

# Chapter VII

## Analysis of the Readership Environment

### 7.1. Introduction

Fast paced technological advancements, heightened competition, stagnant subscriber base and ever-increasing demand for updated information have placed numerous demands on the newspaper industry. Moreover the facade and premises of news and information coverage have changed forever. The newspaper industry operating in this demanding environment is exposed to various challenges. These challenges oblige the industry to enhance its operating standards to that of international levels. Although advertisements are the most important source of income for a newspaper publisher than subscription revenues, advertisers give sustained patronage to the newspaper that has a good subscriber base. If a newspaper does not have a stable subscriber base or if it keeps on losing subscribers, it is not going to get much advertising in the long run and possibly face liquidation and closure. Hence, subscribers and their attitude towards a newspaper are the central elements for the survival, growth and prominence of a newspaper.

In this regard, this chapter and the next chapter are devoted to the classification and analysis of data collected from newspaper subscribers by way of questionnaires and interview schedules. Throughout the chapter, 'subscriber' or 'respondent' is the term used to denote any regular newspaper reader.

Moreover at a few places strict adherence to grammatical and semantic rules and structures is forgone for the sake of readability and clarity. In particular, although a subject or object in the singular sense should take a singular auxiliary verb as in “The percentage of subscribers preferring this newspaper is...”, intentionally the ‘is’ is replaced by ‘are’ as the whole sense is reflexively plural and refers to many subscribers. This condition applies to some analytical instances in previous chapters too.

## **7.2. Analytical Framework**

This chapter analyses the readership environment of newspapers in a logical, descriptive and qualitative manner. More clearly it deals with the readers’ personal and socioeconomic qualities and the reading characteristics engendered from those qualities. In addition, information regarding newsagents and delivery channels is discussed. Thus it provides a context and foundation for the next chapter wherein deeper analysis of subscriber attitudes, which is exhibited in their choices and preferences of particular newspapers, is done. The analysis is performed on the basis of the order of questions found in the questionnaire and tries to show the social and economic environment of the readers by various tables and charts.

## **7.3. Personal and Socioeconomic Attributes**

The attitudes, habits and preferences of newspaper subscribers enormously contribute to the choice and nature of reading. Such attitudes, habits and preferences, in turn, are largely controlled by the socioeconomic

conditions of individual readers. Therefore, the study of subscriber attitude is not standalone, but governed by many personal and social factors. Therefore, in this section, respondents are categorised on the basis of these factors and analysis is undertaken with respect to their age, gender, marital status, no. of children, education, religion, community, occupation and monthly family income.

### **7.3.1. Age Group**

The subscriber base for newspapers consists of people of different age groups. The predominant age group subscribing a particular newspaper may be required by a newspaper company to focus on news items relevant to that particular subscriber group. Proper identification of subscriber base is a vital aspect in shaping the news landscape of a newspaper. Hence, classification based on the age of the subscribers is presented in Table 7.1. Chart (Fig 6.1) showing the segregates more clearly follows the interpretation.

Table 7.1

#### Age Classification

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Up to 20	18	6.00
2.	20-30	61	20.33
3.	30-40	87	29.00
4.	40-50	78	26.00
5.	50-60	47	15.67
6.	Above 60	9	3.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

The table shows that the sample respondents in the lowest and highest age groups constitute a very small percentage. That is, of the six age groups, these two have only 9 percent of the respondents. It is however not a pattern of perfect normal distribution. Each other age group needs its newspaper of choice for academic, professional or entertainment purposes. Thus, a newspaper focussing on a particular age group is about to fail in terms of circulation volume and prominence. More clearly, news variety that caters to almost every age group is the essential element for newspapers. Supplements in English dailies spread over the week for distinctive news items adds credence to this fact.

Here therefore it is inferred that the '30-40' age group is the largest category with 29 percent of the respondents.

