1. INTRODUCTION

The need to communicate, the desire to know what is new, the ability to share information and to use it for growth and survival has been inherent in man from the very beginning of the process of human evolution. As man evolved so did his methods of communication. From cave paintings and wall engravings, to evolution of pictograms, ideograms and later a script, the social environment is believed to have created a context in which text evolved and took concrete form and shape to fulfill the needs of the reader. With the advent of technology, communication systems underwent a metamorphosis and reinvented themselves, but what remained constant were the three variables associated with communication, the Text, Context, and the Reader. In every era, the social, political, religious, economic situations coupled with technological advancements provided a context for evolution of text and reader needs driven by his internal and external context became a dominant factor in affecting changes in the evolving text. The present study is an attempt to determine whether the connection between text, context and reader holds true for the current era as well. The study of evolution of text brings forth the influences that reader and his context have had on the text. One of the most prominent events in evolution of text was the setting up of the first printing press. The invention not only made production of text quicker and easier but also brought knowledge much closer to the hands of ordinary men. For instance, while it took usually a year or more to hand-copy a Bible, with the invention of printing press, it was possible to create several hundred copies a year, and with printed copies available at a fraction of the price of the manuscripts, availability of literature became easier. Cheap publications offered the illiterate an incentive to learn and to read. More the readers lower the cost of such material; and lower the cost, more the number of readers (Emery, 1969).

This chain reaction between the socio economic developments and the emerging class of readers affected a change in the text. While, with the older manuscripts, the emphasis was on the images and beauty of the page, printed works emphasized principally the text and the line of argument and thus the language of metaphors gave way to more scientific methods of conveying information. However immediately after the perfection of printing, ideas and information reached a class of public that lacked requisite literary background, hence a need to learn arose and a new class of reader keen to learn, started emerging. The evolution of text, in the context of
invention of printing thus provided an incentive to the reader to become literate who in turn expected better quality of text and hence the connection between text, context and reader became stronger.

As the human civilizations further evolved, and men developed political interests in the state and started engaging in financial transactions the interest of the reader also diversified and the need for systematic collection and distribution of information was felt. Although the initial attempts to distribute periodic information date back to 59 B.C when Acta Diurna in Rome brought regular information about the state to the reader, the next step towards journalism is seen in Britain where social and political conditions lead to appearance of newsletters. Men of wealth lived only for some time in the city of London and spent rest of the year in the country. While away from the city, they wanted to know the doings of the court and the gossip of the coffee houses. To keep themselves informed, they hired professional letter writers who gathered the items of interest and then forwarded the same through post. The newsletters, thus, first made an appearance in response to the readers’ need to be informed, a need that arose in the context of social and economic set up around the reader. As the journalistic forms of writing evolved, a significant product of this evolution were human-interest accounts of news events that later developed into the genre of journalistic features.

1.1 FEATURE STORIES – THE SOUL OF JOURNALISTIC WRITING

Although the process of communication evolution revolves around the variables of text, context and reader another important constant in this process can be identified as the human-interest element in every exchange of information. While in pre-historic times this human-interest element can be seen in the text that recorded the culture and value systems besides the essential information, in the current times the same has taken the shape of feature stories that appear along with the hard news in the newspapers. The reason behind this constant can be traced to the reader interest and need to gain information beyond the mere occurrence of event. Be it the need to share personal experiences, to learn from the life and experiences of others, to sympathise with the ones who fall prey to misery or the seek solace in the stories of survival and triumph; the need to delve into the human ramifications of any event has been existent since times immemorial. This need therefore has been taken care of by the mass media content in the present days in the form of features stories.
While the heart of media content is said to be the news story that relates to the who, what, when, where, why and how of the current events; the soul of mass media content is believed to lie in the feature stories that explore the emotional and humane ramifications of the reality. Elaborating the vital role that feature stories play for the newspaper is the observation by British newspaper tycoon and one of the early pioneers of tabloid journalism, Lord Northcliffe who believed that feature stories are the essential newspaper content that holds the attention of the readers. According to Lord Northcliffe (as cited in Harrower, 2010, p.113), “It is hard news that catches the readers. Features hold them”.

Several researchers and journalism experts have interpreted Northcliffe’s observation. For McKay (2013) while hard news is much the same wherever you read, features create a unique tone and character and thus satiate the need of the reader to understand and relate to the event. Metzler (1986) believes that a good feature story is a creative work of art. According to him, what makes the feature story stand out is the fact that a feature writer controls the facts by selection, structure and interpretation rather than facts controlling the writer as in the case of a news story. Gorney (as quoted in Harrower, 2003, p.113) mentions the very essence of feature writing is passionate interest in the subject. For her a feature writer’s most essential quality is a crazed curiosity and a desire to know everything about the subject, about five times more than what is going to be used in the story. Citing an extension of a popular definition of news, Harrower says:

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

Various interpretations and definitions of the feature story show that this form of journalistic writing primarily caters to the need of the reader to move beyond the mere informative facts. The feature stories however do not exist in isolation, they evolve and grow in the context of current happenings that make up the internal and external context of the reader and satiate the needs of the reader in turn.
1.2 JOURNEY OF JOURNALISTIC FEATURES – TEXT, CONTEXT AND READER IN HISTORY OF FEATURE STORIES

Feature stories as we see them today with elements of novelistic techniques, emotional appeals and engaging format are a product of centuries of change and transformation. The text i.e. the form of journalistic features evolved and grew in response to the changing reader needs and contexts that in turn were shaped by the social conditions of the time. Reed (1931) traces the journey of feature stories and points at its elements in man’s earliest utterances. According to him:

The initial appearance of matter with feature stamp upon it antedates printed newspapers by many centuries. The ancient folk tales, the episodes of heroic poetry, philosophical conversations of the Greeks, parable of the Bible, all bear an unmistakable earmark of feature compositions. (Reed, 1931, p.2).

The evolution of journalistic features is also intertwined with the evolution of mass media. Acta Diurna in Rome in 59 B.C and Ti-Pao in China in 618 A.D that are considered amongst the very first evidences of written periodicals showed an inclination to present news beyond the political concerns and present information about daily lives of the readers. Acta Diurna, for instance had a special feature story on the election news and everything done by the imperial family was chronicled faithfully (Lee, 1923).

Thereafter socio-political and cultural conditions in every century shaped the internal and external context of the reader; and needs and expectations of the reader further affected the changes in the text. Thus, the variables of text, context and reader come in to play in the journey of journalistic features.

