

Analysis Of Design Trends With Respect To Readers Perspective: A Study Of English Newspapers In India

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Abstract

In the modern day, newspaper design is quite important. Design is turning out to be crucial for a newspaper's survival in a cutthroat market. Newspapers and other slower media are facing fierce competition from internet-based media. In an effort to beat the competition and provide the news in a more appealing manner, newspaper companies are altering their designs. It is possible to entice potential consumers with attractive design. In the current context, understanding the design preferences of Indian newspaper readers becomes crucial. The purpose of this study is to give readers of Indian newspapers an insight of their design preferences. To find out the newspaper readers' preferred designs, a thorough survey was conducted. Data regarding several elements, such as visuals, layout, and advertisements in newspaper design, are gathered via questionnaires. According to the survey, the majority of readers choose images above infographics and cartoons as their preferred visuals. Research emphasizes how crucial images are to news reporting. It confirms that images play an equal role in a news report. This study has also attempted to determine the ideal layout choice for newspaper content. Most popular layout style, is the horizontal layout.

KeyWords: *Layout, Newspaper Design, Front Page, Indian Newspaper.*

Introduction

The newspaper's front page is the first thing that draws readers in. Designers invest the most time and effort into creating it because it is the publication's main page. Designers try to arrange different sections so that photos and stories are arranged according to news values, hierarchy, and personal preference. Every tried-and-true component would be included in a model newspaper design. A complex cycle is in play when designing the front page. Story choice is one important example. To entice hurried readers and buyers, the most important stories should be highlighted. However, the provisions that are introduced on the first page do not solely consist of stories. Every story is highlighted with alternative design elements, such as headlines and photos, in addition to typographic choices and graphic elements. Many of those style choices could reflect the ideals of a newspaper organization regarding what are deemed to be the most important stories of the day that should be shared with its audience (Kim & Chung, 2017). There would be lots of white space and paragraph heads on a well-designed page. The chosen headline would fit the most prominent faces when a mix of upper- and lower-case typefaces conveyed the main points of each narrative. Newspaper designers strive to make communication a fundamental component of their work.

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Over time, newspaper styles have evolved. Upon closer examination, intriguing patterns in newspaper layout and design become apparent. Newspapers from the 1960s were known for their condensed, densely packed pages with few images on the front. Because they were easier to read and locate the data in, modular styles gained popularity by the 1970s. Side-by-side images gained significant importance on the home page. Data graphics and color photography with multiple front-page entry points became popular in the 1990s (Hays, 2018).

In the present times when internet dominates in almost every human activity, news dispersal is no different. Today, news is delivered at tremendous speed and almost live action can be seen from across the world using internet. In such a scenario older media like newspapers seem very slow to new generation and thus it is losing its utility. Newspapers are finding it hard to survive in this competitive environment. But, there are certain aspects of newspapers which gives it hope that newspapers can create a niche for themselves and compete with present age media.

As media business is growing, it is facing new challenges. The most important challenge is from the media business itself as various types of media are offering rivalry to one another. As Newspapers contend among themselves and at the same time with alternative varieties of media, designers try to track down the most ideal way of introducing stories and strategies for designing pages in newspapers. A lot of attention is being paid to newspaper style specifically, creating the frontpage look nice, to spice up the enjoyment of readers and circulation of daily. The study of Siskind, T. G. (1979) focuses on effects newspaper design elements have on readership and reader's preferences. Readers look for information and recreation from the newspaper. Presumably, more pleasing the readers find a newspaper, the bigger the circulation are. Newspapers compete with other media for the readers. Newspapers, like any media threatened by more successful modes of communication, should attempt to set themselves apart as much as possible by highlighting their individuality (Schoenbach, 2004).