### **7.3.2. Gender**

Gender of subscribers, in conjunction with age group, is an important aspect for decisions on newspaper content and context. Thus, subscribers of same age-group but different sex have dissimilar tastes. Hence, a newspaper with more female readers ought to focus on its look, feel and news items so that it is more feminine and female-oriented. Reader statistics based on gender also helps to correct the existing imbalances in news coverage and layout. In this regard, gender based classification of respondents is furnished in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2

## Gender Classification

S. No.	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Male	166	55.33
2.	Female	134	44.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

As the table points out, males outnumber females by about 12 percent. Generally this is true of the present day scenario. Men read newspapers in workplace, shop, library and other public places in addition to their house. Women, on the other hand, confine their newspaper reading to their house and workplace. Although women nowadays have begun to go out equally with men, the social practices that define their forthcoming and sociable nature have not matured as that of men. For example, they have not yet dared to read newspapers sitting on the veranda of teashops.

Yet, educational, legal and work rights have now enabled women to read newspapers elaborately. Until this time, newspapers assigned only a column or two for females. Now, however, many newspapers assign them exclusive pages. Some periodicals have come out solely for women and it shows that newspapers too will soon follow suit.

Hence, it is evident that males constitute the single largest gender category with 55.33 percent.

### 7.3.3. Marital Status

Subsequent to age and sex, marital status is an important factor that has

bearing on news items. Marriage dramatically changes the news preference of both the sexes, quite especially females. For example, a girl who used to look eagerly at beauty and fashion news items may now turn her interest to child care items after marriage. Newspapers too, for their part, attempt to define factors of preference for married and unmarried persons. Another important aspect is that marital status not only comprises either of these states. There are spinsters, bachelors, divorced persons, widows, widowers and single parents. However, as this is not a socioeconomic study, including these attributes will be intrusive, and will serve no purpose. Therefore the two categories are only considered. In this regard, respondents are categorised and analysed according to marital status. Table 7.3 has details.

Table 7.3

Marital Status

S. No.	Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Married	222	74.00
2.	Unmarried	78	26.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

Married and unmarried respondents are distributed in the ratio of about 3 : 1. The numbers are to be seen in relation to the age-group analysis done previously. That is, the first two age-groups namely 'Up to 20' and '20-30' consist a total of 79 respondents, only one higher than 'Unmarried' category. These two age-groups possibly have most unmarried boys and girls. Leaving room for spinsters and bachelors in other age-groups, these two age-groups

should have contributed more than 95 percent of respondents to the ‘Unmarried’ category. Yet, this is quite low compared to the overall sample size. It therefore means that the younger generation respondents are more inclined towards Internet, television and cinema than print media. Hence, this ratio is justified.

Thus, married subscribers constitute the largest category of respondents with 74 percent.

#### **7.3.4. No. of Children**

Here the respondents are classified according to no. of children they have. It applies only to the 222 married respondents. This analysis may not be useful as such. However, this could help to correlate different subscriber parameters when undertaking in-depth subscriber research for future social and marketing activities. Table 7.4 has relevant details.

Table 7.4

#### No. of Children

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>No. of Children</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	No child	9	4.05
2.	1 - 3	193	86.94
3.	Above 3	20	9.01
<b>Total</b>		<b>222</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

As expected, a predominant percentage of respondents, that is about 87 percent, have planned family. It is deducible that many are nuclear families with school going children or babies. This is due to the fact that just before a decade,

many families had 4 or more children. Hence, newspapers need to avoid vulgarities and deviant news items even in adult pages. Additionally, they need to incorporate news items that develop attitude, creativity, knowledge and skills of children, apart from entertainment. A balanced and caring newspaper in this regard is sure to have a solid subscriber base. Also, children of a subscriber will be the future subscribers.

Therefore, it is observed that a predominant percentage of the respondents, to the extent of 86.94 percent, have between one and three children.

