondents does not have any influence of online reading on their print version reading, and they are the majority. The lowest frequency was in the 'upper age' category with 1.67% for 'negative.'

Table 9c: Qualification wise distribution of respondents

Qualification	Positive	Negative	Do not know	Total
UG	7 (5.83)	10 (8.33)	27 (22.5)	44 (36.67)
PG	15 (12.5)	10 (8.33)	35 (29.17)	60 (50)
Above PG	2 (1.67)	3 (2.5)	11 (9.17)	16 (13.33)
Total	24 (20)	23 (19.17)	73 (60.83)	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

Respondents having PG educational qualification under 'do not know' category is the majority (29.17%). Online reading has increased the print version reading of 1.67% of 'above PG' category, and has the lowest frequency.

Table 9d: Occupation wise distribution of respondents

Occupation	Positive	Negative	Do not know	Total
Employee	23 (19.17)	18 (15)	56 (46.67)	97 (80.83)
Student	1 (0.83)	5 (4.17)	17 (14.17)	23 (19.17)
Total	24 (20)	23 (19.17)	73 (60.83)	120 (100)

Figures in parenthesis is percentage

'Do not know' category has far outnumbered other categories in both employees and students (46.67% and 14.17% respectively). Students under 'positive' category registered the lowest frequency (0.83%).

Method of Measuring Expectation and Gratification

The key question of the study centres on two dependent variables: Use of and satisfaction with Malayalam online newspapers. To find out the objectives of users and their level of satisfaction regarding each aspect of the use, four statements each related to use and satisfaction were given to respondents to know their response. The response options were designed in the Likert Scale with the following response categories with scores against each: Strongly Agree (Score = +2), Agree (Score = +1), Neither agree nor disagree (Score = 0), Disagree (Score = -1), and Strongly Disagree (Score = -2). The statements related to use were:

1. I use Malayalam online newspaper to get latest news/information
2. I use Malayalam online newspaper since it has interactive nature
3. I use online version as I could use multimedia content
4. I use online version as I can get more information through links provided

The data was subjected to Student's *t* test to find out the nature of the association between the total scores of the use and gratification. The result is given below with the support of graphs.

Users' Expectation from Malayalam Online Newspapers

The data in Table 10 shows that most valued expectation from Malayalam online newspapers is latest news and information since it scored 155 (mean score 1.29). Links provided is behind it with 127 score

Table 10: Users' expectations of using Malayalam online newspapers

Objectives	Strongly agree (Score = 2)	Agree (Score = 1)	Neither agree nor disagree (Score = 0)	Disagree (Score = -1)	Strongly disagree (Score = -2)	Total score and mean score
Latest news	42x2 (84)	71x1 (71)	7x0 (0)	0	0	155 Mean sore = 1.29
Interactivity	10x2 (20)	58x1 (58)	33x0 (0)	16x-1 (-16)	3x-2 (-6)	56 Mean sore = 0.47
Multimedia	22x2 (44)	70x1 (70)	18x0 (0)	8x-1 (-8)	2x-2 (-4)	102 Mean sore = 0.85
Links	30x2 (60)	73x1 (73)	12x0 (0)	4x-1 (-4)	1x-2 (-2)	127 Mean sore = 1.06
Total	208	272	(0)	-28	-12	440 Mean sore = 3.67

Figures in parentheses denote sub total score

Respondents value multimedia content of online newspaper after latest news and links. It scored 102. Interactivity has few takers, and its score was 56. The cumulative score of the use aspect was 440 with a mean score of 3.67.

Users' Satisfaction with Malayalam Online Newspapers

The data in Table 11 shows that the most valued satisfaction aspect of Malayalam online newspaper for respondents is latest news and information with a score of 112. Links provided stood second with a score of 103. Multimedia content comes third, and it scored 99.

Table 11: Users' satisfaction with Malayalam online newspapers

Objectives	Strongly agree (Score = 2)	Agree (Score = 1)	Neither agree nor disagree (Score = 0)	Disagree (Score =-1)	Strongly disagree (Score = -2)	Total score and mean score
Latest news	19x2 (38)	82x1 (82)	11x0 (0)	8x-1 (-8)	0	112 Mean score = 0.93
Interactivity	11x2 (22)	65x1 (65)	34x0 (0)	10x-1 (-10)	0	77 Mean score = 0.64
Multimedia	10x2 (20)	87x1 (87)	15x0 (0)	8x-1 (-8)	0	99 Mean score = 0.83
Links	17x2 (34)	77x1 (77)	18x0 (0)	8x-1 (-8)	0	103 Mean score = 0.86
Total	114	311	0	-34	0	391 Mean score = 3.26

Figures in parentheses denote sub total score

        Satisfaction with interactivity provision was least among respondents. Its score was 77. The cumulative score for the satisfaction aspect was 391 with a mean score of 3.26.