Seventeenth Century: Although the traces of human-interest accounts date back to prehistoric times but it is only around the late seventeenth century that the journalistic features start appearing perennially in newspapers. First amongst these being ones that treated the problems of love and domestic life of the readers (Reed, 1921). The seventeenth century holds importance in this journey because not only the very first features appear in this era but also because it is the time when regular newspapers start appearing in Britain and America and newspaper content evolves in accordance with reader’s context.
In Britain, this century sees the first ever Coranto in English published in Amsterdam in 1620. Earliest evidences of text catering to the reader interest is also seen in seventeenth century Britain as the first ever women’s magazine, 
*Ladies Mercury*, came out in 1693 with content catering to the needs of female readers.

In America, the seventeenth century sees first evidences of feature stories or newspaper content that goes beyond the regular news in a four page newspaper, *Publick Occurrences*, published by an ex London book seller and publisher Benjamin Harris in 1625. The content of this newspaper was believed to be in response to the reader interests. “Harris knew that most of his readers would be attracted more by appeals to basic emotions and by reference to familiar persons and places. “Conflict and fear were two such emotions emphasized in this early paper” (Emery 1969, p.39). The formula used by Harris became successful as the two emotions used by him found permanent place in the newspaper content.

In India, however the socio political situations took almost a century more to come forth with the initial attempts for periodical publication that could cater to the reader interest.

**Eighteenth Century:** The eighteenth century holds importance in the evolution of feature stories as the socio political conditions gave rise to the needs that were gratified by diversity in newspaper content i.e. content went beyond regular news stories and started incorporating new forms of features. In Britain, the eighteenth century saw the political developments like colonization, social developments like growth of coffee house culture and cultural development of growing intellectual, spiritual aspirations of people. In America, the impact of British colonies led to social developments like setting up of education centres, emergence of a new class of readers and interest in religion and technology. In India, the political conditions served as a ground for birth of journalism. Thus, the reader context shaped by social conditions led to evolution of text in this century. Although the social and political conditions differed but in each scenario, these affected the internal and external context of the reader and his needs, that in turn affected the text.

As mentioned, the political and social developments set the stage for evolution of new forms of journalistic features in Britain. The creation of new British territories, the development of commercial interests and policies that accompanied this growth provided the subject matter for England’s first weekly *Review* started by Daniel Defoe. The *Review* is believed to be one of the early inspirations that later led to
evolution of a new journalistic form of writing, the essay features. Taking inspiration from Defoe’s Review, Richard Steele launched his tri weekly Tatler in 1709. Steele was successful in supplying the content that public expected in their newspaper (Bertrand, 1969) and thus the essay form of feature stories came in to being. Finding place in Tatler and Spectator, these essay form of journalistic features covered diverse subjects that ranged from interesting personalities, everyday philosophy and related topics that could cater to reader interest. The evolution of this new form of journalistic features is also related to the social development of the growth of coffee house culture. Coffee houses became a hub of intellectual exchange and as the common person felt the need to have detailed knowledge about intellectual subjects the essay form of features satiated this need.

The closing years of the eighteenth century in Britain once again provided a social context that influenced reader’s needs and the newspaper text. Economically, socially, politically, and even religiously Britain had already entered the next century, Bertrand (1969). The middle class in Britain not only wanted political and business news, they wished to be taught good manners, and to be entertained in an elegant and respectable fashion so that they could ape their betters and progress on the social ladder, thus the demand for diverse types of features grew further. This need of the readers to be provided with better and diverse content was served with appearance of first ever Sunday papers in the last decades of eighteenth century in Britain that later became the most potent platform for the growth of feature stories. In 1781, Mrs. E. Johnson started the first Sunday paper, British Gazette and Sunday Monitor. Later John Bell, the master of popular press brought out the elegant and entertaining World in 1787. Observer the oldest surviving Sunday paper came out in 1791. Thus, the reader’s needs shaped by external context, i.e. the socio political conditions of the time helped the feature story to evolve into new forms in the eighteenth century in Britain.

The eighteenth century in America also saw the rise of new forms of journalistic features in response to the changing reader needs and contexts. Although the first ever newspaper in America did appear in the previous century but the first continuously published newspaper was the Boston Newsletter by John Campbell. It is interesting to note that it is again the reader demand fuelled by social conditions that led to the appearance of this publication. The colonists who settled in New England were concerned about the education of their children and as a part of this educational
process, the first press came up in Cambridge and first American public school came up in Boston. Gradually, interest in education and cultural dissemination led to high literacy, increased interest in community matters, self-government, prosperity and cultural leadership that made Boston the intellectual capital of the New World. *The Boston Newsletter* came as an answer to the new reader aspirations and needs that had taken shape due to the socio political conditions in Boston. The publication, besides the regular news catered to the human-interest factor as it brought stories on remarkable incidents in neighbouring town and adventure stories by skippers sailing between Boston and the West Indies. Thus, one could see glimpses of travel features in their earliest forms in American journalism.

Personality sketches were another form of feature stories that appeared in the eighteenth century American journalism. Realizing that reader interest was the driving force for choosing the content, the *New England Courant* in 1721 by James Franklin focused on the need of the reader to gain knowledge about the subjects of his or her choice. As Emery (1969) observes, *Courant* supplied the readers with what they liked and needed, rather than with information controlled by self-interested officials. Its style was bold and its literary quality high. Franklin who knew how to interest readers lighted his pages by poking fun at rivals and the personality sketches in his paper appealed to local interests. Franklin printed feature stories, including human-interest articles of the type that Charles A. Dana popularized almost a century and a half thereafter.

Another form of journalistic writing that appeared in eighteenth century America were the features on the subject of religion and mythology. How the choice of the text in this case was governed by the social conditions and reader context comes forth in an announcement made by Bartholomew Green in his paper on January 21, 1723. The announcement by Green (as cited in Lee, 1923) read:

> ...It being my desire to make this as profitable and entertaining to the good people of this country as I can. I propose to give not only the most material articles of intelligence, both foreign and domestic that concern the political stage of the world; but also because this is a country, that has yet, through the mercy of God, many people in it, that have state of religion in the world very much at heart, and would be glad, if they knew how to order their prayers and
praises to the Great God thereupon, I shall endeavour, now and then, to insert
an article upon the state of religion... (p. 25).