#### **7.3.5. Education**

Respondents are further categorised on the basis of their educational qualification. Educational qualification, with its advantages and constraints, shape the reading habit of a subscriber. At the advantage side, a learned subscriber is likely to read Tamil, English and Business newspapers for comprehensive news coverage. Such a learned subscriber base is therefore advantageous to both the newspaper companies and agents. On the flip side, to the disadvantage of the subscriber, the choice may not best suit his needs, for always a status factor is involved with this learned subscriber base. For example, a professor may not prefer, may be in public, to read a newspaper of layman's choice. Hence, educational qualification of people largely affects the choice of newspaper in a town or locality. Table 7.5 furnishes relevant details.

Table 7.5

## Educational Qualification

S. No.	Education	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Primary	14	4.67
2.	Middle school	9	3.00
3.	High school	60	20.00
4.	Degree holder	129	43.00
5.	Postgraduate	55	18.33
6.	Professional	33	11.00
7.	Others	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

If this sample size is truly representative of the population, it is more like a normal distribution. That is, persons of the least and highest learning constitute a comparatively small percentage. The median category i.e. 'Degree Holder' is the largest group. Therefrom, the percentage is declining both upward and downward. It means that unless it is for a targeted audience, a newspaper should not polarise its news items towards a particular category. Beforehand, it is better to analyse the educational background of its subscribers in a particular town or locality. Another aspect is, Professionals and Postgraduates, by their age and learning, do not get swayed away easily by indiscriminate news items. Contrarily, subscribers only with school education are susceptible to sensual and sensational news items rather than that matters more. Hence, there is a big moral responsibility for newspapers in this regard. They may choose to keep on providing sensuous news items such as cinema,

beauty, food, entertainment and like or provide constructive ones on education, politics, morality and religion.

Therefore, it is revealed that majority of newspaper subscribers are degree holders. They constitute the single biggest category with 43 percent of the respondents.

#### **7.3.6. Religion**

In this section, subscribers have been classified based on their religion. Religion plays a crucial role in the subscriber's mind when selecting a newspaper. Subscribers either tend to avoid or immediately embrace a newspaper that provides undue importance to a particular religious faith. Therefore, religious values inculcated in them from the early childhood have overbearing effect on their behaviour and choice. Also, they immediately find out and avoid a newspaper that covertly and subtly belittles their faith. On the other side, many people are out there who, although belong to a particular religion, prefer a secular news output. Therefore, the subscriber base is full of religious zealots, nonbelievers, secularists, moderates, pragmatists, and the like. Hence, analysis based on religion is important to reorientate news items if necessary. Table 7.6 categorises subscribers according to their religion.

Table 7.6

## Classification by Religion

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Hindu	147	49.00
2.	Muslim	10	3.33
3.	Christian	143	47.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

Christians and Hindus are almost equal in percentage. Yet, Muslims constitute barely 3.5 percent of the sample size. The figures are largely in conformity with the demographic structure of the study area. The following were disclosed by the respondents during the interview that went along with the questionnaire session. Firstly, religion had an important role in shaping the vocation or career of the respondent. This, in turn, affected the choice of information they preferred to take in. Secondly, Christians and Muslims were of the view that they were taught to be more sensitive to religious criticism. Hindus, on the other hand, remained more secular, flexible and inclusive. Thirdly, as far as their career was concerned, Hindus preferred farming, agriculture and allied activities, hereditary vocations and small businesses. Contrarily, Christians gave importance to education and employment. Muslims, on the other hand, preferred either working abroad or handling quite risky items such as glass, electronic gadgets and exotic goods. Therefore, newspapers ought to be mindful and accommodative of the religious and vocational values of subscribers when providing news items.

It is thus established that the largest category of newspaper subscribers is Hindus with 49 percent of the respondents.

