

Influences of Marketing Mix Factors in Querying for Information through Conventional English Newspapers in Sri Lanka

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Abstract:- Newspapers are the primary source of information conveying current and trending news materials. These newspapers are available in trilingual modes such as Sinhala, Tamil and English, and since the literacy rate of Sri Lanka is high, many opt to read the English news sources. Hence, this research focuses on the demographic of the readers who eagerly choose the English papers as their news source and has been conducted within the Batticaloa town of Sri Lanka. Based on the Marketing Mix Factors, it was observed that with regard to the daily papers, Daily Mirror is mostly preferred by the reader community whereas Sunday Times is consumed at a higher rate among the Sunday newspapers.

Keywords:- Marketing; Mix-factors; Newspapers; Sri Lanka.

I. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has begun twenty years back accelerating the process of globalization with vast developments in information technology resulting in the shrinking of the globe. Developing countries such as Sri Lanka cannot be left out of this process though financial constraints exist. What is happening around us and in the other part of the world is no more irrelevant to us. A void would be created if the flow of information ceases. Newspapers in developing countries fulfill the task of preventing this happening by loading us with information.

Information is so parochial, so limiting, and so short term. Newspapers are in great demand particularly in developing countries where the other media are still lacking in advancement. According to Reena Mittal (2014), Newspapers are one of the most powerful sources of sharing information and are an upgradation of the knowledge bank [1]. Further, she added that the use of English newspapers in the classroom on regular basis will inculcate many good ideas and habit of grasping vocabulary spontaneously. Sri Lanka that enjoys a high rate of literacy 92.7% is no exception. Newspapers are sought after so much that they have become an inevitable item in the shopping list of most of the Sri Lankan households.

Ranwa Khorsheed and Joumana Rassoul (2018) further elaborate that newspapers are looked at as vehicles of literacy that deliver knowledge to all individuals matching all differences of education, age, social class and other interests [2].

The demand for English Newspaper has increased due to the peoples' anxiety to know without bias and partiality what is happening around them, the news about politics, post war developments, capture peace moves and uncertainty in the daily routine which manifest in ethnic problems. Advertisements for jobs and features to make one's leisure occupied has also contributed towards increase in attracting readers to English Newspapers.

According to the study conducted by Leo W. Jeffres, et al. (2007), newspaper readership is proportionally correlated to the civic culture, social network and social capital [3]. Political participation, being a good citizen, social involvement and connections are among the values cultivated as a result of reading newspapers.

In addition, Emmanuel Taiwo Babalola (2002) states that the availability of different columns in the newspapers devoted to different areas of life vary vastly in genre and thus provide a wide range of information to the reader community [4].

In order for information to properly reach its customers, i.e. the readers, that information needs to be marketed through the proper channels in an effective manner. Mohammed T. Nuseir & Hilda Madanat (2015) stated that Marketing planning, marketing mix, and marketing modelling initiatives are adopted to maximise and to secure optimal competitive advantages by satisfying customers' needs [5].

The Marketing Mix factors play a major role here in satisfying its customers. B. P. S. Murthi and Kannan Srinivasan's (1999) Brand choice models implicitly assume that consumers incorporate all relevant marketing information such as price, display, and feature for key brands on each occasion of purchase [6].

II. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To identify the factors in the marketing mix that influence information seeking behavioral decisions and the relative importance of those factors with regard to English Newspapers.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The factors which influence the selection of English Newspapers were categorized into the four elements of the Marketing mix and are provided in Table 1.

<i>Marketers point of view – 4Ps</i>	<i>Factors affecting information seekers’ behavior</i>	<i>Information Seekers’ point of view – 4Cs</i>
1. Product Features	1. Brand Name 2. Number of Pages 3. Size of the paper 4. Quality of papers 5. Printing quality 6. Reliable Information 7. Current News 8. Presentation style 9. Font size	1. Consumer value
2. Promotion	1. Regularity 2. Supplements 3. Job / Academic Ads. 4. Reputed Manufacturer	2. Communication
3. Place	1. Permanent Location 2. Mobile sales in public places 3. Door to Door sales	3. Convenience
4. Price	1. Price	4. Cost

Table 1:- English News Papers Based on the Marketing Mix.