Difference between User's Expectation and Gratification

        The fundamental question on which the study centered is how use pattern of Malayalam online newspaper is associated with the satisfaction of the users. To find the nature of this association the data was subjected to Student's *t* test and the outcome was as follows:

Table 12: User's level of expectation and satisfaction

Category	Mean	Std. Deviation	*t*-value
Expectation	3.67	2.11	1.53
Satisfaction	3.26	2.02	

Significance: 0.13

        The analysis yielded a *t* ratio of 1.53, which is found to be statistically insignificant at a probability value of 0.13. It means that the difference between the respondents' level of use of and satisfaction with Malayalam online newspapers is insignificant.

Graph 2: Pattern of mean difference between expectation and gratification
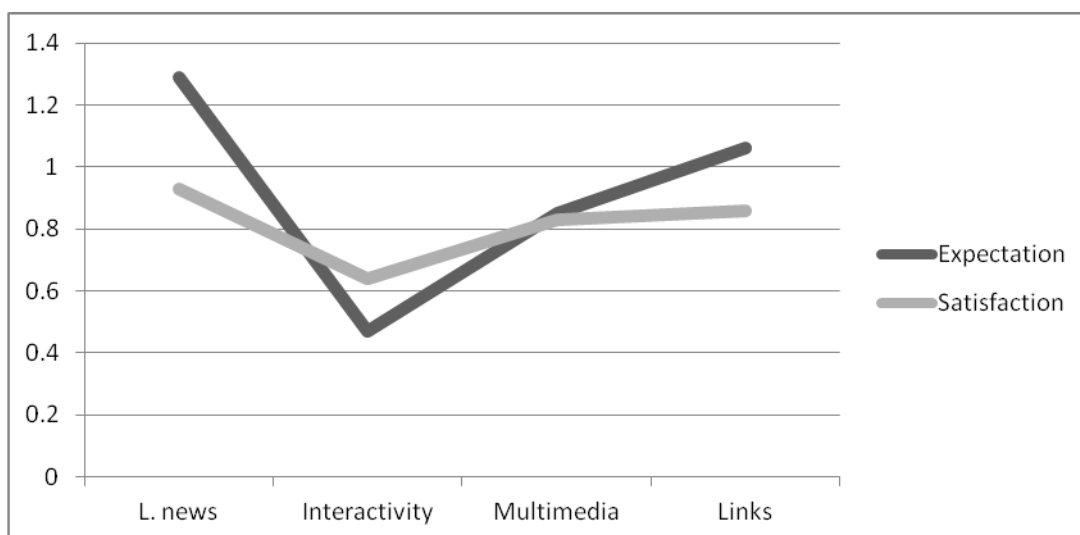
Major Findings

        The study proved that there are not many discrepancies between the expectation and satisfaction of users regarding online newspapers. Still newspapers continue to be the first choice of people when compared to online newspapers. Most of the people do not use online newspapers daily. People look up online newspapers mainly for latest news and information. The study also says that there is no point in blaming online reading for decrease in print version reading. Online reading has null affect on the print version of majority of people. The summary of findings of the study is given below.

Summary of the Findings

- Desktop/laptop continues to be the most preferred choice for using Malayalam online newspapers (86.67%).
- Modern gadgets like smart phones and tablets have few takers for looking up online newspapers (15.83% and 6.67% respectively).

