

**NEWS PROGRAMMING PRACTICES AND READERS'
CONTENT PREFERENCES: A STUDY OF
MALAYALAM NEWSPAPERS**

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DECLARATION

I, M.S. Harikumar, hereby declare that this thesis entitled **News Programming Practices and Readers' Content Preferences: A Study of Malayalam Newspapers** is a bona fide record of research work done by me and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title or recognition in the University of Calicut or any other University.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **News Programming Practices and Readers' Content Preferences: A Study of Malayalam Newspapers** is a record of bona fide research carried out by M.S. Harikumar under my supervision and guidance.

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PREFACE

No matter how well editors try to provide a news fare to match their readers' needs and wants, the reader-editor gap continues to exist. This aspect has been investigated by communication scholars and they are not unanimous on a final solution to bridge this gap. However, studies of such nature would have helped the news planners and media managers modify content in tune with readers' changing needs and expectations.

Unfortunately such studies are rare in the context of Indian newspapers and their readers. What have been investigated remains confined to either content analysis or readership surveys. It is in this backdrop this study was designed to investigate the relationship between news programming practices and readers' content preferences in the context of Indian Press with special focus on Malayalam newspapers.

The findings of the study are presented in five chapters. The first chapter introduces the complex process of news programming in the light of the well known communication concepts of gatekeeping, agenda-setting, news values, and a brief history of the Malayalam press followed by a note on its editorial practices. Available studies on the related aspects of the study are reviewed in the second chapter. The study procedure is detailed in the third chapter and the results of analysis are presented in the next chapter. A detailed discussion on findings and their implications form the last chapter.

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

NEWSPAPERS in their early years of evolution knew little about their readers as to who they were, what interested them and what they read. Such a situation doesn't exist now. A flurry of readership research and dozens of decades-long experience has made editors know more about their readers in great detail. Aware of the fact that newspapers are the primary source of information for the readers, editors' programme news to meet the perceived information needs of the readers. In that they plan, collect, select and present a variety of news in multi-various styles. In doing so, they give varying importance to all news stories.

From among thousands of news stories reaching the editorial desk, only a few are selected for the day's edition. Of these, a handful are chosen for front page display and the rest are spread across inner pages, often grouped under heads such as local, national, international, trade/commerce, sports and so on. At the same time, using appropriate design elements, the editors strive to enhance the noticeability and thereby the readership of the content.

The resulting product with its design elements often connotes something more than the meaning of the words. Such connotations may range from telling the readers which story is significant and serious, to those which emphasize a light hearted, tongue-in-cheek reading fare.

Such editorial practices are often modified in tune with readers changing needs and expectations. No matter how well editors try to provide a news fare suiting to readers information needs, the reader-editor gap continues to exist. A primary reason for the reader-editor gap is the high selectivity that readers' exercise while reading. In a well developed society like USA, the readers read no more than 10,000 words each day regardless of the total offered by the newspapers.¹ In fact, most readers look for a reward as Wilbur Schramm has pointed out: "leaving out chance,

¹ Ruth Clarke, 'Changing Needs of Changing Readers', *Journal of American Society of Newspaper Editors.*, January 1979, p 35.

conflicting mental sets and the qualities of presentation which call attention to one item over others or make one item easier to read than other, we can hypothesises that a person chooses the item which he thinks are likely to give greater reward".²

As a result, readers of newspapers are "less willing than before to let editors make their reading decisions for them".³ Such assertions stem from the existence of selective exposure, attention, reading and recall at the level of the readers. That being the case, editors do not assume that everyone out there is panting to read every word they print. Therefore, they consciously try to improve their news presentation styles to ensure a greater readership of the content. Nonetheless, the reader-editor gap exists reminding of the need for a better understanding of the readers' content preferences. **It is in this context that this study is envisaged to examine the news programming practices and readers' content preferences with specific reference to Malayalam dailies.**

News programming is a complex process involving a large number of professionals ranging from stringers, staff reporters, special correspondents, and columnists to news agencies, to copy editors, photo editors and editors of newspapers. These professionals in carrying out the first task of selecting the news for and on behalf of the readers and others act as gatekeepers. Their decision to select certain news stories and reject others for an edition rests primarily on the news values and editorial policies of their organizations. Needless to say, they do not give equal importance to all selected content. While some are given prominence in their display on pages, some other content is tucked away as fillers. With such practices, editors tell readers not only 'what to think' but also 'what to think about'. This perspective which is central to the agenda setting function of the mass media has an important role in the news programming practices of the newspapers and by implication affects the reading preferences of the readers.

² Schramm, Wilbur, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, 7th Ed., Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1965, p 45.

³ Ruth Clarke, 'Changing Needs of Changing Readers', *Journal of American Society of Newspaper Editors*, January 1979, p 45.

As a necessary background to the present study, the concept of gatekeeping, news values which form the basis of routine editorial judgments and the agenda setting prepositions are discussed in the succeeding sections of this chapter. Also, outlined in this chapter is a brief history of the Malayalam press and their editorial activities directed to meet readers' perceived needs.

GATEKEEPING

Gatekeeping is the process through which ideas and information are filtered for publication or broadcasting. This concept was formulated by Lewin in 1947. While studying the processes of decision making with regard to household food purchases he observed that information always flows along certain channels, which contain 'gate areas', where decisions are made.⁴ This idea was taken up in 1950 by White.⁵ He studied the processing of information by telegraph wire editors in American newspapers, whose decisions to discard news items coming over the wire were seen as the most significant gatekeeping activity. In 1969, the theory was revisited by Bass, who differentiated among different gate keeping roles. He explained that the most important gatekeeping activity occurs within the news organ. Involved in the news making process are two groups of professionals – news gatherers and news processors. These two professional groups transform occurrences into news, which Tuchman (1978) describes as an act of reconstructing the reality. This is a multistage activity of bestowing newsworthiness on a few events. In the first stage reporters/correspondents of newspapers and news agencies select a few events and issues while leaving out certain other aspects of reality. The second stage of gatekeeping occurs at the level of individual media units where a battery of professionals – news editors, copy editors, sub editors, translators and the like – select certain reports for presentation as news of the day (Lewin 1947, White 1950, Breed 1955, McQuail 1969).

The selection process at each of the above two gatekeeping stages gets influenced by a set of factors which could be grouped under three heads: (i) journalists' socio

⁴ Kurt Lewin cited in *A Dictionary of Communication and Media Studies*, James Watson and Anne Hill, Edward Arnold, London 1984, p 203.