Each factor is given a scale from 1 to 5 to show its extent of importance and based on the responses univariate measures are calculated for each individual factor and for each of the marketing mix.

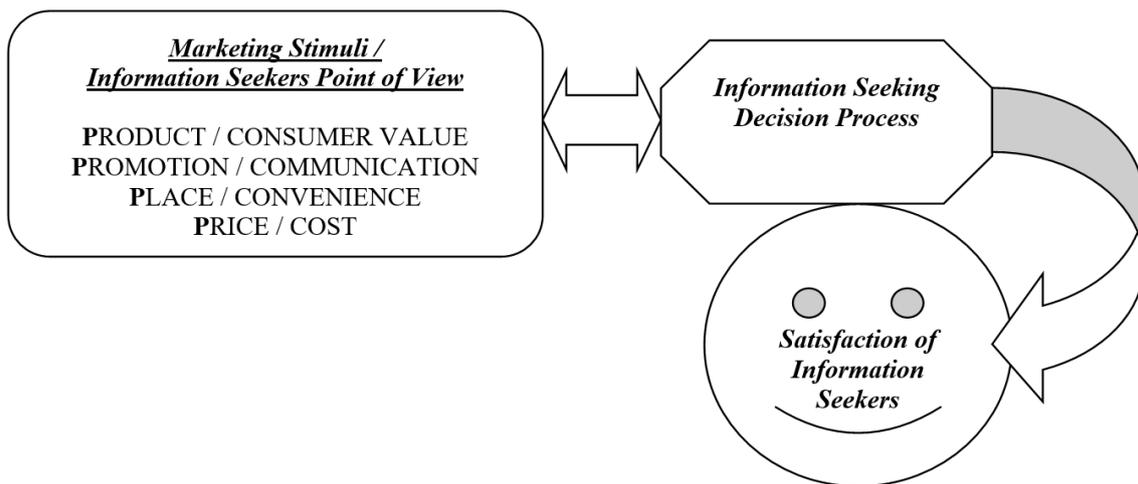


Fig 1:- Information Seeking Decision Process based on the Marketing Mix.

IV. TARGET STUDY GROUP

Household in the Batticaloa Town, Sri Lanka was considered as the study group for this experiment where **100 family members** were selected using the random sampling method as this method is appropriate for a heterogeneous group of people.

V. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The research was carried out based on primary as well as secondary sources of data.

In primary sources of data, the questionnaires played the most important part of data collection. Adopting the information seekers’ point of view is the essence of success in any business world. Therefore, the questionnaires were distributed and recollected among the selected sample group.

The closed entered questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first part consisted of personal information such as Consumption of English Newspaper, Gender, Age Group, Civil Status, Current position, etc. (Question Nos. from 01 to 05). The second part contains 17 statements of Information Seekers' point of view related to the marketing mix statements. (Statements from 06 to 22). The final part includes other personal opinions on Information Seekers' behavior. (Statements from 23 to 26).

- Part – I : Personal Information
- Part – II : Information Seekers' point of view related to the Marketing Mix on English News papers
- Part – III : Other personal opinions on selecting behavior

The questionnaire was printed on both sides on A4 size paper. As a result, it was easy for the respondents to view the entire questionnaire at a quick glance.

The secondary source of data was the Circulation Detail list of Newspaper agents in the Batticaloa town. Accordingly, Daily News, Daily Mirror, and The Island as Daily Papers and Sunday Observer, Sunday Times and Sunday Island as Weekly Papers are at a significant circulation in the Batticaloa Town, Sri Lanka.

A. Data Analysis

Survey responses were entered in an Excel file for data analysis.

➤ *Univariate Analysis:*

Performing univariate analysis where the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, percentages were the measures of the data collected from the samples and etc. was taken into consideration. Based on the univariate analysis, the results are illustrated in pie charts and bar charts.

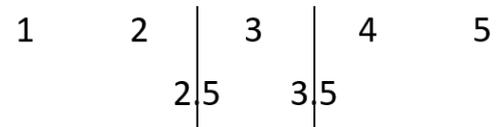
VI. EVALUATION

The respondents of the questionnaire in the second part, i.e. the consumers were asked to respond to the statements from No. 06 to No. 22 in their questionnaire using the following scale called the Likert Scale.