Along with the evolution of several types of journalistic features, eighteenth century
American journalism also saw the evolution of typography and design that added to
the feature story presentation in the newspapers. In 1719, the Boston Gazette inserted
a cut out of ship at the right of its title and one of the postman at the left. The New
Hampshire Gazette and The New York Gazette also show evidence of initial attempts
to insert the text breaker devices. The reason for the same can be understood in
adding and enhancing the appeal of the text so that it appeals better to the reader.
Thus, the eighteenth century in America sees evolution in new forms of journalistic
writing and their presentation.

In India, the eighteenth century marks the beginning of journalism with the first ever
newspaper. It was on January 29, 1780 that James Augustus Hicky came out with his
sheet weekly called the Bengal Gazette that used sensational form of writing the
reasons for which were believed to be personal attacks on selected individuals
(Naqvi, 2007). The first ever newspaper in India had content that was in keeping
with the needs of its readers, the European community in India.

There were extracts from English newspapers in Britain, belated accounts of debates
in British Parliament, letters from local readers and items of gossip and scandal of
interest to the European community. Hicky’s newspaper becomes relevant to the
evolution of features in Indian context as parts of its content could be seen as what
one would today call features on fashion and lifestyle. “In Hicky’s Gazette there
were regular columns – poet’s corner, a women’s column where new fashions and
modes were discussed” (Aggarwal and Gupta, 2001, p.92). Hicky’s newspaper
became popular during its short stint offering content that was in tandem with the
cultural background of his readers. “Hickey knew his reading public. Spicy news
about individual lives interested European readers most” (Aggarwal and Gupta,
2001, p.93).

Another notable newspaper of the era was the Indian Gazette that appeared in the
same year. A four page, well printed publication lead to the decline of Hicky’s
Gazette that faced opposition from the authorities for its content and personal attacks
on the then Governor General.
Nineteenth Century: The nineteenth century became important in the journey of journalistic features as they grew not only in terms of varied themes and subject matter but also in terms of writing styles, presentation and other elements that added to their saleability. The important socio political and technological developments of this century included the Industrial Revolution that led to rise in production and to an extent commoditisation of newspapers; the invention of telegraph and telegram, and the setting up of news agencies that led to better dissemination of content. The changing social conditions affected the reader in terms of new needs and aspirations and the text evolved in accordance to these needs. For instance, the Industrial revolution not only led to mass production but also led to the rise of the middle class that had varied tastes and expectations from mass media content. The genre of journalistic feature in both Britain and America thus became heavily inclined towards human interest, lifestyle trends, and subjects beyond the everyday news. Newspaper text once again reshaped and remoulded in accordance with the context of the reader that was being shaped by the socio political conditions of the time.

In Britain, the first half of the nineteenth century saw daily circulations of newspapers rising from a mere 5000 to about 50,000 in 1850 and as the number of newspaper readers grew the newspaper text adapted itself to the various classes which emerged in this century. The ‘respectable’ Press gave political news and views to the elite while the ‘radical’ Press preached to the masses bringing content beyond the political information and on subjects of interest to the mass audience.

By the second half of the century, the Great Britain had reached the apex of her power both politically and economically. It was a period of peace and progress and both the aspects were reflected in the mass media content. An instance of the social and political events creating shaping reader context and influencing the text is the Education Act in 1870. The Act produced a huge class of readers that was waiting for the newspaper content to cater to the new reading habits that were a product of the spread of education. The readers’ need found answer in the form of newspapers and magazines that appeared thereafter. George Newnes launched Tit-Bits that reached sales figures of about 600,000 with emphasis on human-interest stories concentrating on drama and sensation and another publication The Star achieved success by featuring large headlines and vivid human interest or humorous articles.

Popular journalism was finding its place in the British newspapers for over a century now, but feature stories came to be recognized as a prominent part of the newspaper
text towards the end of the nineteenth century. Taking cue from the American newspapers, editors and publishers in Britain also started seeing features not only as an important part of the content but also as a genre that could give a new lease of life to the dying publications. For instance, *The Daily Mail* in 1896 by Alfred Harmsworth became the first newspaper in Britain that catered to a new reading public that needed something simpler, shorter and more readable than those that were previously available. Human-interest stories, gossip, features for women including fashion features, utility features on cookery, to name a few took over from ponderous political articles and news. In addition, the editors trained the sub editors to shorten and enliven all stories and make the content attractive and diverse for the readers. The social conditions influenced the context in which the reader operated and the text kept evolving in accordance to this changing context. For instance, the feature stories in newspapers on the subjects of home decor, fashion, well being, brought much needed information and catered to the needs of the reader who wanted to learn everything about the new lifestyle that could enhance his standard of living. In addition, there were specialized stories on travel and adventure that satiated the needs of another set of readers looking forward to simpler experiences in life. Philip Gibbs one of the journalists who worked for *The Daily Mail* in 1902 further explains how feature stories became an indispensable part of the newspaper text catering to the reader. According to Gibbs (as cited in Simkin, n.d.):

The New Journalism had arrived, and the *Daily Mail* under Alfred Harmsworth for whom I worked was its founder and pioneer. There were violent critics of this new type of journalism. They thought it vulgar, trashy, and lacking altogether in the dignity of the old-time Press. However, Alfred Harmsworth knew what he was doing, and did it with genius. He knew that a public had grown up which took an intelligent interest in things not previously considered part of newspaper chronicles. Food; fashions; the drama of life in low places as well as high; sport of all kinds; the human story wherever it might be found; the adventure of science as it affected everyday life. Harmsworth knew that women's interests had been left out mainly from the
old-fashioned newspapers, and he knew that here was an enormous field for increasing circulation. (Simkin, n.d.)

Another dimension to the journalistic features in Britain was added with the evolution of content of Sunday newspapers. Although the oldest Sunday paper *Observer* was already in circulation since the previous century, popular Sunday newspapers in the nineteenth century included *The New Observer* that was later named *The Sunday Times*. The early Sunday papers, were serious publications. It was later that the elements of sensational journalism were added to the Sunday papers. As Williams 2010 explains, “It was the format of sex, gossip and crime developed by papers such as the *News of the World*, *Reynolds News* and *Lloyd’s Weekly News* that made Sundays to become Britain’s best selling newspapers from the mid-nineteenth century”(p.8). The high circulation and sales figures of these Sunday papers brought to the forefront the simple fact that newspaper text that had elements of entertainment, light heartedness struck a chord with the readers, and that reader interest was the prime factor in influencing the newspaper text.

