Original Research Article

Journalist's information needs and information seeking - behaviors in the digital age

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the evolving information-seeking practices of newspaper journalists in Karnataka, highlighting how digitalization has impacted their approach to gathering, verifying, and delivering news. With a sample of 610 journalists from 39 newspapers across national, state, and regional levels, the research identifies key patterns and challenges journalists face in the digital age, including the need for diverse information sources and the persistent obstacles within newsroom libraries. The information-seeking behavior of journalists in Karnataka has significantly evolved to accommodate the fast-paced, digital-driven demands of modern journalism. Young journalists, with over 60% of respondents under the age of 35, heavily rely on digital tools like news apps, social networks, and digital newspaper archives to access and cross-verify information quickly. However, despite advancements, challenges remain—particularly around access to adequately organized information and the necessary skills for effective digital information retrieval. More than half of the journalists reported needing information at a moderately significant level across various topics, indicating a broad requirement rather than specialized information needs. The study also highlights key barriers: limited availability of necessary information, insufficient search skills, language barriers, and a lack of qualified library staff. Addressing these issues through continuous digital literacy and library resource improvements will be essential for supporting journalists in this rapidly evolving landscape.

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1. Introduction

In this modern era, every society in the world needed information for any day to day activity. As the need for information varies between different individuals, information has to be attained, processed, stored, retrieve and distributed for communication whether it is for business, education, research and development (Qureshi, S. 2006).[1] The effectiveness in running these activities efficiently depends largely on the availability and amount of information gathered at the right time. Information becomes central to the advancement of knowledge and the development of the knowledge society and it is one of the most important elements to thrive in the modern era. The needs for such information are supported by the development of information behavior that is going on rapidly. Among these are advances in Internet facilities, development of information technology, improvements in communications multimedia and sophistication. (Ngulube, P. 2002).[2]

Their information needs vary from basic information on a given topic to information for cross verification of facts, supporting evidence in the form of photos, and public opinion. News apps, e-newspapers, digital archives of newspapers, television news channels and social

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networking sites are the most frequently consulted e-sources of information. Subject experts, local political leaders / government representatives, and friends and relatives are the major human sources of information consulted for gathering information. Non availability of the required information, lack of time, lack of information (Parvathamma N & Rajashekhar Mahadevagouda 2021).[3] Journalists search, access, and make use of a variety of information sources, both in print and electronic media. Journalists have been increasingly reliant on internet tools in recent years (Parvathamma N & Rajashekhar Mahadevagouda, 2022).[4]

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the frequency and purpose of information seeking and areas of working of the journalists;
2. To find out the vital areas of information needs among journalists
3. To understand the information search strategies adopted the journalists in seeking the information.
4. To know the strategy to locate information/references
5. To identify the difficulties faced in seeking the required information

3. Scope and Limitations of the study

This study is confined to knowing the information-seeking behavior of journalists working for newspapers both in Print and Electronic formats. A total of 37 newspapers were considered for the study. Care has also been taken to select the newspapers that have electronic versions of circulation. (Table 1) shows the distribution of selected newspapers available both in print and electronic formats. The study covered newspapers published in six languages viz., Kannada, English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

4. Methodology

The present study was confined to knowing the Information seeking behavior of journalists who have used the survey method. Keeping in mind the target group, this study adopted the survey method of research (Tasmim, S., & Atikuzzaman, M. 2023).[5] The researcher surveyed the journalists working for 37 newspapers published in six different languages. Further, personal interview and observation methods are also adopted to enhance the rate of data collection. The study also followed the selection of sample to overcome the time and financial barriers. The analysis of data was done using the suitable statistical analysis. A total of 809 questionnaires were distributed among the media professionals in all over the Karnataka, of which 610 filled-up questionnaires were received back consisting of 75.40% responses, which can be considered as a good response from the media professionals.

4.1. Data analysis and interpretation

(Table 1) indicates that of the 610 respondents, 491 (80.49%) are male and the remaining 119 (19.51%) are female. The table shows that the male respondents are the highest to respond to the survey. The majority of respondents i.e. 25.41% belonged to the age group of 26-30 years followed by 31-35 years (21.97%), and 36-40 years (19.51%). The table also shows that 12.13% of respondents belonged to the age group of 41-45 years and 11.64% of respondents belonged to the age group of 20-25 years. Nearly 10% of the respondents are above 45 years. The data indicates that approximately 60% of the respondents are below 35 years.