⁵ David Manning White, 'The Gatekeepers: A case study in the selection of News', *Journalism Quarterly*, 27, IV, 1950, p 23.

cultural background (ii) professional conditioning tempered by the ubiquitous 'news values' and (iii) organisation policies and priorities vis-à-vis news issues, sources and societal concerns.

The third and the last stage of gatekeeping occurs at the level of the media audience. They too selectively attend to media messages, based on what they selectively read, listen to and watch, they form pictures of the world in their mind and act up on them in varying ways.

NEWS VALUES

The reconstruction of reality at the level of the news gatherers and news processors is a complex process. According to Gans (1979, 87) information on unfolding events and issues is first refined and altered by journalists in order to make news suitable for their audience. The 'story importance' is judged by journalists according to four main criteria: rank in government; impact on the nation and national interest; impact on the number of people and; significance for past and future.

The 'story importance' is however gets determined by the news value decisions of the editors. In practice, such decisions are made informally by the editors on the basis of their experience and intuition. A landmark classification of news values was given by two Norwegian scholars Galtung and Ruge in 1965. The news values identified by them are the following.⁶

1. *Threshold*: a big story is one which has an extreme effect on a larger number of people. Where the immediate effect of an event is more subtle, the threshold may be determined by the amount of money involved.
2. *Frequency*: Events which occur suddenly and fit well with news organization's schedule are more likely to be reported than those which occur gradually or at convenient times of day or night. Long term trends are not likely to receive much coverage.

⁶ Johan Galtung, Marie H. Ruge, 'The Structure of Foreign News: The Presentation of Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crisis in four Foreign Newspapers', *Journal of Peace Research*, Volume II, 7 (Summer) 1965, pp 64-91.

3. *Negativity*: Bad is more exciting than good news. Bad news receives more attention because it shocks us and creates confusion.
4. *Unexpectedness*: If an event is out of the ordinary it will have a greater effect than some thing which is an everyday occurrence. If a dog bites a man, that's not news. But if a man bites a dog that's news!
5. *Unambiguity*: Events whose implications are clear make for better copy than those which are open to more than one interpretation, or when any understanding of the implications depends on first understanding the complex background in which the events take place.
6. *Personification*: Events which can be portrayed as the actions of individuals will be more attractive than one in which there is no such "human interest".
7. *Meaningfulness*: This relates to the sense of identification the audience has with the topic. Stories concerned with people who speak the same language, look the same, and share the pre-occupations as the audience receive more coverage than those concerned with people who speak different language, look different and have different pre-occupations.
8. *Reference to elite nations*: Stories concerned with global powers receive more attention than those concerned with less influential nations.
9. *Reference to elite persons*: Stories concerned with the rich, powerful, famous and infamous get more coverage.
10. *Consonance*: Stories which fit the media's expectations receive more coverage than those which defy them (and for which they are thus unprepared).
11. *Continuity*: A story which is already in the news gathers a kind of inertia. This is partly because the media organizations are already in place to report the story, and partly because previous reportage may have made the story more accessible to the public.
12. *Proximity*: If the event happened nearby, it may be more interesting to the reader's than it would be if it happened in another country.

13. *Oddity*: Unusual events merit attention in the news. e.g.; a thirty pound tomato. Events that are firsts or lasts, and therefore historic also may be unusual and gets attention in newspapers.

Seldom does a news event qualify for inclusion in the newspaper on all of these accounts. The editor weighs each story to determine if it has one or more of these values. If the story does, there is a good chance that it will be printed, otherwise it gets rejected. It is these news values that generally guide editors in selection and display of news implying varying importance. The importance implied is at the centre of the agenda setting function of the press which again is important in the news programming practices of the newspapers.

AGENDA-SETTING

It is generally held that mass media do not necessarily tell us how or what to think, instead they provide a frame of reference and tell us, implicitly what topics to think about. Media theorists term this as the 'agenda setting' function of mass media.

In our newspapers, certain matters are given more prominence than others, and this phenomenon provides us with a scale of importance that also has social and political implications. As McCombs and Shaw (1976), two prominent agenda-setting theorists have written, "audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters from the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the media put on it".⁷ Further, they showed that the agenda set by the media goes to constitute the public agenda.

Dearing and Rogers (1996) define the process of agenda setting as 'an ongoing competition among issue protagonists to gain the attention of media professionals, the public and policy elites. Also, they offered several generalizations about agenda setting. One is that different media do tend to agree about the relative salience of a set of issues. Secondly media agendas do not closely match 'real world' indicators. It is not the absolute significance of an issue that counts but the relative strength of sources and people trying to define and promote an issue. Finally, the 'position of an

⁷ McCombs M.E., and Shaw D.L, 'The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1976 Vol. 36, pp 165-166.

issue on the media agenda importantly determines that issue's salience in the public agendas.

Thus, from the above brief discussion it is evident that gatekeeping, news values and the agenda setting process are a part of the whole, i.e., the news programming practices. The chapter now focuses on Indian language press system with special emphasis on Malayalam press as it forms the focus of the study.

INDIAN LANGUAGE PRESS

The fabric of Indian Press consists of two streams – the Indian Language press and the English press. Though evolved during the colonial period, their growth was not uniform. After independence, the English press grew faster than the language press as the latter failed to impress both the readers and the advertisers. This was mainly due to the lack of managerial entrepreneurship, facelessness in production values and editorial character.⁸

With the re-organization of the states on linguistic basis and the subsequent development of the languages in the 1950s, the language press began to move away from stagnancy. By early 1960s, while the metropolitan press enhanced its readership within the metropolis, the language press captured the readership outside. Thereafter, the growth of language press was rapid. In 2005, the Indian language press constituted about 80 per cent of Indian press community accounting for 78 per cent of the total circulation.⁹ "They are attractively designed and written in easily understood prose and they sought local people as dear subjects as well as advertisers and general readers".¹⁰

The technological change in the form of the personal computer and offset press revolutionized the newspaper industry in the latter part of the 1990's. The circulation of daily newspapers in all languages trebled between 1976 and 1992 – from 9.3

⁸ George T.J.S., *The Provincial Press in India*, Press Institute of India, New Delhi, 196, pp 5-7.

⁹ Registrar of Newspapers, *Press in India*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, 2005, p 13.