### 7.3.7. *Community*

Community plays an important role in employment, education and even government loans and subsidies. Caste and community based reservations and quotas have become a social necessity now. Hence, it is deducible that news items reaching out to various communities will have broad readership. Coverage of such news items serves as a linker between the common man and the public administration. Newspapers prominent in providing such information get a wider subscription. On the other side, communally sensitive news items must be dealt with extra care to avoid violence. In this regard, analysing a locality's subscribers on the basis of community is worthwhile. The same is done in the following table.

Table 7.7

#### Classification by Community

S. No.	Community	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	FC	46	15.33
2.	BC	221	73.67
3.	MBC	19	6.33
4.	SC/ST	14	4.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

The numbers show the predominance of Backward Community in the study area. About three in every four respondents, that is 74 percent, belong to

that community. Therefore, it is desirable that the composition of regional news items are fine tuned towards the needs and preferences of Backward Community. Yet others should not be left out as a newspaper may not know the exact makeup of its readers with regard to community in a population. Another notable aspect is that MBCs and SC/STs together do not come close to FC in number. If this does not arise due to error in sample size, then it should mean that reading habit is more prevalent with FC respondents.

It is hence inferred that newspaper subscribers predominantly belong to the Backward Community, having 73.67 percent of the respondents.

#### **7.3.8. Occupation**

Occupation of the subscribers is analysed in this subsection. This attribute has a dominant influence on the habit and choice of newspaper reading. Education and occupation are interrelated and are to be seen in conjunction with one another. Hence, the parameters of analysis for education, which was done previously, apply mostly here also. Furthermore, here the 'Others' category consists of housewives, pensioners, unemployed persons, and the like. Table 7.8 shows the classification.

Table 7.8

## Classification by Occupation

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No. of Subscribers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Business	14	4.67
2.	Professional	9	3.00
3.	Self-employed	9	3.00
4.	Student	46	15.33
5.	Govt. Employee	129	43.00
6.	Private Concern	37	12.33
7.	Others	56	18.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

It is evident from the table that the first three groups namely 'Business', 'Professional' and 'Self-employed' altogether constitute only 10 percent of the sample size. It could mean two things. Either the sample itself is so heavily skewed that it is not representative of the population, thereby limiting the cogency of the study in this particular respect. Increasing the sample size or geographical scope may help offsetting the skewness to some extent. Or, the three categories in reality have insignificant number of subscribers in the study area. This condition could have been due to the fact that education has not resulted in the corresponding occupation. For example, the case of 'Professional' and 'Govt. employee' validate this statement. Number of respondents in 'Professional' is very low compared to those with 'Professional Education' in Table 7.5. There are only 9 professionals against 33 having professional education. It shows that their professional education has not

brought them to the same profession. They have instead gone to family business, entrepreneurship, public service or private employment. Similarly, of the seven categories, 'Govt. employee' alone has 43 percent of respondents. It shows that the priority of subscribers, irrespective of education, is dominantly inclined towards government job.

Therefore, it is evident that Government Employees constitute the single largest category of respondents with 43 percent.

### ***7.3.9. Monthly Family Income***

Income is analysed as the final element in the personal attributes. In our society, correlation between income and newspaper subscription is weak. It is due to the relatively lower rate of subscription. Bulk printing, advertisement revenue and low process cost facilitate publishers to provide newspapers at a much affordable rate. Income may be a decisive factor to buy more than one newspaper. However, need, availability and attitude are the determinants of subscription for the primary newspaper of a reader. Hence, analysis of income should take into consideration these aspects. Table shows the income categories of respondents.