An important landmark in the journey of journalistic features comes in America as the socio economic conditions created a context for the reader to appreciate the form of journalistic features. As the industrial revolution brought with it a shift from handcrafted printing to the steam powered printing, mass production of inexpensive newspapers became possible and thus came into being the Penny Press in America. Although the slashed price was the key feature of this Press, what was also important was the change in the content as it made newspapers available to the lower class citizens. As the Penny Press began to pay more attention to the readers it served, the text had to be transformed as the newspaper men realized that the information that was enjoyed by the upper class did not interest the new public or the new reader.

One of the examples of the change in newspaper text to suit the reader needs in America came in the form of *The Sun*, a Penny paper brought out by Benjamin Day in 1833 that appealed to a wider audience as it focused on human-interest stories written in a simpler style with vivid language. This was also the time for the new type of journalistic features in the form of Police court humour. *The Sun* undertook to provide the labouring class of readers with an inexpensive journal that carried emotional and extravagant narratives. By accentuating the human element, *The Sun* not only received record circulations but also became a precedent to mould the
newspaper text to suit that fitted well with the context of the reader and fulfil the
reader needs. The key element that had clicked with the readers here was how the
subject matter of stories placed emphasis on the common person as he or she was
reflected in the political, educational, and social life of the day.

While the newspaper text undergoing a transformation for the reader was a
pronounced fact, what is interesting to note is that the changing text and social set up
also transformed the reader. As Singh, 2007 puts it, “the sudden availability of cheap,
interesting reading material was a significant stimulus to the achievement of nearly
universal literacy now taken for granted in America” (p. 56).

Another form of journalistic features that came to forefront in this century and enjoy
popular readership until date are the ‘theatrical chit chat’ columns. Sensing the
possibilities of this form of feature writing was New York Herald that was brought
out by James Gordon Bennett in 1835. Surveying the reader needs, Bennett decided
to reach still other classes than those who were most attracted by sensational court
reports. Accordingly, he introduced financial comments, theatrical ‘chit-chat’, and
society news all written in irresistible style (Reed, 1931, p.6). New York Herald is
also said to have added another dimension to the newspaper text of that time as it
identified a new class of readers and their needs. Fellow (2005) points out, “Bennett
realized that there was more journalistic money to be made in recording gossip that
interested bar-rooms, workshops, race courses, and tenement houses, than in
consulting the tastes of drawing rooms and libraries” (p.90). Therefore, as the social
conditions made way for an indulgent lifestyle for the reader, the newspaper text in
American Penny Press was moulded likewise.

Reviews of literary works and performing arts are another form of feature stories that
grew in this century. These found place in Horace Greeley’s New York Tribune and
E.L.Godkin’s Nation. The columns carrying criticism of books and art exhibited a
soundness of judgment and literary excellence that had not been previously attained
in this country. Also winning the public favour were the entertaining new incidents
that were written in a crisp and lucid manner and popularized by the New York Sun
under Charles A. Dana. The guidance and utility articles that were the very first
journalistic features to have appeared in seventeenth century also enjoyed readership
in the nineteenth century. The Kansas City Star established by William R. Nelson in
1880 laid particular stress on features of guidance, information and entertainment
type that are also known as utility features or lifestyle features today.
While various forms of feature stories gained popularity in this century, the journey of journalistic features would remain incomplete without the mention of features journalism that was accompanied by political cartoons, comic strips, coloured supplements, sensational headlines and make up. Although this form of feature journalism has often been trashed, as sensational journalism lacking news value, but the fact was that this was a change in text that came in response to the changing social conditions and reader context. In one of the social and cultural developments, America saw produced a new class of reader, the immigrants, who had different set of needs and expectations from the mass media, thus came the change in newspaper content and presentation as a response to this new class of readers. Joseph Pulitzer, the pioneer who brought a revolution to the genre of feature writing and made it an indispensable part of the newspaper text, mentions the interest of this new class of reader and how he planned to modify the text of his newspaper according to the needs of this class. According to Pulitzer (as cited in Gitlin, 2009)

There is room in this great and growing city for a journal that is not only cheap but bright, not only bright but large, not only large but truly democratic – dedicated to the cause of the people rather than the [rich] – devoted more to the news of the New than the Old world – that will expose all fraud and sham, fight all public evils and abuses that will serve and battle for the people with earnest sincerity. (p.44).

The comment by Pulitzer clearly outlines the new class of readers and their expectations from the newspaper content, as the prime reason and motive behind the choice of subject matter for his newspaper. It was reflected in the content of his paper New York World that ably capitalized on the human element and carried stories on subject matter ranging from scandal, tragedy and crime to fashion, women’s issues and sports. Snow (2010) in a short biography of Joseph Pulitzer mentions that, Pulitzer drew readers by emphasizing coverage of new type of stories. Human-interest stories, gossip and even scandal was given prominent coverage simply because they fascinated the readers (para.5).

The fact that this revolution in newspaper text gratified the reader need is evident from the fact that New York World became the first newspaper in America to sell one
million copies. Thus, the factor of reader need gratification driving the newspaper text became an undeniable fact by this time.

The popularity of this form of feature writing was also evident from the fact that possibly every newspaper in the country in that time tried to pick up this style of writing and make profits. *New York Journal* acquired by William Hearst in 1895 in competition to *The New York World* published feature stories on interviews of the distinguished persons of the hour, science features on recent discoveries and inventions. Hearst preferred to have his news stories read like dramatic 'novelettes from real life'. The war for better sales also led to sensational journalism a trait of journalism often associated with feature stories of this era but with the turn of century the feature stories found their permanent and secure place in the newspaper content.

Just like in Britain, feature story journalism in America found a new dimension with the growth of the Sunday papers that provided a more lively canvas to the feature stories that could be painted in vivid colours unlike the cut and dry newspaper text of the weekly news editions. Readers, specially the working class, expected entertainment from their periodical reading that could break the monotony of the political and didactic instructions and the feature stories in Sunday newspapers satiated this need for diversion. An example of Sunday edition serving as a launch pad for feature story journalism was *Sunday World* started by Joseph Pulitzer as a part of his *New York World*. He turned a dull four page Sunday paper into a twenty-page paper running over with attractive news stories and features, some of them sensational, most of them light, readable, and all illustrated more fully than any newspaper had ever been before. Thus, the reader interest, his internal context i.e. his needs and desires and his external context as shaped by societal conditions once again became instrumental in adding a new dimension to the newspaper text and the feature story journalism.