¹⁰ Robin Jeffrey, *India's Newspaper Revolution*, Oxford Press, New Delhi, 2002, p 1.

million to 28.1 million and the dailies per thousand people doubled from 15 daily newspapers per 10,000 people to 32 per 10, 000.

Among the language newspapers, the Hindi press is at the top both in terms of publication and circulation with 24,017 newspapers accounting for a circulation of 18.8 million copies. This constituted 37 per cent of the total circulation of the Indian press. Following Hindi is the English Press with 8768 publications commanding a circulation of 8.6 million copies. The Malayalam press stands third with 1037 publications commanding a circulation of 6.35 million copies.¹¹

THE MALAYALAM PRESS

Under the British, the Malayalam speaking region of Kerala had frozen into three socio-political divisions. North of Kerala, the Malabar region was under the sprawling Madras presidency, directly ruled by the British. The southern part of today's Kerala was divided between two princely states of Cochin and Travancore.

From 1920 when Gandhi reorganized the provincial units of Indian national Congress on linguistic lines, modest pressures had grown for common Malayali institutions, including single state of Kerala. In the 1940s Nationalist newspapers from Kerala like *Mathrubhumi* supported such demands, which were met in two stages, first, with the unification of Travancore and Cochin in 1949 and then with the formation of Kerala state, under the far-reaching re-organization of India's states, in 1956.¹²

Kerala by the late 1970s stood out among other Indian states for its unusual milieu. Its falling birth rate and high levels of literacy generated the label 'Kerala Model' to describe its puzzling economic and social development. Its heavy migration of workers to the Gulf brought foreign exchange that made Kerala an eager purchaser of consumer goods. That provided a new opportunity for advertisers. To attract

¹¹ Registrar of Newspapers, *Press in India*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, 2005, p 20.

¹² George T.J.S., *The Provincial Press in India*, Press Institute of India, New Delhi, 1967. pp 24-25.

advertising, newspapers had to enhance their circulations. To attract new readers, each newspaper had to either get the paper into new areas or win readers from other newspapers. They did that and reached out to even remote areas. Today Malayalam newspapers are in a commanding position as far as circulation and readership are concerned.

To “identify with the masses” they programmed more of local news. New printing technologies allowed launch of district wise editions. But to move a newspaper closer to local readers demanded that the whole locality must become the focus of the local pages. To maximize readership every newspaper vied to cover every social group - not merely in bits but in greater detail. In theory, this might mean that individuals come to know more about themselves and their neighbors than ever before and that the newspaper habit creates or reinforces a sense of shared geography and related customs. Thus to expand circulation, it was necessary to localize a newspaper’s geographical coverage and broaden its social coverage. When this happened in Kerala, Malayali population lapped up the fare boosting newspaper circulation and made the Malayalam press the most dynamic one in terms of its reach and, enhancing the diffusion rate to 99 dailies per 1000 people as against the UNESCO minimum of 100 copies per 1000 people.¹³

Before going into the details of the study, it is appropriate here to have a bird’s eye view of the story of the Malayalam press and its editorial shifts and changes so as to meet readers' information needs.

Early Years of Malayalam Press

The history of Malayalam journalism is over hundred and fifty years old. Its genealogy is often traced to Christian missionaries who brought out books and periodicals for the propagation of religion. The first Malayalam book *Samkshepa Vedartham* was printed in Rome, by Fr. Clement Piyantias in 1772. The first Malayalam book to be printed on Indian soil was a translation of the *New Testament* in 1418 at Courier Press, Bombay. In 1811, the *New Testament* in Malayalam was

¹³ Registrar of Newspapers, *Press in India*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, 2005, p 30.

printed here. Philipose Rampan did its translation. It was the first book in Malayalam printed in Indian soil.

It was Benjamin Bailey who started printing from Kottayam in 1821. Using the types given by Fort St. George College of Madras, he printed the first book *Cherupaithangal* in 1824. Not satisfied with the types, he designed a new set of Malayalam types in 1829 and used them for printing the *New Testament*.

It was in 1845, that a litho press was set up in Malabar at Illikkunnu near Thalasseri by Rev. Herman Gundert of the Basal Mission. It was here that Gundert made history in June 1847, by launching *Rajyasamacharam*, the first newspaper in Malayalam. It had eight cyclostyled sheets in demy octave. Reading matter was spread across the pages without columns and cross heads to break the monotony. Neither the masthead nor the print line featured the Editor's name. The reading matter was exclusively of religious nature. By the time it ceased publication in late 1850, forty-two issues had seen the light of the day.

In October 1847 Gundert started another publication called the *Paschimodayam*. That too was cyclostyled, but it carried articles on geography, history, natural science and astrology. Edited by Mr. F.Muller, its annual subscription was one Rupee. It ceased publication in 1851.

The scene now shifts to Central Travancore from where early in 1848 came out a printed magazine in Malayalam called *Jnananikshepam*, the treasure of Knowledge. The eight-page magazine was printed at Kottayam based C.M.S. Press set up in 1821 by Arch. Deacon Koshy and Rev. George Mathan. The paper, apart from proselytizing Christianity, dealt with articles on science and information.

Another periodical, from Kottayam to make its appearance around this time was the *Vidyasamgraham*. This magazine started publication in 1864 and went on till 1867.¹⁴

During 1860s efforts were underway to start a "newspaper". Ironically, the first of this genre to be published from Kerala was in the English. That was *Western Star* brought out by Charles Lawson from Cochin in 1860.

¹⁴ Puthuppally Raghavan, *Kerala Pathra Prvarthana Charithram*, Kerala Sahithya Academy, Thrissur, 1985, p 45-48.

Four years later, a Malayalam edition of the *Western Star* started publication from Cochin under the banner *Paschimatharaka*. T.J. Paily edited it in the first instance and later it was edited by Kaloor Oommen Philippose. Later, another publication, *Keralapatrika* appeared from Cochin in 1870.

In 1867, two papers made their debut at Kottayam. One was in Malayalam titled *Santishtawadi* and the other was *Travancore Herald* in English. The *Santishtawadi*, an outspoken critic of the rulers soon fell out with the Travancore Government, which ordered its closure. Thus, *Santishtawadi* became the first martyr in the cause of freedom of the press.