Literature review

Vries, J. D. (2008) describes the design of newspapers and magazines as a process of cultural change which goes beyond designing a publication's layout, typography and use of color, and includes designing the processes and structures of its production. A newspaper design project typically involves three areas of effort and expertise: the technical and typographic, the editorial or device and component ideas, and the systems thinking that allows clients to renew their processes and make the most of the design. For designers, designing a newspaper goes beyond typography and layout. It also includes designing how people work. The findings of Schoenbach, K., & Lauf, E. (2002) tries to shed some light on how the downward trend in the amount of newspaper reading could be stopped or at least slowed down in the US and in Germany. In an explorative secondary analysis, local daily newspapers in Germany are compared to daily newspapers in the US. With the data available from Germany and the US for secondary analysis, the researcher was able to compare the impact of five important, concepts of newspaper content and its presentation, on the development of circulation as an indicator of success. Utt, S. H., & Pasternack, S. (2003) has examined the design of newspapers, including their print front page and online edition for this study. The second purpose is to explore the attitudes of editors toward the importance of appearance and how important they think design is to newspaper readers. They say that almost all dailies use a modular format. Photographs and visuals tend to determine the look of the front page of 46.9 percent of the papers, while news determines the look at 46.2 percent. More than half of the newspapers have been re-designed within the last five years. Most of the editors said they are satisfied with their newspaper's concern for the quality of the front-page design and with the actual appearance of their front page. Almost three fourths think that the typical reader is concerned about graphic design and layout when deciding which newspaper to read. Stone, G. C., Schweitzer, J. C., & Weaver, D. H. (1978) have identified twenty-two variables related to newspaper design. The study is based primarily on the traditional versus modern design concept. The primary purpose is to explore the data to document which of the modern graphic techniques are being used by

a majority of sample papers and which of the techniques are considered crucial elements of modern newspaper design. The study leads to conclusion that modern newspaper design is a method being used to attract readers rather than making newspaper more palatable.

Objectives

This study aims to compare newspaper readers' perspectives with the designing trends that the newspaper industry follows. The goal of the study is to ascertain how readers and newspaper designers think about the newspaper design. This study will determine what newspaper readers want to see and what designers are currently offering in terms of newspaper design.

Research Questions

Q1. What is the usage pattern of visuals in selected leading English dailies and what type of visuals are liked by the readers?

Q2. What type of layouts English newspapers use and does readers like them?

Q3. How many advertisements are published on the front pages and does readers like them?

Methodology

For this study top three leading English newspapers were selected according to Indian Readership Survey 2019 Quarter 4. These are The Times of India, Hindustan Times and The Hindu. Newspapers for period of three months i.e. August-October, 2020 were gathered. Out of ninety-two newspapers each, sample of thirty newspapers were selected by systematic random sampling. For this study front pages of selected newspapers were used.

The front pages of collected e-papers were measured in various parameters using Adobe Photoshop. Areas of elements of layout and design were calculated. The parameters for which areas were calculated are:

- A. Photograph: An Image taken by camera for the visual representation of news.
- B. Info graphic: A representation of information in graphical form.
- C. Advertisement: Paid communications from specific sponsors who use the mass media to convince an audience.
- D. For collecting data for layout type the front pages were coded in categories:
 - a) Frame Layout: The arrangement of news stories in rectangular boxes.
 - b) Horizontal Layout: Shape is made up of series of horizontal units lying on the top of each other.
 - c) Vertical Layout: Vertical division of the layout that helps gives structure to the page.

The unit fixed for all the measurement and calculated areas is Inch and square Inch respectively. Pages were measured by opening jpeg images in Photoshop. Selections were made around the elements and length and breadth were recorded from the info panel. Likewise, all the photographs, Infographics and advertisements on page are measured.



Figure 1 Part of image is selected by selection tool in photoshop; the info panel gives the dimensions of the selection.