A question has been asked to know the frequency of use of print resources by the respondents. (Table 2) depicts the respondents' opinion on the frequency of use of print resources. Of the 610 respondents, 270 (44.26%) always use newspapers followed by magazines and government publications accounting for 37.87%. Press clippings and books were always used by 31.31% and 29.34% of respondents respectively.

48.03% of respondents stated that they use books most of the time followed by press clippings (41.64%), and pamphlets (40.33%). This shows that books, press clippings, and pamphlets are the highly preferred print resources by the respondents.

Overall more than 80% of respondents frequently use newspapers and more than 77% of respondents use magazines, books, and government publications. Undoubtedly, newspapers in print format have been used as rich sources of information by the majority of respondents.

Table 2.1:

The one-way ANOVA test was used to identify if any variations exist among the respondents with various levels of professional experience with regard to the use of print resources at the probability level of 0.05. The data presented in (Table 4) indicates that there is statistically significant difference exists among the respondents with different levels of professional experience in the use of Newspaper (f=16.858, p=.000), Magazines (f=7.789, p=.000), Books (f=18.015, p=.000), Govt Publications (f=7.789, p=.000), Pamphlets (f=3.721, p=.005), Press Clippings (f=6.871, p=.000). Hence, it is arguable that the use of print resources varies as the years of professional experience increases. In other words, the professional experience influences the extent of the use of print resources. Hypothesis-1 is accepted.

Electronic resources have been gaining momentum and the use of the Internet has become inevitable for the information seeker. Many previous studies have recorded the significance of the Internet in obtaining information (Chakroborty, Shuvashish, 2014;[6] Thanuskodi, S 2010;[7] Kaur, and Verma, 2009;).[8] Keeping in mind this, a question has been posed to the respondents to indicate the frequency

Table 1: List of selected newspapers for the study

Sl. No.	Name	Language	Year of Establishment	Owned by	Type	Electronic Circulation
1	Vijayakarnataka	Kannada	1999	Metropolitan Media Company Ltd.	State	Available
2	Samyuktha Karnataka	Kannada	1959	Lok Shikshana Trust	State	Available
3	Vijayavani	Kannada	2011	Vrl Media Limited	State	Available
4	Prajavani	Kannada	1948	The Printers (Mysore) Pvt Ltd	State	Available
5	Kannada Prabha	Kannada	1967	Express Publications (Madurai) Ltd.	State	Available
6	Vishwavani	Kannada	1956	Vishwakshara Media Pvt	State	Available
7	Udayavani	Kannada	1971	Manipal Media Network Ltd	State	Available
8	Hosa Dignatha	Kannada	1979	Jnana Bharathi Prakashana Ltd.	State	-
9	Vartha Bharthi	Kannada	2003	The Community Media Trust	State	-
10	Kranthi	Kannada	1962	M/S. Kranti Kannada Daily	Regional	-
11	Karavali Ale	Kannada	1992	M/S. Chitra Publications (P) Ltd.	Regional	-
12	E-Sanje	Kannada	1992	Abhimaani Group	Regional	Available
13	Kannadamma	Kannada	2014	Rajkumar M. Topannavar	Regional	-
14	Kannadigara Prajanudi	Kannada	2000	Bhagyanjali Publications (Pvt)	Regional	-
15	Sanjevani	Kannada	1982	Karnataka News Publications Pvt.Ltd.	Regional	Available
16	Andolana	Kannada	1970	Rajashekhar Koti	Regional	Available
17	Suddimola	Kannada		M/S Suddimoola Publishers India Ltd	Regional	-
18	Praja Pragati	Kannada	1988	S.Naganna	Regional	-
19	Mysore Mitra	Kannada	1978	Academy Newspapers Pvt.Ltd	Regional	Available
20	Lokadarshan	Kannada	1963	Sharatchandra M Desai	Regional	Available
21	The Times of India	English	1861	Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd.	National	Available
22	Deccan Herald	English	1948	The Printers (Mysore) Pvt Ltd	National	Available
23	The Hindu	English	1878	Kasturi & Sons Ltd.	National	Available
24	Indian Express	English	1932	Indian Express Group	National	Available
25	Hindustan Times	English	1924	The Hindustan Times Limited	National	Available
26	Bangalore Mirror	English	2002	Metropolitan Media Company Ltd.	State	Available
27	Economic Times	English	1961	Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd.	National	Available
28	Rajastan Patrika	Hindi	1956	Rajasthan Patrika Pvt. Ltd.	State	-
29	Dainik Bhaskar	Hindi	1958	D B Corp Ltd.	State	-
30	Enadu	Telugu	1974	Ramoji Rao	State	-
31	Andra Jyothi	Telugu	1960	K.L.N Prasad	State	-
32	Sakshi	Telugu	2008	Y. S. Bharathi Reddy	State	-
33	Daily Thanthi	Tamil	1942	Thanthi Trust	State	-
34	Dinakaran	Tamil	1977	Sun Group	State	-
35	Malayala Manorama	Malayalam	1888	Malayala Manorama Company Limited	National	-
36	Mathrubhumi	Malayalam	1923	M. V. Shreyams Kumar The Mathrubhumi Printing And Publishing Company Ltd.	State	-
37	Daily Salar	Urdu	1964	Salar Publicaiton Trust	State	-