While feature stories had found their place in the British and American Press, in *India* the features form of writing was yet to take a concrete form and shape. The nineteenth century in India saw social and political developments in the form of rise of national consciousness. Although newspapers in India were still at a growing stage, the social context continued to influence the newspaper text and often, long features that spoke at length about the social conditions and situation in India, or which promoted a certain religion or faith were a part of the newspaper text.
After the first newspaper was published, many other British owned journals came out; some of them also enjoyed official patronage. The same was reflected in their content that revolved either around promoting the interests of the East India Company or religion features that promoted Christianity in the country.

A perfect example of how newspaper text was inspired by the social conditions and reader context was the rise of reformist publications in the early years of the nineteenth century. Pioneered by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, these publications had a mission of educating the population about the social reforms. According to Mathur (2006) the content of these publications, specifically the Sambod Kaumudi prepared the native mind for the abolition of Sati a rampant social evil. Another publication by Roy that highlights a strong connection between newspaper text and readers was the Mirat-ul-Akhar. The purpose of the publication, as quoted by Ram Mohan Roy (as cited in Natrajan, 1955) was “to communicate to the rulers a knowledge of the real situation of their subjects and make the subjects acquainted with the established laws and customs of their rulers” (p.22). Another publication that gave voice to the social consciousness of the times and exposed the failings of the East India Company was Calcutta Journal by Silk Buckingham. Although Buckingham had to quit the country but influence of his journalistic writings that were well built in the social context of the times were seen as an inspiration for the newspaper content in the times to come.

As the social and political conditions of the country became more focused around the freedom struggle, journalism in India could be seen taking the shape of a crusade and the newspaper text became a weapon to promote the ideas of patriotism. This spirit of nationalism became a social context that made features on the subject of patriotism and nationalist spirit an integral part of the newspaper text and this content in turn influenced and inspired the readers. Although mass illiteracy of the Indian readers, poverty, Press restrictions proved hurdles in the flourishing of newspapers in India but the spirit of nationalism and patriotism became the most prominent element of the social context that governed the newspaper content for years to come. The political developments sparked a period of national awakening. There was a visible relationship between the formation of political associates and the establishment of Indian-owned newspapers in different parts of the country. The content of these publications was oriented towards political and social reforms.

The mutiny of 1857 further provided a context for the newspaper text that aimed at inspiring the readers to join the struggle for freedom. Jagdish Prasad (as cited in Ed. Mathur, 2006) brings to light the role of newspaper text in the social scenario of the
time. It also explains how on the one hand the newspaper text influenced the reader 
and on the other hand became a reflection of the sentiments of the reader’s context. 

....it was in 1857 itself that Payam-e-Azadi started publication in Hindi and Urdu calling upon the people to fight against the British...the opinions of the native Press may have often been regarded as the safety valve which gives warning of danger...Thus had the Delhi newspapers of January 1857 been consulted by European functionaries, they would have seen in them how the natives were ripe for revolt and were expecting aid from Persia and Russia...

(p.15).

Besides the social and political conditions, another factor that influenced the text in this century was the number of technological developments like the telegraph that made the newspaper content more timely. This century also saw rise of many English language Indian newspapers that made their mark later by becoming centenarian newspapers of the country, most prominent amongst them being the Times of India in 1838, The Hindu in 1878 and The Tribune in 1881. These also exemplify the divide in the Indian Press that resulted from the political situation in the country. The Times of India had a reputation of being a Pro British rule newspaper and had news from the Britain and the Indian subcontinent. The content in The Hindu on the other hand was a reflection of the revolutionary aspirations of the readers at that time. The Tribune started by Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia explained the reasons for starting the publication in its very first editorial. The editorial voiced the reasons in these words, “Our appearance in the field of journalism is to meet a crying want of this part of India, namely an English journal for the representation of ‘native’ opinion” Ananda (1986).

As the newspapers became widely available, they acted as a harbinger of modernity, contributing to the construction of a national identity. Although the social and political conditions like low literacy rate, poverty and repressive laws did act as a handicap for the development of the Press in India yet the expansion of printing technology to the Indian languages made the newspaper text more meaningful for the majority of the readers and thus the Indian Press saw a healthy growth.
Over all, the nineteenth century holds special importance for the genre of Journalistic features as the Press in Britain, America and India, driven by the social conditions and reader context, started incorporating the human interest as an essential element in the newspaper content and the readers saw higher need gratification in the content that they could relate to. Therefore, from advice columns and essay form of features the content of the newspapers moved towards incorporating everything from lifestyle, utility, social reforms, art, culture and sports as a part of the features content of the newspapers. In addition, the advancement of technology and technique helped in specialism in journalism. The ‘new journalism’ that came forth towards the end of the century recognised that newspaper text could be categorized under different genres to cater to different market of readers. As Parthasarathy (1989) puts it the newspapers offered something or the other for every types of reader; writing for a well read man, sub editing for a man of detail, and management for the man of business.

**Twentieth Century:** With a strong foundation already being laid for feature stories in newspapers, this century helped in strengthening their role in the newspaper content by reshaping and restructuring them. As De Fleur and Ball- Rokeach, S point out in Granato (2003) whenever a new mass medium appears the existing media must modify its functions. Therefore, the inventions of Radio, Television and Internet in the twentieth century led to metamorphosis of the newspaper content. Moreover, as the newspaper text underwent a change to compete with the emerging mass media, feature stories became the quintessential element in the newspaper text as they offered diverse topics of human interest, vivid display and lucid detailing to even the most sombre events. Thus bringing the much needed entertainment quotient to the newspaper and striking a chord with the readers especially in a social context where more lively and colourful media were vying for the reader’s attention.

