

Print Media Readership Survey 2024 in Sri Lanka

Demography, Content Preferences and Behavioral Insights for a Loyal Readership Base

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Executive Summary

A data-driven survey on print media readership is important in that the publishing houses, media agencies, and advertisers need to correctly assess audience trends to design their own near-future roadmaps and align their business trajectories. A joint survey was therefore designed and conducted to gauge a couple of important behavioral aspects among print media consumers with a view to providing a comprehensive understanding of print media readership in Sri Lanka. Thus, the study focuses on current consumption patterns, reader demographics, factors influencing print media engagement and consumption of news disseminated in printed form.

Broadly speaking, this study report presents findings related to the discourse of willingness to purchase, weekday and weekend favorites, and motivation behind classified ads and supplements. In Sri Lanka, niche markets for print media can be segmented based on several demographics such as townships, ethnicity, gender, age, education level, employment status, marital status, type of household, language preference and travel. It is found that print media readership is notably high among older Sri Lankans, particularly those aged 50 and above. This demographic remains the most consistent consumer of newspapers and magazines. Urban areas show higher print media consumption rates compared to rural regions, though local print media still influences rural communities. Regarding the types of print media consumed, the study revealed that weekend newspapers are the most frequently consumed print medium valued for their wider news coverage and in-depth reporting. Specialty magazines focusing on hobbies, lifestyles, and professional interests are popular for their detailed content and visual appeal. Print tabloids, particularly non-fiction, are also read, reflecting a continued interest in short-form content.

As mentioned, demographic trends show that print media remains a staple for certain segments of the population, particularly older, more educated, and urban individuals. Publishers may need to focus their efforts on these groups while exploring strategies to attract younger readers, possibly through contents tailored to their interests as appropriate. On the other hand, the motivational aspects are crucial for the survival of print media as an industry. The physicality of print media is appreciated for its sensory and relaxing qualities, offering a contrast to screen-based reading. For many, print media consumption is a deeply ingrained habit among those who have grown up with print as the primary source of information.

Subscription costs are a barrier for some readers, impacting their ability to access print media regularly. There is growing awareness and concern about the environmental impact of print media, which may influence consumer attitudes. The opportunities are not necessarily unavailable for growth, however. There is interest in hybrid models that combine print and digital content, suggesting a potential pathway for media companies to engage readers across multiple platforms. The demand for localized news and community-focused content present an opportunity for print media to strengthen its relevance. Readers show a preference for personalized content, indicating that customized print media offerings could attract and retain a

broader audience. The enduring trust in print media and the value placed on the physical reading experience do suggest that these are critical factors in its ongoing appeal. Publishers could therefore leverage these strengths by emphasizing the reliability of their content and the unique sensory experience of the print itself. However, there is also an opportunity to bridge the gap between print and digital, perhaps by offering complementary digital content that aligns with the trust and depth provided by print.

Print media's ability to provide focused, high-quality content appears to be a key factor in maintaining readership, especially in many new niche markets. Publishers might consider expanding these offerings or developing new ones to capture a broader audience towards a target readership of 20% of the country's population in the next few years. The survey underscores that while print media in Sri Lanka continues to be a significant and valued medium, especially among older and more educated demographics, the industry faces challenges from declining younger readership and environmental concerns. Newspapers and specialty magazines remain popular, with readers citing trust, credibility and the tactile experience as key reasons for their preference for print over digital media. The study concludes that while print media faces an evolving media landscape, it retains unique strengths that, if leveraged effectively, can sustain its relevance and appeal even in the digital era. The findings offer valuable insights for publishers, advertisers, and policymakers aiming to successfully navigate the vacillations inevitable in the print media industry.

Keywords;

Consumption Patterns, Content Preferences, Mass Media, Media Consumption, Media Trends, Newspaper Readership, Print Media, Public Opinion, Trends and Patterns