- *Unimportant* : 1
- *Not so important* : 2
- *Neutral* : 3
- *Important* : 4
- *Very Important* : 5

Four dimensions on Marketing Mix towards English Newspapers were considered in the statements and the response of each individual consumer was tabulated in an Excel file for testing purposes. Based on the values indicated in the questionnaire, mean value for each question is calculated. The mean value lies in the range of 1 to 5 for the statements with 5 responses.

Mean value of a variable is considered for evaluation. The mean value of a variable is compared with the median value 3 and a decision is made in accordance to the following.



If, Mean value < 2.5	Not important	(1 ≤ X < 2.5)
If, 2.5 < Mean value < 3.5	Fairly important	(2.5 ≤ X < 3.5)
If, Mean value > 3.5	Very important	(X ≥ 3.5)

Table 2:- Decision Boundaries.

VII. DATA PRESENTATION

A. Part – I of the questionnaire

➤ *Consumption of English Newspapers*

Out of 100 samples, 72 were found to be English Newspaper (Daily/Weekly/both) consumers whose responses are used for study purpose.

<i>Consumers of English Newspapers</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Consumers	72	72%
Non consumers	28	28%
Total	100	100%

Table 3:- English Newspaper Consumer Chart.

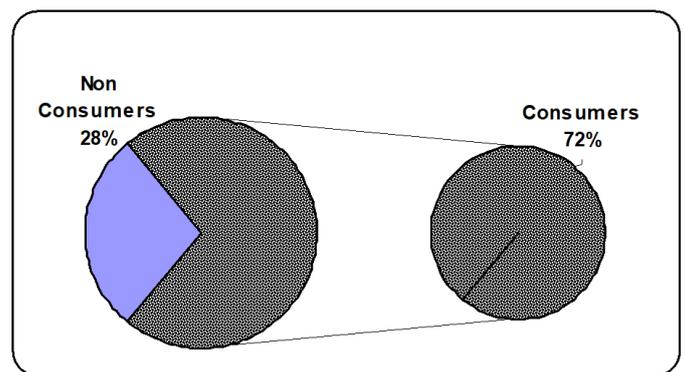


Fig 2:- Consumption of English Newspapers in the Batticaloa Town.

➤ *Gender*

As per the responses received, out of 72 samples, 61% of consumers are Males and 39% of consumers were found to be Females.

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Male	44	61%
Female	28	39%
Total	72	100%

Table 4:- Gender-Based Respondent Demographic.

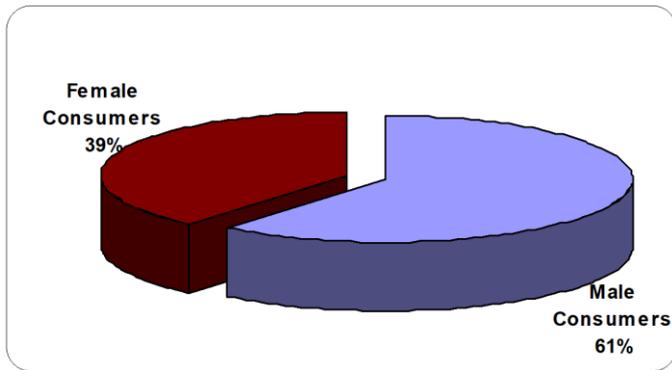


Fig 3:- Proportion of Gender-based English Newspaper readers.

This indicates that there is a big majority of Male consumers in the Batticaloa Town, Sri Lanka.

➤ *Age Group*

Age group distribution pattern of the consumers in the Batticaloa Town, Sri Lanka is represented by Sample of 72.

Age Group	Respondents	Percentage
10 – 30 years	13	18%
31-50 years	19	26%
Above 50 years	40	56%
Total	72	100%

Table 5:- Age-Based Respondent Demographic.