The next in the line was the *Satyanadakahalam* that started publication modestly as a fortnightly from Kunammavu in October 1876. Published under the auspices of the Italian Carmelite Mission, Rev. Candidus was its first editor. This 16 - page fortnightly featured a range of topics in its columns, from international affairs to local news and Government pronouncements and court proceedings to mission news. Four years later it was converted into a weekly. Change in format was introduced and the *Satyanadam* joined the early rank of “illustrated weeklies”. *The Keralam* (1886), *Malayalamitram*, *Thiruvithanore Abhimani*, *Kerala Deepakam* (all 1878) and *Keralachandrika* fall in this category. Another magazine *Keralaopakari* published from Malabar had the distinction of being the first one to be printed from this area. Incidentally the *Keralopakari* was printed from the Basal Mission Press located at Mangalore. Most of these journals were fired with the zeal of the Christian missionaries.

A good number of these early publications were short-lived. Besides being not ‘newspapers’ in the strict sense of the word, their emphasis was more on literary and religious topics. Their periodicity was yet another factor which detracted them from their intrinsic relevance and importance as newspapers.

The ‘Real’ Newspaper

It fell to a Gujarathi’s lot to launch the first systematic “newspaper” in Malayalam. Devji Bhimji started a printing press at Cochin in 1865 under the name the Keralamitram Press. In running the press Devji Bhimji faced heavy odds. Everything was discouraging including the unhelpful attitude of the authorities. In an

unprecedented move, the Police authorities slapped an order on Devji Bhimji requiring him to surrender all matter meant for printing for prior scrutiny and approval of the authorities. Later, the authorities forced the closure of the establishment. But Devji Bhimji was steadfast in his perseverance. After a year-and-a-half the British Resident prevailed upon the authorities to withdraw their orders and Devji Bhimji launched *Keralamitram* on the new year day of 1881.¹⁵

In a number of respects the *Keralamitram* can be hailed as the first “newspaper” in Malayalam language. In the initial stages, it was issued thrice a week, and later on, it was published as a weekly. The paper provided a wide range of reading matter, which by contemporary accounts maintained an exceptionally high standard. Due weight was also given to literature, criticism, and articles on general topics of public welfare. *Keralamitram* is first editor was none other than Kandathil Varghese Mappilai who later founded the *Malayala Manorama*. Devji Bhimji also tried his hand at running a Marathi magazine entitled *Keralakokil* from Cochin.

The pattern of development and growth of journalism in Malabar area was more or less similar in nature, with the difference that journalistic ventures were more profuse. An English weekly *West Coast Spectator* started publication in 1879 from Kozhikode. Vakil Poovadan Raman printed the weakly from the Spectator Press. An Englishman, Dr. Keys, edited it. In later years this was rechristened as the *Malabar Spectator* and was quite popular locally.

Keralapatrika’s Arrival

A significant turning point in Malayalam journalism was the publication of *Keralapatrika* weekly from Kozhikode in 1884. Chengalathu Kunhirama Menon, a freedom fighter, conceived the idea of a weekly, possibly after attending a conference of the National Movement in Calcutta in 1864. Kunhirama Menon himself claimed that *Keralapatrika* was the first real newspaper of Malayalam in the Malabar district. It was printed from Vidyavilasam press and had active backing of a number of prominent personalities of the day.

¹⁵ Public Relations Department, *A Brief History of Malayalam Press*, Government of Kerala, 2003, p 13.

With its editor Chengalathu Kunhirama Menon wielding a powerful pen *Keralapatrika* emerged as a pace setter in Malayalam journalism. The weekly featured news on international affairs, politics and other local occurrences. Literature and literary criticism received their due share in *Keralapatrika's* columns. An instance has been recorded where the great literary icon of that era, Kerala Varma Valiya Koil Thampuran took exception to the severe criticism of some of his works in the columns of the weekly. However, the maharaja of Travancore was so impressed by the crusading spirit of the *Keralapatrika* that he subscribed for 200 copies distributing among the officials of his administration.¹⁶

Running a newspaper, especially in the regional Malayalam language was not easy. The elite preferred English and thought it inappropriate to be seen browsing through a Malayalam newspaper. Advertisement support was just not available, an unbelievable factor. Powerful patronage especially from royalty could not be spurned. But when it comes to principles Kunhirama Menon, the father of Malayalam Journalism, was not the one to compromise.

The management of *Kealapatrika* changed hands in 1938 some times after the death of Kunhirama Menon. Among the editors of this period include Sanjayan and Koyippallil Parameswara Kurup.

The Spectator Press of Kozhikode came out in 1886 with a Malayalam periodical entitled the *Keralasanchari*. It was edited by Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar otherwise well known by his Pen name "Kesari". The sharp humour and wit which were the characteristic of the new periodical marked a turning point in Malayalam journalism.

The year 1886 stands out in history of Malayalam Journalism as it saw the birth of the *Malayali* from Thiruvananthapuram. This was the official organ of the Malayali Social Reforms League. In Pettayil Raman Asan the new magazine found an able editor. In due course, his mantle fell upon C.V. Raman Pillai, yet another literary giant. Though the sheet anchor of the magazine was social reforms, it spear headed the crusade for political and civil rights with zest.

¹⁶ Perunna K.N. Nair, *Malayala Pathrathinte Katha*, Calicut, 1976, p12.

Newspapers from Travancore

The second oldest existing newspaper in Malayalam- *the Deepika*-was launched from Kottayam in 1887 under the banner *Nasrani Deepika*. Its periodicity underwent a number of changes over the years to emerge finally in 1938 as a full-fledged daily newspaper. Change in periodicity also coincided with an abbreviation of its name to the *Deepika*.

The *Malayala Manorama* started publication from Kottayam in 1890, initially as a weekly. A joint stock company floated the paper, perhaps for the first time in India. Its first editor was Kandathil Varghese Mappilai who brought with him the experience of his previous association with the *Keralamitram* of Cochin. At the beginning, the weekly was predominantly literary in its character. Its transition to a newspaper of general interest followed quickly. It was converted into a daily in 1928. In many instances the *Malayala Manorama* actually gave the lead to mass movements of the period.



The last decade of the nineteenth century was uneventful for Malayalam journalism in the sense that no newspaper other than those mentioned above commenced publication during this period. But this period was marked by the launch of a memorable crop of literary magazines. *Sujanandini* came out in 1892 from Kollam. Kandathil Varghese Mappilai and Bhashaposhini Sabha joined hands to launch *Bhashaposhini* in 1897 as the official organ of the Bhashaposhini Sabha. The same year saw the publication of *Saraswathi* from Thalasseri under the able editorship of Moorkoth Kumaran.