- Females are not enthusiastic about online newspapers. Only 32% of users are females where as 67.5% users are men.
- Above-45-years-old people find online newspapers not attractive as only 20% of users are in this category.
- Majority of the users of online newspapers are middle aged (48.33% of users).
- Students are not interested in online newspapers as only 19.17% of users are students.
- In the era of mobile phones, a minuscule of people (3.33%) still depends on internet cafe for browsing.
- People use online newspaper mostly for latest news.
- People are least bothered about the interactivity provision provided in online newspapers.
- Most valued satisfaction aspect of Malayalam online newspapers is its latest news and information.
- Only interactivity provision could surpassed the expectation level of users. Satisfaction derived from it is more than its expectation.
- Online reading has no major effect on the print-version reading.
- However, for the relatively negligible chunk of the sample who responded online reading had some effects on their print version reading, the trend observed was, online reading resulted in a decrease in print-version reading of males, and an increase in females.
- Majority of people read more than two online newspapers.
- Majority of the people read newspaper daily (80%).
- Most of the people do not look up Malayalam online newspaper daily.
- Majority of users use online newspaper 2-4 days a week (44.17%).
- There is not much difference in the expectation and satisfaction level of user regarding Malayalam online newspapers

Tenability of Hypotheses

The study advanced two hypotheses. To prove the hypotheses, Student's *t* test and findings from observations are used. Based on the test result, hypotheses are detailed below.

H1. Online versions of Malayalam newspapers have negatively influenced the readership of print version.

The hypothesis H1 was not proved since majority of the sample (60.83%, ref. Table no 9) opined that online reading had not affected their reading habit of print-version of newspapers. The researcher found that online newspapers had not affected the reading habit of print-version. The hypothesis H1 is not proved, and it is not valid.

H2. The users' expectation of the online newspapers is positively associated with their satisfaction with them.

The analysis yielded a *t* ratio of 1.53, which is found to be statistically insignificant at a probability value of 0.13. It means that the difference between the respondents' level of use of and satisfaction with Malayalam online newspapers is insignificant. Thus, it is proved that hypothesis H2 is valid, and expectation of online newspaper is positively associated with their satisfaction.

In short, we can say that readers of news dailies continue to go with hard copies of their favourite newspapers even though they access the online versions of the same. So the researcher with the support of data obtained from the study may state that there is no

pressure from online newspapers to the newspaper industry in Kerala. The existing major online newspapers are up to the expectation level of users.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Uses and Gratification approach has attained much importance in the field of communication research today. There are a lot of studies in order to know the motives of the receivers who use a particular medium.

The central belief of the uses and gratification approach is that of an active audience. Therefore, it is interesting to know why people watch a particular TV programme or read a particular magazine and what do they derive from watching or reading it and also what motivates people to do so.

This particular study is about the uses and gratification of Malayalam online newspapers, and it is conducted among the employees and students of Calicut University campus. The fundamental inquiry of the study was to test the significant association between the use pattern of Malayalam online newspapers and the resultant satisfaction.

A total sample of 120 respondents participated in the study. From the study, it was found that online reading will neither decrease print-version reading nor increase it. But for the relatively negligible chunk of the sample who responded online reading had some effects on their print version reading, online reading caused a decrease in print-version reading of males where as it increased for females. People above 45 years old and Females are less interested in online reading.

Another revelation is that students who use internet the most are less enthusiastic about Malayalam online newspaper. It also proved that there are not many discrepancies between the expectation and satisfaction level of users regarding Malayalam online newspapers. The most valued expectation and satisfaction aspect of online newspapers is latest news and information.

Limitations

The study was conducted on the basis of 120 samples taken from University of Calicut campus due to time constraints and feasibility. Had the sample size be more, the result would have been more accurate. As the sample was taken from one location, heterogeneity of the population might not be reflected in the sample. The purposive sampling method adopted for the study targets only a particular population. It focuses only on users of Malayalam online newspapers. So a comparative statement or result with regard to other languages is not revealed from the study.

Recommendations

Despite its limitations, the study sheds light on the inner dynamics of the use and gratification of Malayalam online newspapers. This indication helps the professionals in media organization and web site designing sector to make changes according to needs and necessity of online newspaper readers. There should be more in-depth inquiry into the factors contributing to the difference between expectation and satisfaction. Professional approach to the design and content of the Malayalam online newspaper would be defined based on those findings.

For future researchers

- The study reveals that students and women are less enthusiastic about Malayalam online newspaper. More in depth study could be carried out to address this issue.

- The researcher found that there are cross ownership in media industry which may affects the information dissemination. The issue has to be studied.

For practitioners

- Interactivity provision in Malayalam online newspapers could not generate much interest in users. So there should be new techniques and methods to increase the interactivity for better feedback.

- In short, the study gives an idea about the level of expectation of users for Malayalam online newspapers and their satisfaction with them, despite its limitations. It also broke the myth that online reading would decrease print version reading habit.

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