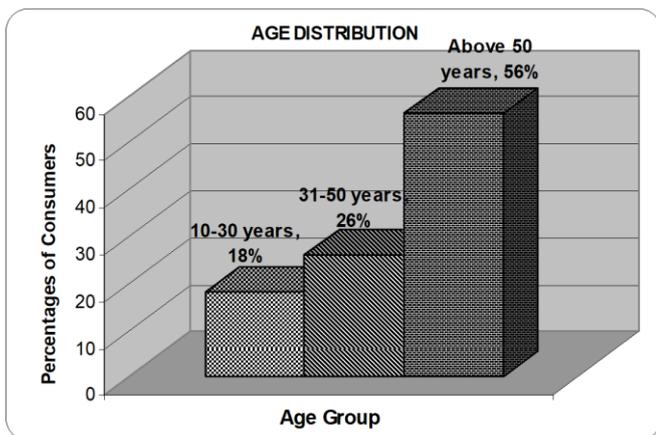


Fig 4:- Proportion of age-based English Newspaper readers.

As per data collected, 56% of consumers are above 50 years of age. It would be due to the following reasons.

- They spend their leisure time mainly reading Newspapers because other media pose advanced technology e.g. Information retrieval via computer with internet facilities. This may be difficult for them because of the unavailability of such sources or lack of knowledge in advanced technology.
- They may have more language skills than readers below the age of 50 as they would have studied in English medium schools during their period.
- English Newspapers which contain political, feature articles, social activities etc. may attract mostly aged people than others.

➤ *Civil Status*

As per responses received, the information seekers taken for the survey can be grouped according to their civil status as follows.

Civil Status	Respondents	Percentages
Married	46	64%
Single	26	36%
Total	72	100%

Table 6:- Civil Status-Based Respondent Demographic.

Among selected sample, 64% of information seekers were married and 36% were single.

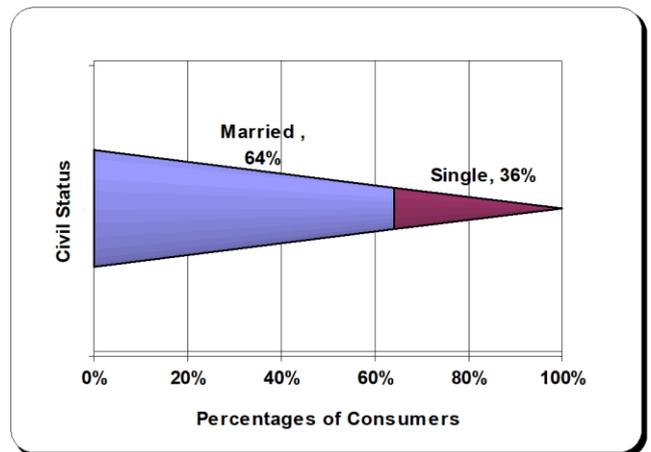


Fig 5:- Proportion of civil status-based English Newspaper readers.

➤ *Current Position*

As per responses received for question no. 05, the information seekers could be categorized according to their current position as shown in Table 7.

Current Position	Respondents	Percentages
Working	22	31%
Retired	34	48%
Jobless	09	12%
Student	07	09%
Total	72	100%

Table 7:- Current Position-Based Respondent Demographic.

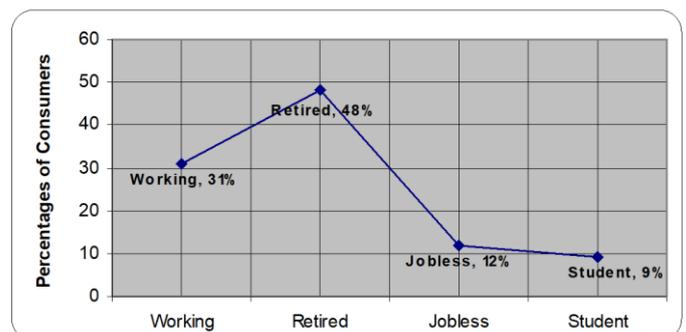


Fig 6:- Proportion of current position-based English Newspaper readers.

It shows that the majority information seekers are retired persons.

B. Part – II of the questionnaire

➤ **Product Contributing Factors**

The contributing factors of the product mix along with its mean value is given in the following table and is presented in Figure 7.