Table 7.9

## Monthly Family Income

S. No.	Monthly Income	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	5,000 - 10,000	97	32.33
2.	10,000 - 15,000	95	31.67
3.	15,000 - 20,000	75	25.00
4.	20,000 - 30,000	23	7.67
5.	Above 30,000	10	3.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

An inverse proportion is observed in the table between income category and no. of respondents. That is, as the income tab goes up, no. of respondents comes down. Furthermore, eighty-nine percent of respondents have income not more than 20,000 a month. If this data is true, it means that a predominant percentage of respondents belong to middle or lower-middle class families. Another aspect is, since 43 percent of respondents are in government job, it is likely that they get at least 15,000 a month. However, only 36 percent say that their income is 15,000 or more. Here too, a meagre 3.33 percent of respondents come forward to say that their income is above 30,000. It shall be due to that respondents are hesitant to identify themselves with higher income groups. It shows the conservative mindset of respondents in disclosing their income, which is characteristic to Indian population.

Therefore, it is observable that 32.33 percent of the respondents with a monthly family income of between Rs. 5,000/- and Rs. 10,000/- constitute the single largest category.

## **7.4. Reading Characteristics**

With his or her own socioeconomic background, the reader gets into the first stage of acquaintance and opinion formation towards newspapers. This builds the reading characteristics, which is analysed in this section. To be specific, the influence to buy, years of reading, habit of reading, source of inspiration, newspaper type and choice of newspaper language of the respondents are put to analysis.

### ***7.4.1. Influence to Buy***

Inspiration to read newspaper comes from many sources. It comes from parents, siblings, teachers, colleagues and friends. Moreover, it may be a self-initiated responsibility, imitation of others or imposed obligation. This aspect is studied to analyse certain psychological elements that induce buying. For example, if an article says that one should not run to a psychiatrist for even slight mental disturbances, it indirectly induces and favours going to a psychiatrist, which people normally hesitate. Therefore, characteristics peculiar to an influence group which results in differing reading habits and buying behaviour are important to ascertain the preferences of society. Table 7.10 has details of influence factors.

Table 7.10

## Influence to Buy

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Influence to Buy</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Self obligation	226	75.33
2.	Parents	32	10.67
3.	Other family members	10	3.33
4.	Friends and relatives	14	4.67
5.	Coworkers	9	3.00
6.	Advertisements	9	3.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

Three quarters of the respondents say that self obligation is the most important influence factor to buy newspaper. Desire to read and to know what happens around is now crucial to everyday life. It is inflamed by news media by overblown and sensational news items, especially of crimes and sins. Thus, it has instilled a never-ending search for knowledge of worldly things. This is much more intense in recent times. In addition to the search of knowledge, newspaper reading serves to fulfill various social functions and necessities such as education, matrimonial, employment, business, arts, and the like. These necessities also act as driving forces for 'Self obligation'. In addition, role models could have been wrongly termed 'influence' by the respondents. If so, weight of 'Self obligation' will increase further. Thus, all remaining factors are rendered insignificant. Among these minor factors, parents' influence is dominant with 10.67 percent of responses. Influence of relatives, colleagues, advertisements and friends is minimal. Hence, marketing efforts by secondary

channels will be futile.

Hence it is evident that self obligation is the most influential force for the subscription of newspapers with 75.33 percent of respondents opting for it.

#### **7.4.2. *Years of Reading***

A subscriber's span of reading in years results in a comparative mental mapping of newspapers. More clearly, initially a subscriber tries one newspaper by self initiative or influence. Then switches to another one and weighs the advantages and disadvantages of both. If over-enthusiastic, the subscriber even tries third and fourth ones before settling in any one of the newspapers. This primary newspaper provides the subscriber most news items in accordance with his or her preferences. Also, that newspaper will be in concordance with his or her values and attitudes. The hidden attributes that made the subscriber to settle with the final newspaper will be of enormous importance to the publishers. They show the strength of that newspaper in relation to others. If studied carefully, these hidden attributes help to considerably enhance the subscription and quality of a publisher's newspaper. They help to identify areas of improvement in language, presentation, layout, coverage and many other things. Moreover, everything is conveyed by the subscriber to his or her circle of influence like children, relatives, friends, colleagues and others thereby swaying the reading habit of many others. Therefore, years of reading is a very important analytical aspect. Table 7.11 has details.