A significant episode in the history of Malayalam journalism was the launch of *Swadeshbhimani* from Thiruvananthapuram in 1905. Ramakrishna Pillai who had made a mark as a brilliant columnist and literary critic was inducted as its first editor. He drew his powerful pen to expose palace politics and corruption and favouritism

rampant in the corridors of power. For that bold journalistic move, he was deported and the press was confiscated. But he could not be subdued. He launched his next journalistic venture *Atmaposhini* from Kunnamkulam in Cochin state. He edited this organ for two years till 1915. He also authored a book on Journalism, the first of its kind in Malayalam. Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai died in exile at Kannur in 1928.¹⁷

The appearance of *Mitavadi* from Thalasseri in 1907 marks an important milestone in the history of the press in Kerala. Moorkoth Kumaran, who had already tried his hand successfully at other journalistic ventures, occupied the editor's chair. The *Mitavadi* gained in stature within a short span of time as a literary magazine of fine quality.

Mahakavi Kumaran Asan's *Veenapoove* was first published in the *Mitavadi* in 1913. The *Mitavadi* published a daily newssheet during the World War I featuring the latest news from the War front.

The origins of *Kerala Kaumudi*, one among the leading newspapers in present day Kerala, can be traced back to 1911. Its founder C.V. Kunhiraman was a multi faceted personality – a poet, a brilliant prose writer, historian and a journalist. The paper initially started publication from Mayyandu. Later it was shifted to Kollam and then to Thiruvananthapuram. It was converted into a full-fledged daily in 1940.

The *Samadarshi* that commenced publication from Thiruvananthapuram in 1918 was a powerful and popular vehicle of public opinion. A. Balakrishna Pillai joined the paper in 1923 as editor. He riveted his attention on the corrupt bureaucracy of Travancore. The devastating criticism in the *Samadarshi* was aimed at the authorities that in turn made things difficult for the running of the paper. The notorious Travancore Newspaper Regulations of 1926 were an offshoot of Bala Krishna Pillai's incisive criticisms. The management of the paper was not prepared to the official displeasure and Balakrishna Pillai had to resign in 1926.

¹⁷ Sreedhara Menon A., *Kerala Charithram*, SPCS, Kottayam, 1969, p 447.

Balakrishna Pillai had in the meanwhile launched a new periodical *Probodhakan*. Within six month of its appearance, the government of Travancore banned it. Balakrishna Pillai now started the *Kesari*, which made an indelible imprint in Malayalam journalism. Scathing criticism of the authorities was taken up with an added zeal in the columns of the new publication. The newspaper regulations of 1926 took shape in this backdrop. He sought to mobilize public opinion against the government's repressive measures. Sensing that the situation would get out of their hands, the authorities clamped a ban order on *Kesari*. Though *Kesari* was short lived, its impact on public opinion and development of Malayalam Journalism was tremendous, and out of proportion to its longevity.¹⁸

The *Malayalarajyam* made a triumphant entry into Malayalam Journalism in 1929, featuring in its columns API and Reuter dispatches and news pictures of foreign photo agencies. It was published from Kollam. An organized network distribution of this daily was soon built up. Modern printing equipments gave the new daily a new outlook in appearance and content. *Malayalarajyam* was the first daily to go in for a rotary press.

The Illustrated Malayalarajyam weekly was a prestigious publication of the time. The daily was edited by K.G. Sanker, who was forced to resign from *Malayali* over a controversial editorial criticizing the Travancore government. He continued his pro nationalist stance in the *Malayalarajyam*. A number of leading writers were persuaded to contribute regular columns. In a short span of time *Malayalarajyam* became well known and read as Kerala's leading nationalist daily. With Sanker relinquishing control on ill health, the daily fell on bad days.

The Birth of Mathrubhumi

In the Malabar region the tempo of the political struggle in the early decade of the twentieth century was quicker than the socio-economic reform movements. The All Kerala Political Conference at Ottappalam in April 1921 marked the beginning of the move for a united Kerala, which became a reality in terms of law thirty-five years later. At the time of this conference, Gandhian movement of non-co operation was in

¹⁸ Puthuppalli Raghavan, *Kerala Pathra Pravarthana Charithram*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1985, p. 50-52 .

full swing and had a great impact on Kerala. In this milieu the *Mathrubhumi*, made its debut from Kozhikode in 1923.¹⁹ A band of dedicated workers floated a public limited company to launch *Mathrubhumi* thrice a week beginning on March 18, 1923, with K. P. Kesava Menon as its editor.

The baptism by fire for the *Mathrubhumi* came soon with the Vaikom Satyagraha. The demand was for the grant of right of passage to the untouchables along the approach roads of the temple. The moving spirit of the Satyagraha was T.K. Madhavan, himself a renowned journalist. In the forefront of the enlightened leaders of the forward communities who actively participated in the struggle was K.P. Kesava Menon. The *Mathrubhumi* too was in the thick of the fight as it joined in every phase of the national struggle.

At the peak of the civil disobedience movement, in April 1930, the *Mathrubhumi* started issuing as a daily. As practically the only source of information for the people in Malabar about the developments in the national movements, its circulation base gradually grew extending to remote villages.²⁰ But close on the heels of increasing circulation and influence come official harassment too. Following a critical editorial on incarceration of a political worker without trial, the government swooped down the paper demanding a security of Rs. 2000. The *Mathrubhumi* furnished the security amount in the interest of the continued publication, but as a measure of silent protest left its editorial columns blank for a month to come.



An article by Sanjayan, a well-known humorist, criticized the high handedness of the British army personnel at Cochin. This provoked the government and banned the

¹⁹ Sreedhara Menon A., *Kerala Charithram*, Sahitya Pravarthaka Sahakarana Sangham, Kottayam, 1969, p.439.

²⁰ Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd, *Mathrubhumiude Charithram*, Vol. 1 & 2, 1978.

daily altogether. A state wide agitation was started and the government was forced to withdraw the punitive order. The Dewan of Travancore, C.P. Ramswamy Iyer refused entry of the paper in the Travancore state.

Another important Kozhikode-based publication of this period was the *Al-Ameen* which first started publication in 1924 and became a daily in 1930. Its founder was Mohammed Abdul Rahman Sahib, a prominent leader of Indian National Congress. Its nationalist stance often infuriated the authorities and on more than one occasion the *Al-Ameen* was discontinued as a result of action by the authorities.

The other noted newspapers of those decades were *Prabhatham*, *Deenabandhu Lokasakthi*, *Swaraj*, *Yuvabharatham* and *Bhaje Bharatham*. Most of these publications survived for brief periods.