<i>Product Mix Factors</i>	<i>Mean Value</i>
1. Brand Name	4.25
2. Number of Pages	3.06
3. Size of the paper	2.92
4. Quality of papers	3.36
5. Printing quality	3.95
6. Reliable Information	4.53
7. Current News	4.01
8. Presentation style	2.67
9. Font size	4.13
Overall Product Mean	3.65

Table 8:- Contributing Factors of the Product Mix and Their Respective Mean Values.

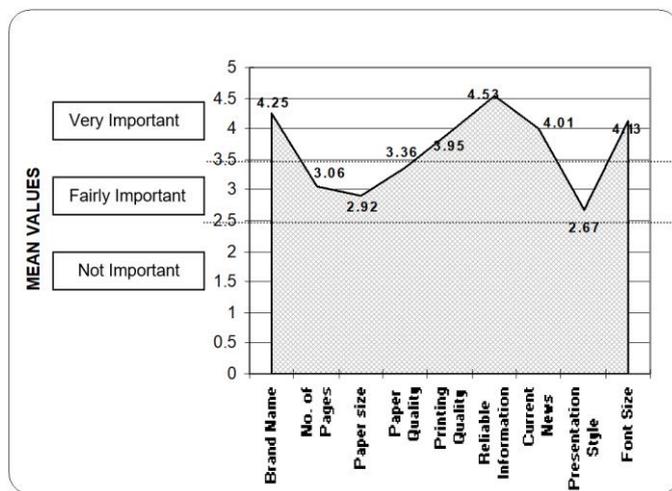


Fig 7:- Product Contribution Factors.

As a whole Product factors get a mean value of 3.65 with the standard deviation of 0.97.

➤ **Promotion Contributing Factors**

The contributing factors of the promotion mix along with their mean values are given in Table 9.

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Mean Value</i>
1. Regularity	4.01
2. Supplements	3.80
3. Job / Academic Ads.	2.89
4. Reputed Manufacturer	1.98
Overall Promotion Mean	3.25

Table 9:- Contributing Factors of the Promotion Mix and Their Respective Mean Values.

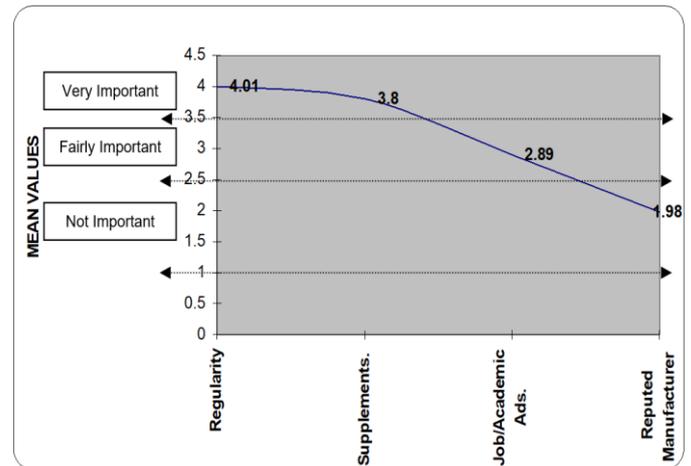


Fig 8:- Promotion Contributing Factors.

As a whole, promotion factors get a mean value of 3.25 with a standard deviation of 1.22.

➤ **Place Contributing Factors**

The contributing factor of the place mix along with its mean value is given in the following table.

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Mean Value</i>
1. Permanent Location	3.97
2. Mobile sales in public places	2.30
3. Door to Door sales	4.56
Overall Place Mean	3.61

Table 10:- Contributing Factors of the Promotion Mix And Their Mean Values.