Table 7.11

## Years of Reading

S. No.	Years of Reading	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than 5	60	20.00
2.	5 – 10	79	26.33
3.	10 – 20	92	30.67
4.	Above 20	69	23.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

Subscribers with 10-20 years of reading experience constitute the single largest category with 30 percent of the sample size. Leaving that, all categories are fairly evenly distributed. The range of the four categories, that is the difference between the maximum and minimum values, is about 10 percent. Therefore, this table should be seen in relation to the age-group of respondents. While younger subscribers such as school-going children, college students and employment seekers possibly have less than 5 years or 5-10 years of reading habit, middle-aged and aged subscribers such as businessmen, housewives and retired persons will have 10 or more years of reading habit. Also, apart from the age group of the respondents, when this analytical element is seen in combination with the analyses of 'Influence to Buy' (Table 7.10) and 'Source of Inspiration' (Table 7.13), it shows that the choice of newspaper for the respondents in the first two categories is a near-voluntary decision with possible guidance from respondents of categories 3 and 4.

It is therefore observed that subscribers with 10 to 20 years of reading

experience constitute the single largest category with 30.67 percent.

### 7.4.3. *Habit of Reading*

The habit of reading newspaper differs from reader to reader. This variation is mostly due to the readers' personal quality differences such as age, education, and occupation. For example, a stock broker must read business newspapers daily. Likewise, politicians and administrators must read general newspapers daily. So is the case of a serious job seeker. Therefore, the habit of newspaper reading is categorised into four differing emotional states. Respondents in the first category exhibit the strongest bond with their newspaper. The attachment decreases gradually down until the fourth category. It is therefore clear that subscribers falling under the first two categories will be strongly inclined towards their newspapers. They can not be swayed away from their personal choice. As far as the last two categories are concerned, there is better chance for the influence groups and advertising mediums to force a switchover from the existing newspaper. Table has the details.

Table 7.12

#### Habit of Reading

S. No.	Reading Habit	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Compulsory and indispensable	37	12.33
2.	Regular and routine	194	64.67
3.	Frequent and habitual	55	18.33
4.	Rare and occasional	14	4.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

The table reveals that majority of the respondents have settled with their newspapers. More clearly, their preferences have formed already. They are content with what they read now and are not likely to make a switchover to another newspaper at present. Another important deduction is that overlapping occurs especially between categories 1 and 2 and categories 2 and 3. Respondents reluctant to be identified as obsessive news chasers have possibly opted for the second category of response. Alternatively, those who were not able to understand the subtle differences between categories 2 and 3, should have preferred either one. Due to this, higher than expected polarisation occurs in category 2. About two in every three, i.e. 65 percent, say that they are regular newspaper readers and their habit is routine. Finally, the last category 'Rare and occasional' has a very minimum percentage of respondents, that is only 4.67 percent. It means that almost no one is averse to newspapers.

Hence, it is clear that for 64.67 percent of the respondents newspaper reading is a regular and routine habit.

#### ***7.4.4. Source of Inspiration***

Source of inspiration is different from influence to buy newspapers. Influence is the power exercised by a person that affects another ingenuous person's course of events. It is related to power, prestige and wealth. Influence results in sure change. Inspiration, on the other hand, refers to animating or stimulating the mental and emotional feelings of a person to creative and moral activity. It takes the inspired person to the next higher level of feelings and

change. Also it is voluntary. In this regard, many compulsions force a reader to buy a newspaper. However, the reading zeal comes from an inspirational source. This shall be studied to know of the society's values. Analysing the inspirer and the inspired show the direction in which the society goes as regards news and information. Table 7.13 has the details.