The data is recorded in excel spreadsheets and calculation were done to determine the

- Percent area of photographs
- Percent area of Infographics
- Percent area of advertisements
- Percent of each layout type

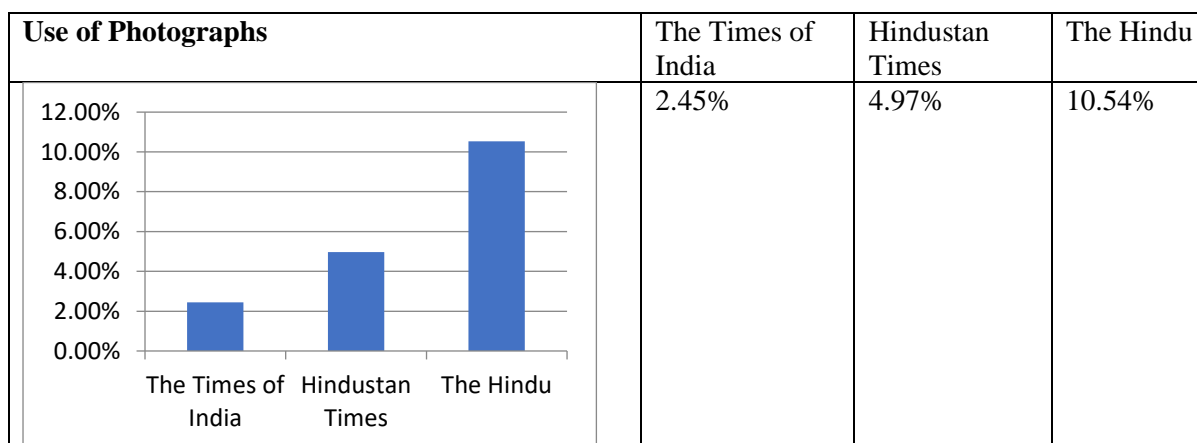
Next step is calculating the averages of each element. By comparing the averages of all the newspapers inference for each element is drawn.

For studying the preferences of the readers towards the design patterns of newspapers, survey was conducted. An exhaustive survey was carried out to study the design preferences of the newspaper readers. The survey is carried out with sample size of 408 respondents. Respondents are from age 13 years to 56 years. The age is further categorized into age groups 12-20, 21- 29, 30- 38, 39-47, 48-56 and 57-65 years of age. The findings from the content analysis were utilized to form a preliminary questionnaire. The researcher also conducted a basic observation study in form of three focus groups which consisted of participants from different age groups. The responses from the focus groups were also utilized to give final form to the preliminary Questionnaire. Testing the questionnaire was carried out with the reliability and validity analysis performed through pilot study. Data collection was carried out with the help of well-structured questionnaire. For the purpose of study 500 questionnaires were distributed among respondents. Only 408 respondents have submitted duly filled in questionnaires. Hence analysis is done on the basis of 408 respondents.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Photographs

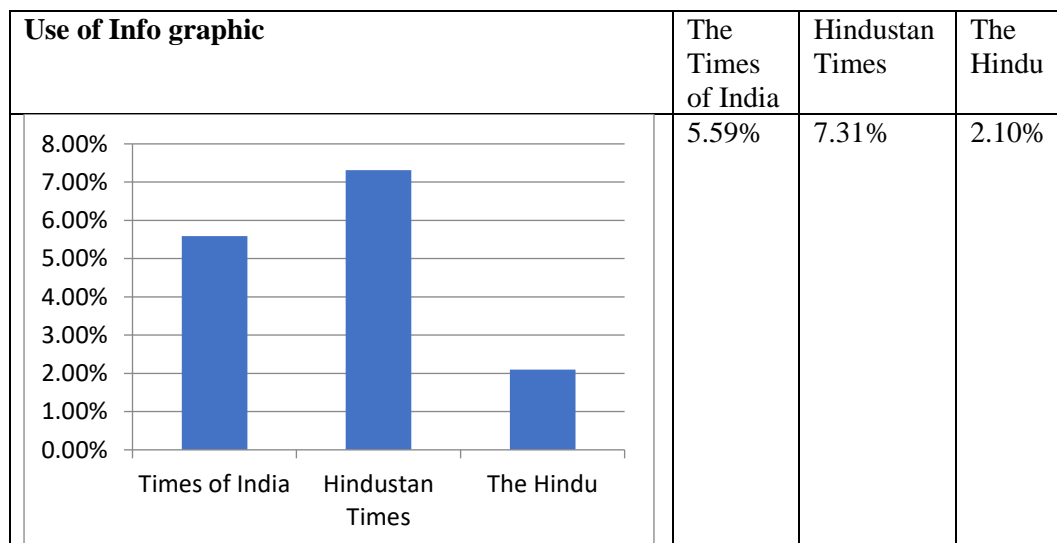
Overall 30 newspapers each were coded for this study. The study found out that on average The Times of India has 2.45% of front page under photographs whereas Hindustan Times has 4.97% and The Hindu has 10.54% space under photographs. The Hindu adopts old method of putting visuals along news stories. It uses only the photographs with a cutline whereas The Times of India and Hindustan Times uses other types of visuals like info graphics and designed pulled quotes along with photographs.