The decade proceeding independence was a period of consolidation and revival for the press in Kerala. What was previously a buyers market for news gradually changed into a seller's market. An element of competition started surfacing, though in rudimentary form. Survival demanded not only adequate resources but a proper entrepreneurial approach.²¹

The press in Kerala is said to have come of age as India achieved independence. It was a far cry from the cyclostyled sheets of 1847 to the full-fledged dailies. Growth was no longer haphazard. It was deliberately planned. The aim now was to consolidate and expand in a field which was becoming more and more competitive.

Today, the average urban adult spends 44 minutes per day reading dailies and magazines. And what do they read? The NRS reports that apart from news and politics, sports is the topic of interest among readers. While the level of interest among urban audiences is predictably higher than among rural audiences, it is remarkable that urban and rural up-market readers exhibit similar reading patterns.²²

²¹ Robin Jeffrey, *India's Newspaper Revolution*, Oxford Press, New Delhi, 2002, p 101-108.

²² *NRS Report*, National Readership Studies Council, Mumbai, 2004, p 81.

THE MALAYALAM PRESS TODAY

The Malayalam press today presents a diverse and impressive picture. The report of the Registrar of Newspapers says that at the end of 2005, there were 1037 newspapers comprising of 159 dailies, 145 weeklies, 128 fortnightlies, 548 monthlies, 35 quarterlies, 6 annuals and the remaining 16 of different periodicity.²³

These publications together commanded a circulation of 6.35 million copies, the third highest in Indian press system. This indeed is an impressive achievement in view of the fact that the Malayalam speaking population constitutes only 3.17 per cent of the total population.²⁴ Among the 159 dailies there are four dailies which account for 70 per cent of the total circulation of dailies in Kerala. These four dailies are: *Malayala Manorama*, *Mathrubhumi*, *Kerala Kaumudi* and *Deshabhimani*. According to ABC report July - December 2005, *Malayala Manorama* topped the circulation chart with 13,95,191 copies followed by *Mathrubhumi* 10,40,183, *Deshabhimani* 2,45,751 and *Kerala Kaumudi*, 1,47,128 copies.²⁵



The front page of *Mathrubhumi* dated 14.05.05

Such an impressive circulation indicates to their popularity among the media-savvy readers. Though there are more than ten regional TV channels and most of them provide round the clock news bulletins, the Malayali populace appear to be depended on their favourite newspapers to tell them what is happening in and around them and how to make the sense of it.

²³ Registrar of Newspapers, *Press in India*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, 2005, p 100.

²⁴ *Statistical Outline of India*, 1995-2002, Bombay Tata Services 2003, p 18.

²⁵ *Audit Bureau of Circulation Report*, July – December 2005, ABC, Mumbai.

To match readers' expectations, Malayalam newspapers have made considerable changes in the recent times in news gathering and styles of presentations. While not reducing space for hard news, they have come to devote substantial space for analytical stories and columns by experts and columnists of national repute. Local news i.e., news covering the region of a given edition has come to occupy significant salience in the newshole. An example of this feature is available from dozens and dozens of obits, matrimonial bits and information on area-specific government schemes and programmes. Panchayath level developmental issues and local body politics too gets great coverage in the local pages of the dailies.



The front page of *Malayala Manorama* dated 14.05.05

To reach out to the growing number of readers in hinterlands, the dailies have strengthened their circulation networks besides energizing the news gathering networks by appointing an array of local correspondents and stringers.

To make pages visually attractive, Malayalam newspapers whose pages were considered as best designed have adopted several new techniques. Besides using pictures, graphics and other illustrative elements more liberally in an aesthetically pleasing manner, the Malayalam dailies today print both inner and outer pages in colour. Pull outs on various themes are published regularly. Cartoons which for long adorned the front pages are now being displayed on inner pages including the classified pages.

Like their cousins in other parts of the country, the Malayalam dailies too have competed vigorously with each other in boosting their circulation through innovative marketing strategies. In the forefront are the two leading newspapers - *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi*.

In the early 1990s both offered insurance schemes to its subscribers. Later *Malayala Manorama* offered scholarships for subscribers' children and discount cards, which could be utilized at select outlets to earn a discount on the subscriber's bills.

Two years ago, *Malayala Manorama* announced its 'Swarna Thambola' (Golden Thambola) saying it has earmarked Rs. one crore to be given away as prizes to the winners. At the end of the Thambola, it gave away 2500 sovereigns as prize to the winners.

To stay one step ahead of its archrival, *Mathrubhumi* announced a budget of Rs.1.25 crore for their readers participating in their new 'programme'. Cashing in on the Monsoon season in Kerala, their bonanza was called 'Sammanna Mazha' (Rain of Prizes). It proudly advertised that 'you don't have to crack your head over numbers to get your prize. You only had to read the paper carefully and keep it safely till the next day'.

True, while one had to match the numbers in the Thambola card for the *Manorama* game, to win the basic prize from *Mathrubhumi* only had to see whether the copy of the paper carried a particular inscription or a catch word which would be announced in the next day's edition. There were hundred prizes to be won every day. A gold coin or a silk sari was the daily prize.

Out of the winners, five got motor bikes in a draw which was held every week. Two cars were given away every month and the luckiest person got a house worth Rs. 22 lakh as gift.

In addition to these marketing strategies, both the dailies have adopted innovative news programming practices. For instance, *Malayala Manorama* in recent years introduced a financial page, a youth page, a health page, a career page, a film page, a service related page and a children's page on specific days in a week. "Padippura", an exclusive educational feature page in color focusing on class projects for the school going students published thrice a week, is yet another new feature of *Malayala Manorama*.

To compete with its rival, *Mathrubhumi* too adopted similar methods. It began publishing a financial supplement (*Dhanakaryam*), and a humour related

supplement (*Narmabhumi*). Also, it started various columns catering to the different tastes of readers. Some of these are: a career related page, a service page, an agriculture related page, an IT page, a national and overseas employment opportunity page, and an educational colour feature page for school going students (Kutty. Com) on specific days in a week. Further, it introduced a bi-weekly column, "Chovvadosham" to review its news contents focusing on its grammatical and stylistic errors. To cater to automobile buffs, "Top Gear" and "Vahanalokam" columns were launched. The other special columns launched recently include an Opp-Ed. feature called "Swakaryam", which is a reporter's diary on news behind news; "Ente chora thilakkunnu" (My blood boils) every Monday on page one, which describes the helplessness and apathy of the reader on burning social issues, "Powravartha" citizens news focussing on local issues and "Sunday Stroke", a Sunday cartoon on the editorial page by Gopikrishnan on political issues.