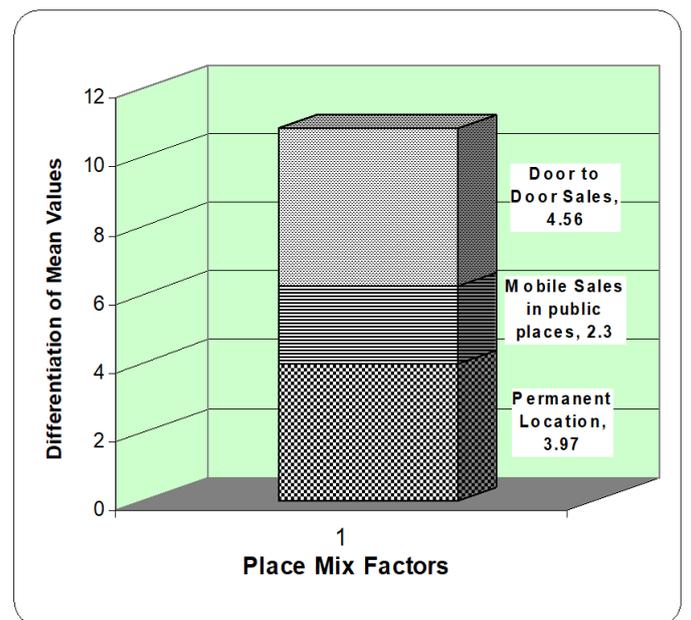


Fig 9:- Place Contributing Factors.

As a whole Place factors get a mean value of 3.61 with the standard deviation of 0.97.

➤ *Price Contributing Factor*

The cost incurred by the customer i.e. the price paid for the newspaper is considered to be very important by 59 respondents and fairly important & Not important by 11 and 02 respectively. As a whole, price factor gets a mean value of 4.39 with the standard deviation of 0.83.

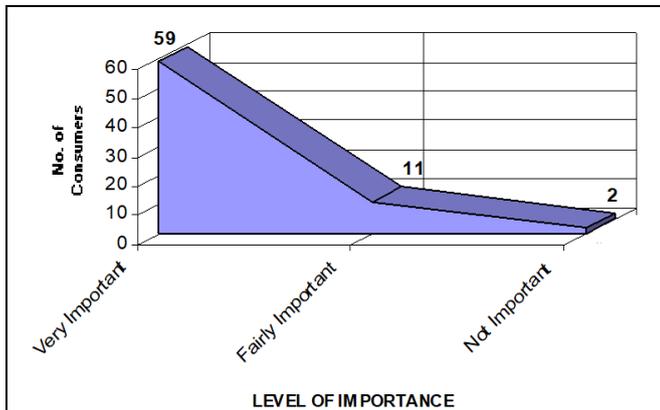


Fig 10:- Price Contributing Factors.

C. Overall Evaluation of Marketing Mix Factors influencing Information Seekers' Behaviour

The average value assigned by each of the 72 respondents in their Likert scale for the factors that form the 4Ps of the Marketing mix are given in Table 11 at a glance.

Level of importance	PRODUCT	PROMOTION	PLACE	PRICE
X < 3 (Not important)	01	20	18	02
X = 3 (Fairly important)	23	33	22	11
X > 3 (Very much important)	48	19	31	59
Total No. of Consumers	72	72	72	72
Mean value	3.65	3.25	3.61	4.39
Standard Deviation	0.97	1.22	0.97	0.83
Level of Importance in each Mix	Very Important	Fairly Important	Very Important	Very Important

Table 11:- Contributing Factors of the Promotion Mix And Their Mean Values.

D. Part – III of the questionnaire

➤ *Preference of Brand (English Daily)*

Daily Mirror was found to be the most preferred brand among English daily newspapers though it was marketed in Batticaloa town recently which is chosen by 55 consumers i.e. 76% of the respondents. Daily News is preferred besides Daily Mirror by 43 consumers i.e. 60% of the respondents. The Island is preferred only by 08 consumers i.e. 11% of the respondents. Respondents were asked to check off all relevant cages if they consume more than one. Therefore, the total exceed 100%.

DAILY PAPERS	No. of Consumers	Percentage
Daily News	43	60%
Daily Mirror	55	76%
The Island	08	11%

Table 12:- Preference of Daily Paper Brands.