Graph 1: Space wise use of Photographs in selected newspapers form 1st August, 2020 to 31st October,2020

Info graphic

Analysis of info graphics shows that Hindustan Times uses maximum info graphics followed by The Times of India and The Hindu has least of infographics. On frontpage The Times of India uses the infographics with much refined details and visual representation in form of charts, tables and maps along with photographs. This facilitates the reader with in-depth understanding of news story. Hindustan Times uses the maximum infographics space wise but as compared to The Times of India the Infographics in Hindustan Times have a smaller number of charts and tables so, overall information delivered is comparatively less. The Hindu uses only 2.10% of Infographics.



Graph 2: Space wise use of Infographic in selected newspapers form 1st August, 2020 to 31st October, 2020

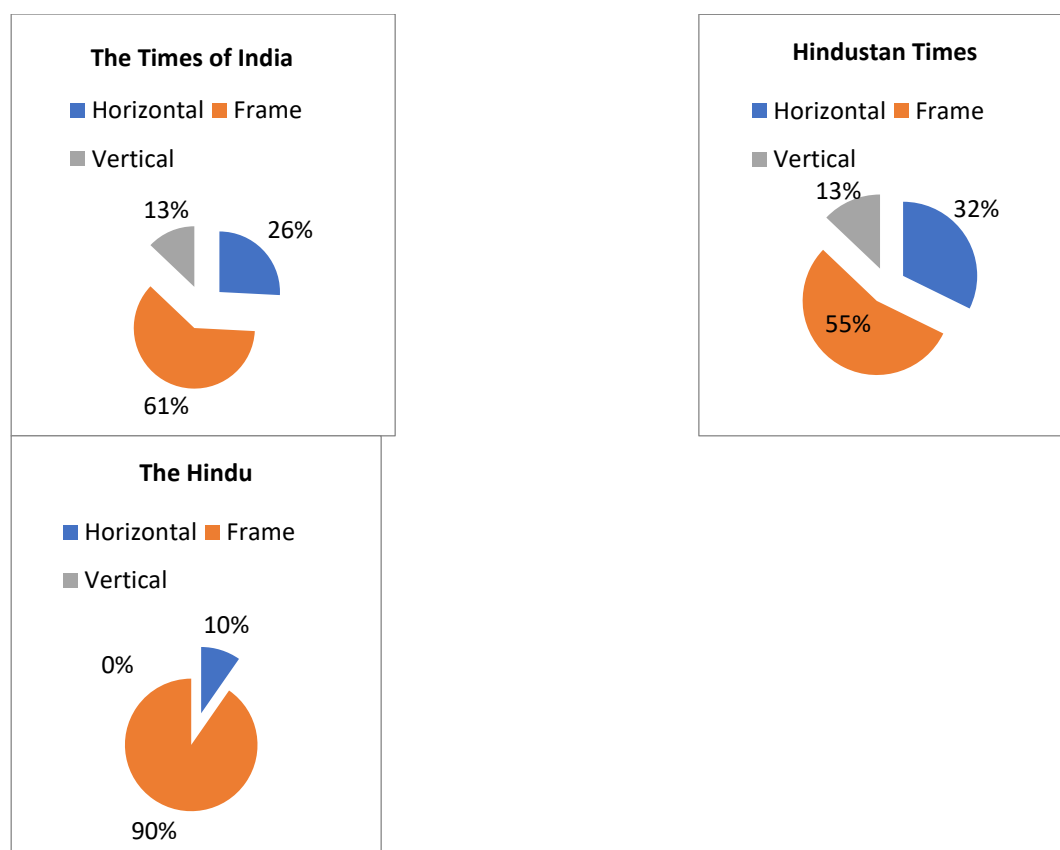
Visuals preferred by newspaper readers:

The study has found that among photographs and infographics photographs are the visuals liked by most of the readers. Photographs are liked by 69.1 percent respondents. Photographs are the basic kind of visuals with news stories. More enriched visuals are infographics as they provide more details than photographs. Infographics are liked by only 19.1 percent of readers. Study shows the element that attracts first of all is Photograph. Most readers see the photograph first of all. The study also shows that age category 30-38 has a greater number of readers that read the whole news story whereas age category 12-20 has a greater number of people that are attracted to photographs

81.6 percent of respondents believe that visuals assist in understanding the news. This validates that visuals are equally important as well written and reported news story. A visual adds to the overall experience of reading newspaper. Photographs also serve as a proof of the event which is being reported and thus increases the credibility of newspaper. On the other hand, Infographics provide the readers with important details like data or statistics plus some maps or diagrams which further enriches the medium. 71.8 percent readers prefer colored photographs in newspapers but 28.2 percent prefer black and white photographs as well. The study reveals that the age group 48-56 has respondents that have least preference for colored photographs.

Layout Type

For the layout types the results show that The Times of India has 61% layouts as frame layouts. 13% of the layouts style is vertical layout and 26% of layout style is Horizontal layout. Hindustan Times has 55% of layouts as Frame layout 32% are Horizontal and 13% of layouts as vertical layouts. The Hindu uses 90% of layouts as frame layouts and 10% of layouts are Horizontal. It has 0% layouts as vertical layouts.



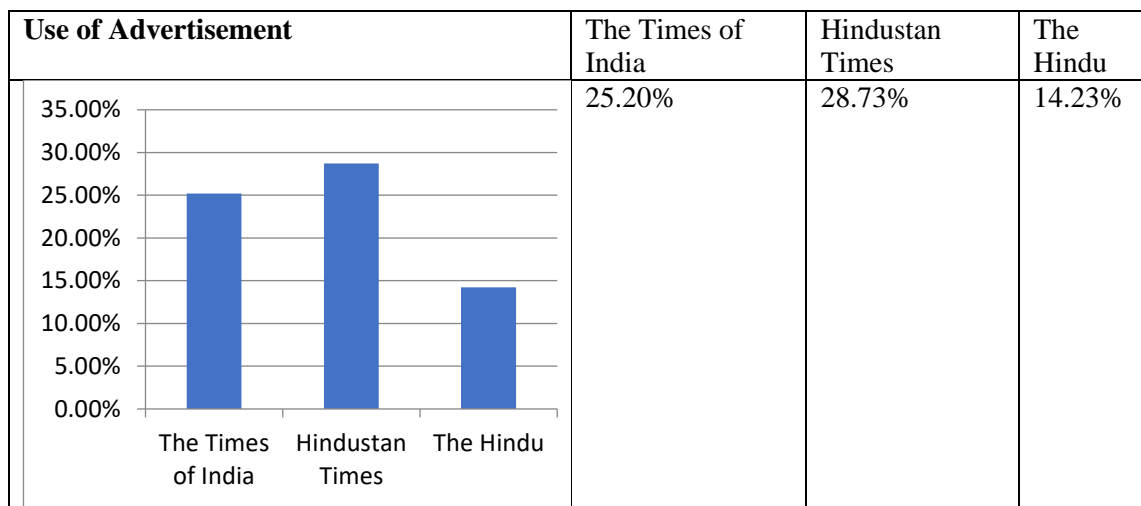
Graph 3: Use of Layout Types in selected newspapers form 1st August, 2020 to 31st October, 2020