Table 2: Gender-wise distribution of respondents

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	491	80.49
Female	119	19.51
Age group	Number	Percentage
20-25	71	11.64
26-30	155	25.41
31-35	134	21.97
36-40	119	19.51
41-45	74	12.13
46-50	38	6.23
>50	19	3.11

Table 3: Frequency of usingprint resources for collecting the required information

Print Sources	Always	Most of the Time	Often	Rarely	Never	WA
Newspaper (binding, clippings)	270 (44.26)	226 (37.05)	9 (1.48)	105 (17.21)	0 (0.00)	4.08
Magazines	231 (37.87)	243 (39.84)	10 (1.64)	114 (18.69)	12 (1.97)	3.93
Books	179 (29.34)	293 (48.03)	13 (2.13)	123 (20.16)	2 (0.33)	3.86
Government Publications	231 (37.87)	243 (39.84)	10 (1.64)	114 (18.69)	12 (1.97)	3.93
Pamphlets	124 (20.33)	246 (40.33)	50 (8.20)	161 (26.39)	29 (4.75)	3.45
Press Clippings	191 (31.31)	254 (41.64)	34 (5.57)	129 (21.15)	2 (0.33)	3.82

Table 4: Hypothesis-1: The frequency of use of print resources varies with the year of experience of professionals

Print resources	df	F	Sig.
Newspaper (binding, clippings)	4	16.858	.000
Magazines	4	7.789	.000
Books	4	18.015	.000
Govt Publications	4	7.789	.000
Pamphlets	4	3.721	.005
Press Clippings	4	6.871	.000

Table 5: Frequency of usingelectronic resources for collecting the required information

Electronic Sources	Always	Most of the Time	Often	Rarely	Never	WA
Internet / Websites / Smarts Phones	296 (48.52)	266 (43.61)	11 (1.80)	37 (6.07)	0 (0.00)	4.35
Television	238 (39.02)	256 (41.97)	24 (3.93)	92 (15.08)	0 (0.00)	4.05
Archives in your library (Newspaper, photos, cartoons, and Graphs)	194 (31.80)	247 (40.49)	94 (15.41)	68 (11.15)	7 (1.15)	3.91
Radio	208 (34.10)	234 (38.36)	49 (8.03)	102 (16.72)	17 (2.79)	3.84

Table 6: Hypothesis-2:There is a positive correlation between the use of electronic sources and theprofessional experience of the respondents

Electronic Sources	T	p value
Internet / Websites / Smarts Phones	-.085	.035
Television	-.145	.000
Audiovisual Program	-.156	.000
Archives in your library (Newspaper, photos, cartoons, and Graphs)	-.073	.073
Radio	-.156	.000