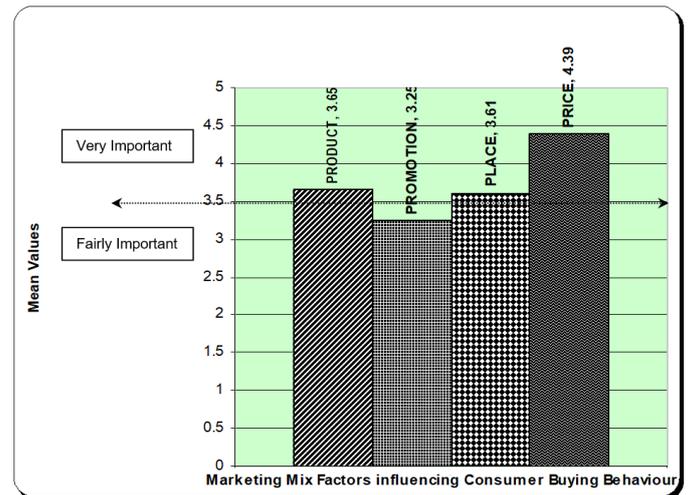


Fig 11:- Overall Evaluation of Marketing Mix.

As per data responses received, **PRODUCT, PLACE** and **PRICE** are very important. And the **PROMOTIONAL** Factors are fairly important.

Majority of Information seekers of English Newspapers are retired persons who are above 50 years of age. And, their pension is also moderate. Therefore, they need to consider the price, easy retrieval of Newspapers (Door to Door sales) and paper productive assessment.

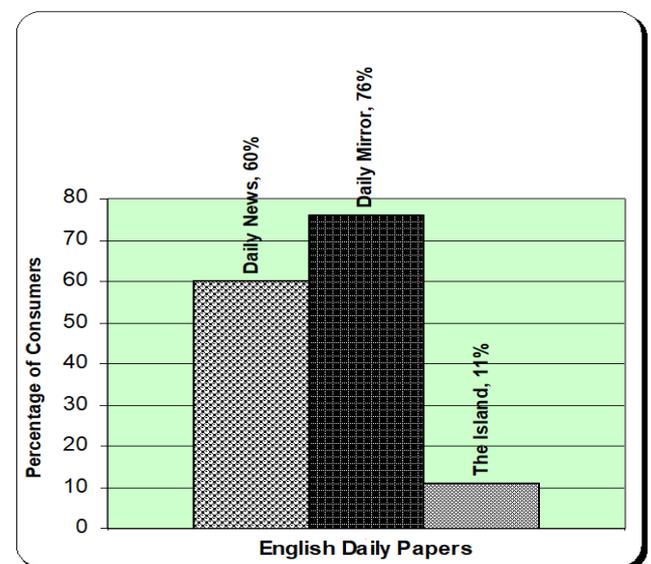


Fig 12:- Preference of Daily Brand.

➤ *Preference of Brand (English Weekly)*

The Sunday Times was found to be the most preferred brand among English weekly newspapers which is preferred by 57 consumers i.e. 79% of the respondents. The Sunday Observer is preferred besides the Sunday Times by 51 consumers i.e. 70% of the respondents. Sunday Island is preferred by 14 consumers i.e. 19% of the respondents.

WEEKLY PAPERS	No. of Consumers	Percentage
Sunday Observer	51	70%
Sunday Times	57	79%
Sunday Island	14	19%

Table 13:- Preference of Weekly Paper Brands.

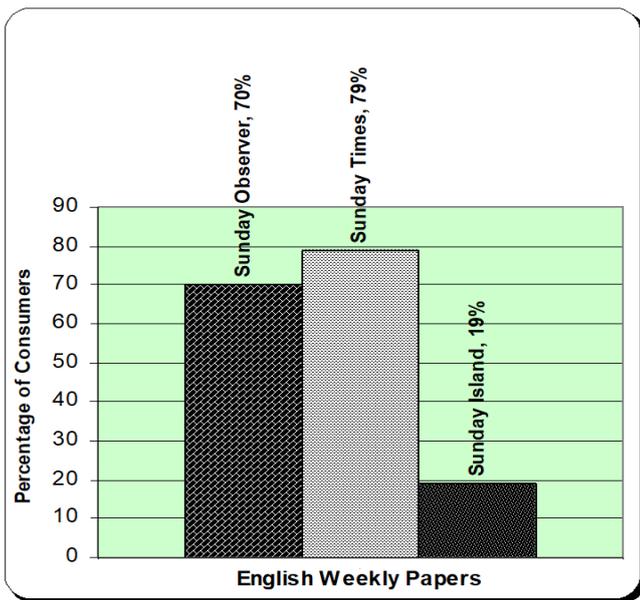


Fig 13:- Preference of Weekly Brand.