Layout preferred by newspaper readers

The layouts liked most by respondents are Horizontal Layout and Diagonal Layout. Horizontal layout is most common type of layout used by every newspaper. It shortens the long news stories. The entire news can be perused with an overlap page. Titles are isolated by text with the goal that the title holds its importance. It actually takes advantage of the page width. Then again, a corner to corner design separates the page into units or segments utilizing an overlay line and one more in the focal point of the page. Every one of the four areas have an allocated attention grabber. This recipe reminds that there is something else to the page besides the top.

Advertisement

Analyzing the use of advertisements, it is found that Hindustan Times leads by giving 28.73% of space on average to advertisement followed by The Times of India with 25.20% space and The Hindu stands at third place by allotting 14.23% space to advertisement. The Times of India and the Hindustan Times use almost a quarter of the page on advertisements whereas The Hindu uses more space on providing news to its readers and places a smaller number of advertisements on front page. The Hindu is not indulging in providing eye catching content on the front page. The Times of India and the Hindustan Times give large colored advertisements making the front page look flamboyant.



Graph 4: Space wise use of Advertisement in selected newspapers from 1st August, 2020 to 31st October, 2020

Advertisements preferred by newspaper readers

Advertisements are one of the major sources of revenue for the newspaper. 90.2 percent of respondents read advertisement in newspaper. In fact, advertisements add color to the page and serve to attract the readers to newspaper. 38.2 percent respondents agree that color advertisements are more attractive. 15 percent strongly agree to this. The respondents who agree are in the age group 12-20 and 21- 29 years. But this statistic does not prove that only young people have preference for color as aged people have also responded considerably in favor of colored advertisements.

Conclusion

The study finds that The Hindu has used maximum number of photographs on the other hand The Times of India uses least photograph. Hindustan Times is ahead in using info graphics. The Times of India uses infographic in more effective way and the quality of design and information that infographics provide is very detailed. The Hindu sticks to traditional style of putting the visuals and does not experiment much with info graphics. Photographs rank on top among all visual elements when liking for visuals is measured. Readers are attracted towards the visuals and that too colored one. This reality guides the newspaper design and thus we see majority of newspapers with colored photographs on the front page. Eventually this leads to higher sales volume and revenue generation. This is proving as life saver formula for newspapers. Secondly use of visuals along with news stories makes the whole process of reading newspaper more exciting. On the other hand, enriched visuals like infographics provides useful data and visual description when there are diagrams and illustrations are used. It makes the newspaper more informative and readers can understand news with much deeper meaning.

The Hindu has used frame layout and does not change it. This gives a consistent look to the front page of The Hindu. On the other hand, The Times of India has experimented with vertical and horizontal placement of stories as second priority. This gives The Times of

India a fresh look. The front page is designed in a most unusual layout patterns and with this The Times of India maintains its flamboyant looks. The Hindustan Times goes for frame layout half of the time. The readers like mostly the horizontal layout as it provides ease of reading and handling the broadsheet newspaper.

Hindustan Times has published more advertisements space wise whereas the Times of India and The Hindu stood second and third in this aspect. The Hindu adopts old school method of giving serious news to its readers and thus maintaining a standard. All the readers do read the advertisements and advertisements are liked in color by the readers. Advertisements provide style and glamour element to front page and that is liked by the readers.

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