In Britain, the socio-political conditions including the two World Wars, the mass media mergers, the availability of latest technologies and the war for better revenues provided a context that had two faceted effects on the newspaper text. While on the one hand was the birth of full colour editions, multiplication in Sunday feature supplements and the rise of tabloids, on the other hand was the conglomeration that led to commoditisation of news. In both the cases, it was the surrounding social context that affected a change in the newspaper content and it was the reader interest that guided this change further. Bertland (1969) elaborates this connection as he
describes the evolution of Press in Britain in the early twentieth century. The Press in Britain had split into the ‘heavies’ on one hand, which, together with the political weeklies, kept some of the 19th century press power and the ‘populars’ on the other hand which concentrated on short news and entertainment to attract a large half-educated public. The modern Press, says Bertrand, was here to stay and the older London newspapers and the provincial Press would have to adapt to the new climate or die. The new climate here was the social context where the trade unions were becoming powerful, women had the right to vote, and the standard of living was rising. In other words the class of readers that had emerged in the 19th century was becoming powerful and it was the interests and tastes of this class of readers that was affecting a change in the content and format of the British newspapers. Citing the example of *The Daily Mirror*, Bertrand explains how the publications ensured high readership and better revenues by catering to the interest of the masses. He says:

In 1934, circulation of The Daily Mirror was down to 220,000 copies a day.

Then Bartholomew, a earthy, ruthless, semi literate genius of the Popular Press, kicked it up by 2 million. He turned the *Mirror* into an American style muckraking tabloid with a poster front page, devoting its diminutive articles and profusion of pictures to crime, sex, and strident radicalism. He thus conquered a new public, the lower strata of the working class. (Bertrand, 1969, p.133)

While the displeasure towards the ‘new’ journalism or the ‘popular’ Press had been a part and parcel of its growth what is significant here is to note the steep rise in readership after the Popular Press or the new journalism established itself as an undeniable success ingredient in the newspapers. From 1925 to 1955 the population of Great Britain went up to 10% and newspaper circulation to 90% reflecting the reader interest and inclination to this new journalism. However, it is also pertinent to mention here that new journalism or feature story journalism has often been mistaken with sensationalism that was only a miniscule part of the bigger whole. The most potent ingredient being the factor of ‘human-interest’, the knack of capturing the humane ramifications of the event, the art of going beyond the surface and exploring the parts of the story that would strike a chord with the reader. While the newspapers
served the reader with what was considered to be of his interest, it was also true that the evolving newspaper text was also changing the needs of the reader. As the forms of feature stories diversified and started catering to the niche audience through special pages and supplements, the latent needs of the reader came to the surface and they started demanding more such content.

The rise of human interest and entertainment feature stories in this century can also be attributed to the rise of new mass media in Britain. Radio and Television for instance gave news with such objectivity, concision and speed that newspapers were encouraged either to serve as journals of record and to concentrate on comments and background articles, or else to become entertainers and to provide pictures and human-interest stories. While the role and rise of feature stories in the latter case was apparent, even in the former case the feature stories with a topical news peg (also called the news features) became popular. Therefore, in either case, the impact of emerging new mass media led to growing quantity and quality of the feature stories as the reader expected an extra edge in the news pages and an entertainment quotient in the separate supplements. The newspapers that understood and implemented this text, context, and reader connect survived and flourished while those that could not doomed.

Sunday Newspapers that served as a special platform for the feature stories also saw growth in the 20th century British Press. The examples include Sunday Pictorial (later Sunday Mirror) in 1915, Sunday Express in 1918, Manchester Sunday Paper in 1954, Sunday Telegraph in 1961, launch of Sunday Times Magazine in 1962 to name a few.

Features for women was another dimension that saw growth in 20th century Feature Story Journalism in Britain as this century saw the rise of the Daily Mirror, the first and only daily newspaper designed and dedicated exclusively for women. This development in text again drew from the social context where women were emerging as a special class of reader who wanted to work and vote and as a reader, had interests beyond lifestyle and fashion features.

Design and Presentation were also important elements of feature story journalism that underwent a transformation with the advent of technology to make the feature story more presentable and interesting for the reader. The Daily Mirror, after its re-launch in 1904 cashed in on this need of the new age reader and achieved success.
How the social context and the changing reader interest drove this change in presentation of text is evident in an excerpt from Hamilton Fyfe’s autobiography:

The shape and content of the *Daily Mirror* recommended it strongly to those who needed something to help them through their half hour’s journey to work in the morning. Packed in tram, train or omnibus, standing up perhaps and holding on to a strap with one hand, they required in the other, not a journal to stir thought or supply serious information, but one to entertain them, occupy their minds pleasantly, prevent them from thinking. The news was displayed and worded in a manner that made assimilation simple. Everything in the *Daily Mirror* was calculated to be easy of absorption by the most ordinary intelligence. (Fyfe as cited in Williams, 2010, p.133)

As the demand for feature stories grew, the supply for the same was catered to by the establishment of the Feature syndicates. As a result any publication, large or small, was able to obtain at small cost, comics, illustrations and miscellaneous features of every kind by prominent artists, distinguished authors and recognized authorities.

Similar patterns in growth of feature stories in newspapers are seen in *America* in the twentieth century. The world wars, Spanish civil war, technological inventions, changing lifestyle of the population were some of the important developments of the century that affected the change in text. Turow (2011) describes the change in newspaper content and the place of feature stories in them in the twentieth century America as he says that competitive environment of the century changed the daily newspaper dramatically. “With colour comics, syndicated columnists, hefty sports sections, photograph filled Sunday magazine sections, and more, the newspaper became a mosaic of features designed to attract as many different types of people as possible” (p.266). Therefore, the social context coupled with the reader interests changed the way newspapers looked and functioned.

The socio political events provided the subject matter for the content of the newspapers and the reader interest became the driving force for the choice of the story format. Thus, the feature story that had been well established in the last century diversified further as almost every big story was covered with the special features along with the main news item. For instance, the very beginning of the century saw
the Spanish Civil War, an event that was covered with feature stories and pictures along with the hard news as the reader interest was in human-interest element of the war stories behind the informative news.

The subject matter for newspaper text in this decade was driven by the socio political developments across the globe and the technology that could help gain quick and detailed access to these events, together the two factors helped serve the reader interest that was reflected in the high circulation figures. As the variety of events getting feature coverage spanned from socio political events to rare achievements, another example was the story of airplane flight of Charles Lindbergh from New York to Paris. The fact that Lindberg flew alone and was young and modest caught the public imagination and the event was given more than 15 page feature coverage by the *Times*.

Another example was the story of the birth and infancy of the Dionne quintuplets, which after the initial spot news became the subject for thousands of pages of feature articles. Capturing the change that had occurred in the newspaper content in twentieth century by comparing the coverage of the similar news item in the previous century, Mott (1949) says that a news item about the birth of quintuplets when carried in *New York Courier and Inquirer* in 1833 was summed up in ten lines. This explains the great alteration in the news values in a hundred years. Attributing this change in newspaper content to the readers, Mott adds, “this was partly because of interest of most readers in the basic and universal desires and emotions –the quality commonly called, human interest” (p.696).