Table 7: Vital areas of information needs

Areas	Less Significant	Moderate Significant	Utmost Significant	WA
Technical or Journalistic writing / Report writing	0 (0.00)	331 (54.26)	279 (45.74)	2.46
Press Law, Copy right law, Norms	12 (1.97)	357 (58.52)	241 (39.51)	2.38
Ethics of Journalists	2 (0.33)	416 (68.20)	192 (31.48)	2.31
Indian Constitution , Government Policies / Different commission/s report	12 (1.97)	357 (58.52)	241 (39.51)	2.38
Press Accreditation	29 (4.75)	407 (66.72)	174 (28.52)	2.24
VIPs tour schedule	2 (0.33)	383 (62.79)	225 (36.89)	2.37
Techniques of feature writing	0 (0.00)	303 (49.67)	307 (50.33)	2.50
Investigative Journalism	0 (0.00)	348 (57.05)	257 (42.13)	2.40
Film Criticism	17 (2.79)	336 (55.08)	288 (47.21)	2.55
Recorded Speech of politicians & great luminaries.	7 (1.15)	315 (51.64)	257 (42.13)	2.31
Press clippings of important events	17 (2.79)	336 (55.08)	209 (34.26)	2.16
Antecedents of corrupt officials / or corrupt politicians	0 (0.00)	401 (65.74)	201 (32.95)	2.30
Consolidated FIR Reports of the local police stations editing & Information on anti-socials	0 (0.00)	331 (54.26)	279 (45.74)	2.46
Financial Reporting/ Stock Market / Sports and Games events	12 (1.97)	357 (58.52)	241 (39.51)	2.38

Table 8: Strategy to locate information/references

Strategy	Number	Percentage
By scanning through the issues of periodicals in the library directly	302	49.51
By searching in newspaper archiving database	343	56.23
By searching in websites or other newspaper	375	61.48
By discussing with own professional colleagues	310	50.82
By approaching to Librarian	106	17.38

Table 9: Difficulties faced in seeking the requiredinformation

Difficulties	Opinion Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Completely Disagree	Mean
Inadequate library resources	151 (24.75)	256 (41.97)	102 (16.72)	65 (10.66)	36 (5.90)	3.69
Inadequate library services	147 (24.10)	230 (37.70)	129% (21.15)	42 (6.89)	62 (10.16)	2.96
Inadequate physical facilities (space, furniture etc.)	107 (17.54)	104 (17.05)	313 (51.31)	62 (10.16)	24 (3.93)	3.34
Information not readily available	81 (13.28)	141 (23.11)	298 (48.85)	62 (10.16)	28 (4.59)	3.30
Information scattered in many sources	79 (12.95)	101 (16.56)	347 (56.89)	65 (10.66)	18 (2.95)	3.26
Lack of modern communication technology	87 (14.26)	88 (14.43)	367 (60.16)	53 (8.69)	15 (2.46)	3.29
Lack of Searching Skills	109 (17.87)	121 (19.84)	299 (49.02)	66 (10.82)	15 (2.46)	3.40
Lack of time	97 (15.90)	111 (18.20)	348 (57.05)	57 (9.34)	27 (4.43)	3.47
Language	66 (10.82)	106 (17.38)	320 (52.46)	58 (9.51)	32 (5.25)	3.05
Library Staff is not qualified enough to find information	59 (9.67)	108 (17.70)	319 (52.30)	79 (12.95)	44 (7.21)	3.09
Not aware of the availability of library material	73 (11.97)	118 (19.34)	297 (48.69)	85 (13.93)	34 (5.57)	3.17
Professional risks while carrying out official duties	94 (15.41)	83 (13.61)	371 (60.82)	80 (13.11)	21 (3.44)	3.44
The library materials are disorganized	55 (9.02)	83 (13.61)	371 (60.82)	71 (11.64)	30 (4.92)	3.10

of use of e-resources to obtain the required information.

(Table 5) shows the frequency of using electronic resources by the respondents. The majority of respondents always use the Internet/websites/smartphones (48.52%) followed by television (39.02%). Radio is used by 34.10% of the respondents to gather the required information.

More than 90% of respondents have been depending on the internet to collect the required information. Arguably, the frequency of use of the Internet is very frequent compared to other electronic resources. Television, as well as Radio, is also used frequently to gather information. It is notable to know that more than 25% of the respondents used the library archives less frequently.