Table 7.13

Source of Inspiration

S. No.	Source of Inspiration	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Voluntary	217	72.33
2.	Parents	37	12.33
3.	Teachers	14	4.67
4.	Friends	32	10.67
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

Among the sources of inspiration, 'Voluntary' is the largest portion with 72.33 percent of respondents. It shows that many respondents have discredited any external inspirational source. Also, factors such as easy availability of newspapers, its inexpensiveness, necessity to read and luring advertisements work together to weaken the need for an inspirational source. Even as these factors are working against, the other three inspirational sources put together have the remaining respondents which is only 27.67 percent. It strongly indicates the insignificant role played by traditional inspirers such as parents, teachers and friends. Hence, individual-directed approach is the best for a newspaper to win over the readers. Moreover, it is clear that many have

confused influence with inspiration. Therefore, percentage-wise, the responses are equivalent to that of 'Influence to buy'. For example, the category 'Voluntary' is equivalent to the 'Self obligation' category in 'Influence to buy' and so on.

It is therefore inferred that 72.33 percent of the respondents, that is about three quarters, are voluntarily inspired to subscribe and read a newspaper.

#### **7.4.5. Newspaper Type**

Most subscribers read only general newspapers. Very few subscribers with distinctive purpose read business newspapers. They are industrialists, bankers, professionals, managers of large private organisations and students of business and management. Studying the distribution of subscribers in this regard helps to provide circulation data. It also assists in identifying the news preference and polarisation in a particular target group. By that, marketing strategies could be devised to increase readership and advertisement revenues.

Table 7.14 classifies respondents by the type of newspaper they read.

Table 7.14

#### Newspaper Type

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Newspaper Type</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	General newspaper	207	69.00
2.	Business newspaper	5	1.67
3.	Both	88	29.33
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

Percentage of respondents reading either general or business newspapers

is on expected lines. About seven out of ten respondents read only general newspapers. Only a meagre 1.67 percent of the respondents read business newspapers exclusively. However, those reading both the newspapers is unexpectedly high at 29.33 percent. One possibility is that many respondents read business newspapers in their workplace. There is strong possibility for this as medium and large private organisations always subscribe business newspapers. Hence, employees of these organisations get an opportunity to read business newspapers despite their not actually subscribing it. Professionals too prefer to read or subscribe business newspapers. Hence, the combined weight of professionals and private concern employees has pushed up the 'Both' category. Another but unlikely possibility is that those with the distinctive purpose of reading business newspapers is quite higher in the sample.

It is thus inferred that subscribers buying and reading only general newspapers are the largest category with a composition of 69 percent.

#### ***7.4.6. Newspaper Language***

According to statistics, Tamilnadu is one of the most urbanised and educated states in India. The Policy Note 2007-08 of Tamilnadu Education Department says that the literacy rate in Tamilnadu is 73.47 percent against the national average of 65.38 percent. Moreover, the craziness for western and English education is unrestrained in Tamilnadu. Many prefer English newspapers not only for English reading but also for status. Thus, English has gained more prominence than the mother tongue itself. This condition is very

unlikely in any other state or country. Against this backdrop, the language of preference for the newspaper subscriber is studied in this subsection. Table 7.15 has relevant details.

Table 7.15

Newspaper Language

S. No.	Language	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Tamil only	147	49.00
2.	English only	28	9.33
3.	Both	125	41.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Primary Data)

Table shows that readers of English newspapers are far less in number than readers of Tamil newspapers. However, in reality, 153 respondents read English newspapers. That is, adding 125 respondents in the ‘Both’ category, to ‘English only’ category puts 51 percent of the respondents at the English newspaper side. Thus, more than half of the sample respondents give importance to English language irrespective of their personal qualities. Another aspect is that about 1 in every 10 respondents do not prefer reading newspaper in their mother tongue. As the study area has less than 10 percent floating population, it is unlikely that all the 28 respondents are non-Tamils. This was confirmed during the interview as most native respondents believed that English newspapers covered political, business and international news items in a better manner. Thus yearning for English is established here.

Here it is clear that readers subscribing only Tamil newspapers

constitute the majority with 49 percent.