Just like Britain, America also saw the growth of Sunday Papers that gave a perfect platform to the feature stories. The development of Sunday Edition throughout the country immediately after the war with Spain was one of the chief phenomena of the period. Sunday Papers of fifty pages or more soon became common. Supported by a great volume of advertising these papers were filled with feature material in great quantity and variety with sections devoted to news, theatre, education, household tips, society and clubs. The reader interest in the feature content was clearly reflected from the popularity of Sunday papers. The Sunday circulation of a given paper was commonly much larger than its daily circulation, in spite of the increased price per copy and about three fourths of a large paper's profits usually came from Sunday edition (Mott, 1949).
Another development in growth of feature stories came along with the growth of the Tabloids in America. Although ‘tabloid’ applied to newspapers referred solely to the small page size that had existed in the American journalism for more than a hundred years ago, but what differentiated the modern tabloid was how it catered to reader needs. While earlier tabloids had smaller page size owing to Press capacity, modern tabloids with smaller page size were simply catering to reader convenience. An initial experiment to introduce a tabloid to the American newspaper reader was done by Pulitzer in 1901. Pulitzer who was being visited by Alfred Harmsworth turned one day’s issue of *New York World* over to the visitor for experimentation. The Harmsworth *World* appeared on January 1, 1901 in thirty-two pages, each one-half the size of the regular *World* page. The editor called it a ‘tabloid newspaper’ and ‘the newspaper of the 20th century’. It was well-illustrated and emphasized on condensation besides carrying among other things, a digest of a recent book. It sold well enough to call for extra Press runs reflecting the reader approval for a format that was convenient to handle and the content that was interesting to skim through in the midst of their busy lifestyle. Hence began the Tabloid revolution of the 20th century in America.

Besides the Sunday papers and Tabloids providing an excellent canvas for the vivid and lucid feature stories, this century also saw the a growth in Feature syndicates that boomed in the years following the World War. These brought a variety of columns and features written by experts on a variety of subjects ranging from politics and finance to books, movies, radio, theatres, music, art, society, fashions, home making, cookery, child welfare, medicine, law, weather, science, travel, sports and so on. One example of this evolving newspaper text, catering to the reader interest was the column by Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, ‘*My Day*’ that told in an informal way what a President’s wife does and sees and thinks about her daily life. Thus human interest elements along with the hard news of the day was a combination that had struck a chord with the reader and hence the 20th century saw the big feature story, often topical, sometimes called a news feature gaining a strong foothold in the newspaper content.

The evolution in feature story also brought along with it the evolution in newspaper design and writing style and positioning of the feature stories. The very first exhibition of newspaper typography held in the 20th century called the attention of the country’s publishers to the evolution in page make up. Gradually newspapers
developed the so-called streamlined make-up that involved omission of column rules, and multiple decks of heads; and required the setting of heads flush left in caps and lower case of non-serif types—thus opening up and lightening the completely typographical effect. The writing technique changed under the influence of the other mass media. Since radio and television already broke the news to the reader, the newspaper was looked upon as a source of interpretation rather than merely information and hence the 5W and 1H summary lead gave way to the feature leads with greater variety and more instant appeals in order to cater to the reader interest.

In the Indian context, the twentieth century saw the feature story take proper shape and form. The British rule, the freedom struggle, and then the triumph to mark the end of this struggle were the political and social developments in which the feature story grew in the first half of the century. The socio-political situation of the country divided the Press into two sections; the native Press that supported the boycott movement against the British and the Anglo-Indian Press that supported the move for co-operation. The divide created by the socio-political context was reflected in the feature stories that appeared in the newspapers as the two sections of the Press catered to a different set of readers. On the one hand were feature articles that included fashion notes from Paris every week, gossipy accounts of alleged amorous liaisons, personal experience features, reprints of articles from the British newspapers, that catered to the readers from elite British and Indian class. On the other hand were feature stories in the form of long human-interest accounts that voiced the concerns of nationalism. In either case, the reader interest decided the newspaper text.

As the struggle for freedom intensified, the national sentiments started reflecting in the newspaper content and the subject matter for feature articles was usually inclined towards the current political happenings in the country. The connect between text, context and reader in this pre-Independence era is highlighted in the words of Mahatma Gandhi (as cited in Aggarwal and Gupta, 2001), "...One of the objects of a newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is to fearlessly expose the popular defects ..." (p.104)

Driven by this ideology the native Press in the country used the newspaper content as a tool to spread the message of the freedom struggle. Human interest account of the atrocities being inflicted on the freedom fighters, in depth articles on the agitations
and local and national in every part of the country was ventilated through the newspaper text.

After Independence, the genre of journalistic features saw diversification in themes and subject matter but it took a while for the Indian journalists to break away from the mould of political subjects. Indian newspapers for years followed the beaten track and stuck to catering to the scanty class of readers who were concerned only about political developments of the country. However, as the country evolved and progressed socially and economically, a new class of readers evolved and newspaper content began to change. The same is highlighted by Tandon (ed. Wolseley, 1964):

> It is a curse on Indian journalism that long statements and boring speeches consume 90% of the space in our papers. They make them dull, colourless and lifeless and very little room is left for features and articles. However, now the tendency is to cut down lengthy statements drastically and find space for non-news form of writing. (p. 10).

Tandon further elaborates in his account of feature writing in India, that the Indian journalist obsessed with the struggle of freedom, developed insensitiveness to the non-political subjects and wielded the pen as a crusader for freedom and not as a literary artist. It was only after Independence that the Indian Journalist started focusing on writing that is more non-political. He now felt life at various levels and gave expression to it with human-interest accounts and feature stories. One of the prime reasons for this change in the text of the feature stories can again be attributed to the socio-political conditions of the country that shaped the reader context and in turn the needs and expectations of the reader from the newspaper. As the violent legacy of the Partition of the country dictated that the media act as a unifying force the media content was extremely sensitive to the ethnic, cultural and religious subjects. The newspaper content also evolved with the objectives of nation building and modernisation and the same started reflecting in the news and feature stories that appeared in the newspapers.