With such innovative changes in their programming practices, *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* have retained and added to their readership base. But the question that arises is whether the multi-interest content is being read by their readers. In other words whether the news programming practices match with the readers' content preferences? If so to what extent? These questions have to be answered in respect of the various news categories so as to have an insight into the ubiquitous editor-reader gap in the news programmed and news read. This is the area which forms the focus of the study. The next chapter of the thesis presents a review of studies relating to news programming practices of dailies, readership of news programmed and other related areas.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

THERE ARE not many studies of Malayalam Press to understand the nature of relationship between the importance the newspapers and readers give to the different news categories and subject matters of news.

This however is not to deny the presence of large number of content analysis studies conducted by journalists, academics and students. In this chapter, some of these studies have been grouped and presented under four sections. The first section details the findings of studies relating to the divergent content of the newspapers, especially Malayalam dailies.

The second section focuses on a couple of experimental studies designed to understand the importance of certain news values at the level of the readers. The third section reviews a few studies that investigated readers' preferences in reading the contents programmed by the Malayalam dailies. The fourth and last section focuses on a summary of the gatekeeping studies to point out the general mismatch between readers' interest and judgement of the editors.

CONTENT ANALYTICAL STUDIES

In the 1960s George carried out a content analysis and readership survey of six Malayalam dailies to understand the general attitude of the readers to each paper. Interestingly, it found that the readers were emotionally attached rather than intellectually to their newspaper. This attachment was dependant on the religious or caste identifications of the particular newspaper. The study also evaluated the distribution of space for Kerala news, national news and international news. It found that the *Malayala Manorama* published from Kottayam devoted 78.8 per cent space for Kerala news. National and International news occupied only 11 per cent and 9 per cent respectively. *Deepika* allotted about 61 per cent to Kerala news and another 29 per cent and 10 per cent to the national and international events

respectively. The other four papers devoted 50-60 per cent of their space for Kerala news, 27-30 per cent for national and rest for international news.²⁶

Vilanilam made a comparative study of foreign news reported in two US and two Indian newspapers. The US papers selected were *New York Times* and *Philadelphia Enquirer* and the Indian papers were the *Times of India* and the *Malayala Manorama*. His study revealed that the newspaper of both the countries programmed news unfolding in regions closer to home. As a result, the quantum of foreign news in US dailies was less than three per cent of the newshole. Indian newspapers on the other hand devoted nearly 15 per cent of their space to foreign news.²⁷

The factor of proximity, an important criteria in news programming, also stood out in a study by Ahmed and Subash. They content analysed six Malayalam dailies to determine the news to advertisement ratio and the importance the Malayalam dailies attach to local, regional, national and international news events. Their study revealed that the major dailies, *Malayala Manorama*, *Mathrubhumi*, and *Kerala Kaumudi* gave almost equal space to news and advertisement, i.e., 50 per cent each.

The other dailies such as *Deshabhimani*, *Chandrika* and *Veekshanam* devoted 70 - 80 per cent of its total space to news and the rest to advertisements. Also, all the dailies attached greater importance to regional news followed by national and international news. And irrespective of the affiliations of the managements, political news was given the top priority in all the dailies, followed by crime and trade unions.²⁸

Radhakrishnan and Karippai content analysed Malayalam dailies in 2001 to understand the role of newspapers in transfer of agricultural technologies. They found that the illustrations contributed to the understanding of the printed messages.

²⁶ George T.J.S., *The Provincial Press in India*, Press Institute of India, New Delhi, 1967, p.20.

²⁷ Vilanilam J.V., *Education and Communication*, Kairali Book International, Trivandrum 1985, p.38.

²⁸ Ahmed S. A., and Subash. K, 'Content Analysis of six Malayalam Dailies, the Present and Future of the Press in South Indian Languages', *Seminar Report*, Dept. of Mass Communication, University of Calicut, 1982.

However, a number of inadequacies have been identified in the use of illustrations in the farm pages of most of the leading Malayalam dailies. Editing without technical expertise has been quite often distorting the intended messages. The experience stories - either of success or failure- have increased human element but demands professional skill by the contributor. The question-answer columns and the 'tips and bits' are the other common formats appearing in the farm pages. Further, on analysing readers response the study indicated that experience/success stories were the most preferred ones and were instrumental in creating attitudinal changes.²⁹

Rosamma did a content analysis of seven Malayalam newspapers in 1990 to study the information needs and use of information sources in newspaper establishments in Kerala. The Newspapers as a whole devoted 63.73 per cent of their space to news content and 36.27 per cent to ads. The largest news space was in the *Chandrika* (85.56 per cent) and the largest advertisement space was in the *Malayala Manorama* (51.77 per cent). It was found that the *Malayala Manorama* devoted below 50 per cent of the total printed area to news. Three-fourth of the newshole (76.89 per cent) of the dailies belonged to hard news i.e., matter of fact reporting of events and happenings.

Features (16.39 per cent) took the second largest share of the newshole followed by editorials (2.70 per cent), readers views (2.25 per cent) and miscellaneous (1.77 per cent). The study revealed that space provided to news was the largest in the *Kerala Kaumudi* (83.78 per cent). Analysis of themes of news items found that all the newspapers gave prominence to politics. News about political parties and their activities constituted more than 15 per cent of the newshole. Sports news appeared second in order of importance in *Malayala Manorama* and the *Mathrubhumi*.³⁰

Kumar did a content analysis of selected Malayalam dailies in 1993 to study the regional character of Malayalam dailies. He found that regional news occupied 34.3 per cent of the cumulative newshole. Malayalam dailies except *Deepika* devoted the

²⁹ Radhakrishnan D. and Ranjan S. Karippai, *The Role of Newspaper in Transfer of Agricultural Technologies*, Dept. of Agricultural Extension, College of Horticulture, Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur, 2001.