➤ *Sources of Influence in Choosing*

Outside influences	No. of Respondents	Percentage
No one	48	66%
Parents/Spouse	07	9%
Friends/People at work place	17	25%
Relatives	0	0
Seller	0	0
Other media ads.	0	0

Table 14:- Influencing Sources in Choosing Paper Brands.

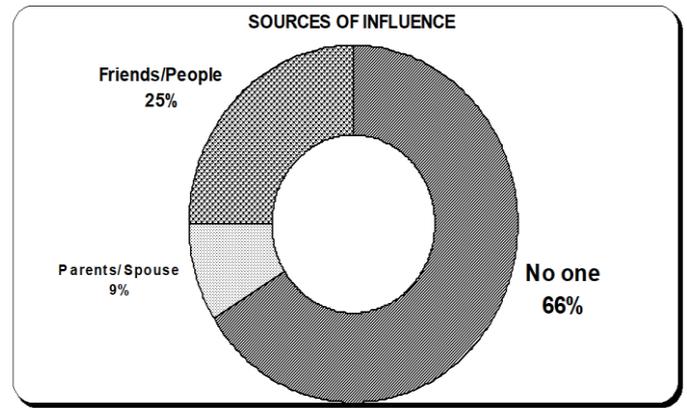


Fig 14:- Proportion of sources that influence the selection of brands.

66% indicate no such influence from any person in making a choosing decision on English Newspapers. As far as the second and third categories are concerned, there are 34% of respondents who are influenced by others.

➤ *Unavailability of Preferred Brand*

As per responses received, the consumers taken for the survey can be categorized as follows:

Brand option	No. of Consumers	Percentage
Buy a different brand at the same shop	14	19%
Go to another shop to buy the preferred brand	41	57%
Agree to both statements above	17	24%

Table 15:- Choice of Brand Based on Availability of Preferred Brand.

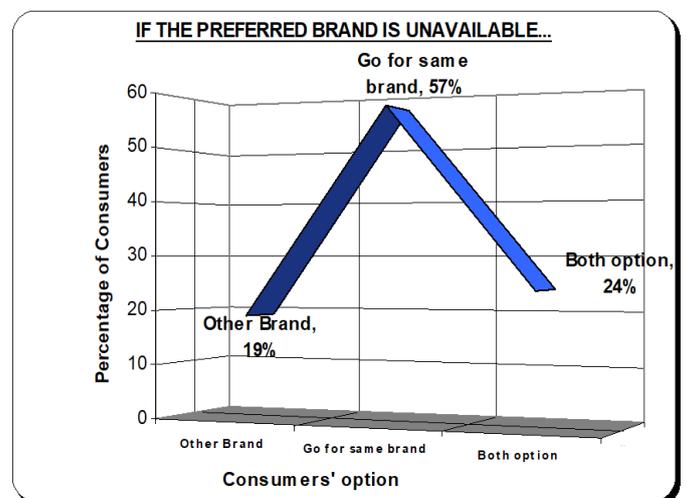


Fig 15:- Choice of brand if preferred brand is not available.

19% of the consumers buy a different brand even if their preferred brand is not available at their normal outlet. Though they prefer a certain brand they don't really want to take much shopping effort in purchasing that particular brand. But 41% of the consumers take much shopping effort in reaching their preferred brand. This is because they may fully depend on future issues for continuation of topics.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In a general sense, the most important reason for analyzing information seekers' behaviour is the significance of the role it plays in our lives. Most of our time is spent directly in the market place, shopping or engaging in other activities. A large amount of additional time is spent thinking about products and services, talking to friends about them, and seeing or hearing advertisements about them. In addition, the goods we purchase and the manner in which we use them significantly influence how we live our lives. Likewise, information seekers' behaviour is also influenced by the Marketing Mix factors analyzed in this paper. Therefore, every human being value their information needs with several expectations. When the expectations are fulfilled with the information products, the consumption will occur.

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