According to Tandon (ed. Wolseley, 1964) one of the popular forms of feature writing in India have been personality features as in India more than in any other country, history is regarded as biography writ large. Great men who have captured the imagination of people have become subjects of feature stories that are often
written to commemorate their birth or death anniversaries. Yet another form of feature that he points out was peculiar to the Indian context post Independence was the mythological or the culture feature that draws its source from the myriad Gods and Goddesses in the country and the festivals, fairs and beliefs that they include. The average Indian reader being rooted deep in culture and traditions was catered well with such features.

The human-interest feature that later grew as a part of the Indian newspapers can be attributed to the British and American papers that made the feature writers in India explore the unusual and the eccentric as a theme for feature stories. Later the Indian journalist explored the possibilities of reviews of various arts in the feature supplements that came up in the mid twentieth century and since then have become an indispensable part of the weekend newspaper.

Thus, over the decades genres like theatre, art and culture, lifestyle, social issues, to name a few, became a permanent feature of the newspapers. In addition, special pages were dedicated to women and children content, science features and many sub genres and themes within the bigger genre of feature writing started to develop. Although the same had also existed in the pre-Independence era but the difference appeared in terms of source and treatment given to the stories. While the socio political conditions in the previous century and early decades of this century had favoured reprints from British newspapers, the post – Independence era of the 20th century saw newspaper production as a well developed industry in India. It had professionals taking up the job of providing feature stories and more local content started appearing in form of human-interest features. These catered to the needs of newspaper readers in big and small cities. Moreover the growth of vernacular Press provided an opportunity for the local subjects to be carried in local languages, thus the content made better sense to the diverse population from different walks of life and further encouraged reading of newspapers.

The last decade of the 20th century was the era of globalisation and liberalisation that provided a perfect context for the sudden splash of colour and further diversity in the newspaper text. The readers who were now exposed to products and services from across the globe saw themselves at par with the global population. They were curious about the experiences around the world, thus developed a market for lifestyle features that could discuss the global and national trends in food, fashion, travel, gadgets and other experiences. As the standard of living improved, there was more
scope for educations and this further added to the readership of newspapers. As the industry in India grew, the niche subjects dealing with separate industry trends started becoming subjects for features that initially had special pages dedicated to them and later had to be adjusted in special supplements along with the main editions. Thus, the changing social political and economic conditions not only changed the needs of the reader and provided a completely new context in which the text was consumed but also affected a change in the newspaper text that had to evolve, grow and diversify in order to cater better to the readers.

**The Twenty First Century:** The present century marked with technological innovations is revolutionizing the patterns of communication. The content is more personalized, the choices to access this content are innumerable, and the reasons to choose a specific content from the plethora of information available are manifold. In such a scenario where news, views and experiences are just a click away, do the feature stories in newspapers still add to the mechanized and cloned reportage across the mass media? Does the feature story still cater to the need of the reader to understand the human ramifications of an event? Does mass media content, particularly the feature stories evolve in response to the reader needs and context? Does the relationship between the text, context and reader still exist as it did in the previous centuries or do the large scale upheavals upset the constant of text, context and reader equation? These are some of the questions that the present study seeks to answer.

Therefore, as the newspapers undergo metamorphosis, the present study closely analyses the trends in feature stories with respect to the variables of text, context and reader. The study seeks to determine the trends in the content, presentation and source of feature stories and also seeks to analyze the trends in reception of feature stories.

**1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

As one sees, over the centuries feature stories have grown from being seen as a 'non-serous news', 'fillers', 'entertainment pieces' or even 'sensational journalism', to an essential part of the newspaper content. Having carved a niche for themselves, feature stories are today seen as an indispensible and quintessential ingredient of any successful mass media content and thus become a significant subject for research. Moreover, feature stories are an intimate form of journalism, reflective of the humane face of society and responsive to social and cultural developments, therefore
it becomes important to study the variables of Text, Context and Reader as it can help in understanding the factors that help in production and reception of feature stories.

The present work a trend study of feature stories in centenarian newspapers with respect to the variables of text, context and reader involves a content analysis that spans 80 years that is followed by a readership survey. From analyzing the trends in subject matter, writing style and readability to looking at the changes that occurred in positioning, typography and verbal visual presentation of feature stories, besides the changes in their source; the present study seeks to trace the trends in the content, presentation, and sources of journalistic features. The readership survey looks at the reception of feature stories, the reading preferences, the factors that govern these preferences, the need gratification and the effect of readers' internal and external context on the reading preferences. Thus, the study divided in two parts, not only looks at the trends in text, context and reader but also sees the connect between these variables and how this connect can help understand the trends further.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
The study holds relevance both from the perspective of benefiting the industry by helping in devising content strategies and from the standpoint of enriching the theoretical foundations that help understand diverse journalistic forms.

Looking at the study from the industry’s perspective, the present work can lead to policy implications for content strategy by identifying the content that leads to high need gratification in readers. The trend analysis can show the dominant themes and writing styles that remain prominent in all social and cultural conditions and the readers survey can help establish a connect between trends in text and preferences in readers. The focus on feature stories becomes an added advantage as the format of journalistic features is becoming increasingly popular as a tool that can generate and sustain the reader interest. While the analysis of subject matter can provide the editors with preferred themes that the readers like to read, the analysis of other parameters like writing styles, readability, verbal visual ratios, positioning, typography and sources can help devise holistic content strategies. As the study, attempts to verify the findings of the content analysis through a readership survey it can help suggest a winning formula for newspaper content development.

In terms of enriching existing theoretical foundations and suggesting new frameworks, the study can prove useful, as it looks at the trends in feature stories vis-
à-vis the variables of text, context and the reader. The study can verify if the reader needs still act as a dominant factor in moulding the content. The study can enrich the existing theories on selective influences and need gratifications besides suggesting new frameworks that incorporate the variable of text, context and reader. While the existing theories connect the mass media content to the reader need gratification, the present study can add to the same by looking at the factors that shape the reader needs, i.e. the internal and external context of the reader. It can help postulate frameworks that discuss the relationship between the contexts in which text is consumed by the reader with special reference to feature stories. The study can help devise theoretical frameworks that use the text, context and reader mechanism to study the evolution of other journalistic forms.

Thus, the trend study of feature stories vis-à-vis text, context and reader is relevant in the present mass media scenario as it helps explore the subject of feature stories that are being incorporated in the mass media content owing to its high need gratification. The study is also relevant because the approach of text, context and reader can help evolve new theoretical frameworks besides proving useful in reinventing the content of newspapers.