It was assumed that there is a positive correlation exists between the use of e-resources and the years of professional experience of the respondents. The data presented in (Table 6) indicates that the uses of e-resources are negatively correlated with the years of experience of the respondents. The results of the Pearson correlation for the Internet (t=-.085), television (t=-.145), audio-visual program (t=-.156), archives (t=-.073), and radio (t=-.156) show that the use of these sources is not correlated with the years of experience of the respondents. It indicates that the respondents with the higher number of professional experience use less e-resources than the respondents with a lesser number of years of professional experience. Meanwhile, the correlation is statistically significant for the use of the Internet (p=.035), television (p=.000), audio-visual programs (p=.000), and radio (p=.000). Hence, hypothesis-2 is rejected.

(Table 7) shows the level of significance in relation to the area of information needs. The majority of respondents opined that information requirements are of utmost significance in the areas such as feature writing (50.33%) followed by film criticism (47.21%), FIR reports, and information on anti-socials (45.74%), and report writing (45.74%). Information requirement is moderately significant in the areas such as ethics for journalists (68.20%), press accreditation (66.72%), Antecedents of corrupt officials / or corrupt politicians (65.74%), and VIPs tour schedule (62.79%).

The data presented in the above table indicates that the information requirements are significant for all journalists who work for different sectors of newspapers. More than 30% of respondents opined that the information required about all areas is of utmost significance whereas more than 50% of respondents felt that the information is required at the level of moderate significance related to all areas.

Various strategies are in practice to locate the information available in various information resources. In response to the question on the strategies used to locate the information, the majority of respondents stated that they search on websites which accounted for 61.48%. It is followed by a search through newspaper archiving databases (56.23%), discussion with professional colleagues (50.82%), and a search through the periodicals in the library (49.51%) are the other strategies used by the respondents to locate the required information.

Meanwhile, approaching the librarian is strategically followed by only 17.38% of the respondents. The data in the above (Table 8) indicates that searching through websites as well as newspaper archives is the major strategy used by the respondents.

(Table 9) indicates the difficulties faced by respondents while seeking the required information. The majority of respondents strongly agreed that inadequate library resources (24.75%) followed by inadequate library services (24.10%) have become difficulties while seeking the required information. The majority of respondents i.e. 41.97% agreed that inadequate library services followed by inadequate library services (37.70%) and information not readily available (23.11%) hinder the information-seeking process. Approximately 50% of the respondents have given a neutral response about the various difficulties in seeking required information and expected lack of library resources and services.

The above table indicates that the respondents opined that the high-level difficulty persisted with the library resources and services.

5. Findings and Conclusion

1. The study found that of the 610 respondents, 491 (80.49%) are male and the remaining 119 (19.51%) are female.
2. The study found that of the 610 respondents, 468 (76.72%) are working for Kannada newspapers, 96 (15.74%) respondents are working for English newspapers. Remaining respondents are working for Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, and Urdu newspapers.
3. It is observed that more than 80% of respondents frequently use newspapers and it is followed by magazines, books, and government publications are highly preferred.
4. Search on websites and search through newspaper archiving databases are the major strategies followed by the respondents to locate information.
5. Discussion with professional colleagues and search through the periodicals in the library are also used as strategies to locate the required information.
6. The study found that the majority of respondents have a very strong level of skills in using social networking sites followed by graphic designing tools, and professional software(s).
7. The majority of respondents faced the problem of inadequate library resources and inadequate library services while seeking the required information.
8. The respondents with journalism degrees face difficulties related to information search skills and lack of times.
9. The respondents with other academic degrees face difficulties related to infrastructure and technology while accessing the information.
10. Lack of modern communication technology, professional risks while carrying out official duties, lack of searching skills, and lack of time are the major difficulties are faced by the professionals with different ages.

6. Conclusion

The professionals in journalism have to gather background information and to make news items. The reporters, editors, column writers, photographers collect different forms of information that could make the news at the end. The collected information and the news that they made is a responsible task which set the standard of the newspaper industry. They are answerable to the society. Hence, they collect and evaluate the information from various sources. To fulfill their information demands they have to identify the authentic sources of information. This study has made an attempt to identify the behavior of journalists in the process of information seeking.

7. Conflict of Interest

None.

8. Source of Funding

None.

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