### **7.5. News Agents and Delivery Channels**

This section deals with the tasks of news agents. The channels of distribution, deposits, returns, delivery and issues if any are analysed. After pilot study it was found that the functions and operations of news agents were the same irrespective of the newspaper(s) they handled. Further, more authoritative figures regarding circulation and prominence are available elsewhere. Also even though they themselves are newspaper readers, news agents have the possibility of providing opinionated responses. Owing to these reasons it was decided against getting primary opinions from them. Rather everything about news agents and delivery are furnished below.

In the study area most agents do newspaper distribution as family business for a long period. For example two Main Agents in Tuticorin are doing this as a family vocation for 80 years. However it was a part-time one as activities therein are restricted to morning hours. There are two types of agents namely Main or Direct Agent and Sub Agent. Deposit is required to join as a Main Agent. Deposit varies between one and two lakh rupees, according to the prominence of a newspaper. That is, the more prominent the newspaper the higher the deposit. Two other methods are also there to arrive at the deposit. One is charging of Rs.150/- per newspaper. Thus, if an agent wishes to sell 1,000 newspapers daily, he or she will have to deposit Rs.1,50,000/- as deposit. In the other method, the cost of one and a half month (45 days) circulation

volume is required to be deposited beforehand. These Main Agents assign Sub Agents after getting approval from the newspaper company.

Irrespective of one's being main or sub agent, most of them handles only one newspaper. Normally commission for the agent varies between 15 and 20 percent, based on the policies of the newspaper group. Dhina Thanthi offers the highest commission but Business Line and Dhina Malar offer the lowest commission. No incentive or bonus of any kind is provided by the newspaper company to the agents. However some fringe benefits like dresses, bags and gift items are offered to main and sub agents during important festivals like Pongal, Deepavali and Christmas.

Agents take delivery of newspapers somewhere around 4'O clock in the morning. They have it distributed by 7.30 AM. Supplements, special issues of festival days and gift offers if any are sent well in advance to the agents to facilitate easy categorisation, assortment and distribution. About 5 percent increase of circulation is witnessed during Sundays, holidays and festival days.

Newspaper delivery boys are paid piece rate, which varies between 15 and 30 paisa per newspaper according to the agent's wish. Unsold and undelivered newspapers are taken back by the newspaper company at the evening. Sub Agents return to Direct Agents who in turn return it to the Company. While agents settle the collection of subscription amount to the newspaper company within 10 days of the next month, they prefer their commission once a year for the sake of bulk amount, safety and manageability.

Moreover as this is a secondary business, it is not affecting their income and expenditure much.

Finally, non-availability of delivery boys is the major problem for agents and sub agents. In addition, defaults and delays in collection, abrupt departure of delivery boys well in the middle of the month and very low return on investment are other pertinent issues. Another paradoxical point, although unverified by the researcher, was that procrastination of subscription was more prevalent with readers of higher income strata.

## **7.6. Conclusion**

In this chapter, subscribers' personal and social qualities, and reading characteristics were analysed. With regard to personal and social qualities, the respondents were in diverse age groups with a slightly titled sex ratio in favour of men. Moreover three quarters of them were married with planned family. They had varied educational qualifications with degree being opted by the majority. Yet, education had not resulted in the corresponding employment as most of the respondents preferred and settled in government or stable private sector jobs. Thus there were observably minimal number of persons in business and self-employment. Further, their religious and community distribution was in conformity with the demographic structure of the study area. In addition, the respondents were very conservative in disclosing their income level.

With regard to the reading characteristics, most of the respondents were self motivated to buy and read newspapers and their reading choice was

voluntary. Moreover majority of the respondents were with 10 to 20 years of reading experience. It showed that their reading habit was set with minimal room for switchover. Further, for every seven general newspaper readers there were three business newspaper readers, but slighting of mother tongue and giving importance to English language newspapers was observed with them.