³⁰ Rosamma Joseph, *A study of Libraries' Information Needs and Use of Information Sources in Newspaper Establishments in Kerala*, University of Calicut, 1990, p 67.

largest space for area news. The study showed that not only the party owned papers but also the business house papers gave maximum space for interpretative news and features.³¹

The case of developmental news in three Malayalam dailies was investigated by Rajesh in 1996. He found that *Kerala Kaumudi* gave more developmental news than *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi*. Education received second priority in *Kaumudi* whereas the second priority of *Malayala Manorama* was technical and scientific development and that of *Mathrubhumi* was rural and urban development. Family planning and housing were the most neglected developmental sub-categories in all the newspapers.³²

From the foregoing literature survey it emerges that the Malayalam dailies provide prime place for regional news followed by national and international news. In that, it is the hard news i.e., matter of fact reporting of events and issues that was programmed far more regularly than other categories of news such as features, columns etc. In terms of subject matter of news, the Malayalam newspapers tended to give prominence to politics than other subject matter categories. Most of these studies unfailingly point out that the proximity news value matters most in programming news in Malayalam dailies. This practice is not specific to the Malayalam press. Newspapers around the world follow a similar practice.

STUDIES ON NEWS VALUES

While the above studies affirm the importance of proximity in news programming practices of newspapers, there are a couple of studies which primarily investigated the importance of selected news values from the perspective of readers. One such study is by Straughan and Murdoch. In 1986, they conducted an experimental study to examine whether the presence of certain news values affects readers interest in news stories. The news values they examined were timeliness, prominence, cultural proximity and conflict. The reader interest in news was measured by the scored value of a manufactured news item. Forty sets of such news items were created,

³¹ Ajithkumar. K., *Content Analysis of Selected Malayalam Dailies*, Dept. Mass Communication, University of Calicut, 1993.

³² Rajesh E., *A Content Analysis of Developmental News in Three Malayalam Dailies*, Dept. of Mass Communication, University of Calicut, 1996, p 28.

each set consisting of an experimental item that included a news value or a pair of news values; and corresponding news item without the news values. The subjects of the studies were 240 undergraduate students of an introductory mass communication course at a University in the southern United States. They were divided into an experimental group, which read the news item containing news values, and a control group, which read the item with no values. All subjects then completed separate questionnaires on reader interest. Results indicated that the presence of news items containing conflict and proximity news values scored significantly higher in reader interest than items that did not contain these news values. Additionally, all combinations of the experimental news items, except for the combination of timeliness/prominence, were scored significantly higher than the control combination items. Results also showed a significant relationship between frequency of viewing television news and interest in foreign news.³³

David, in 1997, conducted an experimental study to investigate the relationship between news recall and high-imagery news language and pictures. For this purpose, subjects were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (high-imagery copy with pictures; high imagery copy without pictures; low imagery copy with pictures; low imagery copy without pictures) and asked to read the stories as they would normally read other newspaper stories. They were then asked to re-call as much of the target story as they could. The recall test was followed by a manipulation check on the imagery-evoking potential of the high and low imagery versions of the target story. Manipulation checks for the target stories were conducted in the no-picture condition. In addition to an 11-item imagery index that tapped quantity, ease and vividness of the images evoked by the target stories, subjects also evaluated the high and low imagery versions on three other scales: comprehensibility of the story, its meaningfulness and the interest in the story. The order of presentation of the high and low imagery version was counterbalanced between subjects. The results suggested that there was a significant gain in re-call from the addition of either visual imagery through pictures or verbal imagery through high-imagery language. Surprisingly, the addition of both visual and verbal imagery all the same time did not yield the expected additive effect. The results also indicted

³³ Straughan and Dulcie Murdock, 'A study of News Values and their Effect on Reader Interests in Third World News', *American Journalism Review*, March 1999, pp 23-27.

that imagery induced by news language can be as potent as visual images. This means that relative to sterile, non-imagistic writing, well-composed verbal stories with imagery-evoking language might facilitate recall and learning. From the standpoint of memory and comprehension, if reporters had more freedom to use high-imagery language, even at the expense of slightly departing from conventional norms of reporting, there could be some tangible payoffs.³⁴

READERSHIP STUDIES

There are plenty of studies that have investigated the nature of readership of Malayalam dailies. Most of these studies are by journalism students pursuing post graduate courses. In 1994, Devi conducted a survey of Malayalam newspaper readers and their reading preferences and patterns. She found that the readers of Malayalam dailies attached very high importance to newspapers, the mean affinity being a high of 3.90. This suggests that people in Kerala rely heavily on newspapers for information on day to- day events and issues happening nearer home and in far away places. The readers of *Malayala Manorama*, *Kerala Kaumudi* and *Chandrika* gave first preference to area news whereas the readers of *Mathrubhumi* and *Deshabhimani* gave first preference to regional news. From her content analysis it is clear that the newspapers allotted maximum space to regional news followed by area news, national news and international news.³⁵

In 1993, Suresh studied the influence of editorials of Malayalam dailies. He found that very few people read editorials to form an opinion. People mostly read editorials to get more information on an issue. Majority of readers read it to understand the stand taken by the newspaper. Most readers agreed that some editorials have an influence on their views.³⁶

Another student-scholar Rajeev conducted a study on the readership of political news in Malayalam newspapers in 1996. He found that periodicity of reading

³⁴ David, 'Pictures, High Imagery News Language and News Recall', *Newspaper Research Journal*, Ohio, July, 1998.

³⁵ Maya Devi. S, *A Survey of Malayalam Newspaper Readers: Reading Preferences and Patterns*, Dept. of Mass Communication, University of Calicut, p 50.

³⁶ Sushil Suresh, *A Study on the Influence of Editorials*, Dept. of Mass Communication, University of Calicut, 1993, p 45.

political news was high among the males than the females. Majority of the readers ranked political news as their first preference. It was found that majority of readers were regular readers of political cartoons while editorials and articles/columns on politics were read occasionally.³⁷

Sreela on the other hand did a study on the impact of news on crime against women in Malayalam newspapers in 2003. She found that all respondents read news on crime against women and they read it fully. 44 per cent of respondents believed that newspapers try to suppress facts while reporting crime against women. Most of the readers (75 per cent) opined that newspapers give most prominence to news on sexual harassment. The readers complained that news reports on crime against women as incomplete and impartial and were being used to increase the circulation of newspapers.³⁸

Anil studied the status of environmental reporting in Malayalam newspapers in 1997. He found that among the Malayalam newspapers, *Mathrubhumi* and *Madhyamam* gave more coverage to environmental stories in terms of space and frequency. But in-depth articles and investigative reports on environmental issues were very few. Malayalam press gave importance to events rather than issues. The dailies did not pay much attention to major environmental issues like pollution.³⁹

A study on the feasibility of read 'N' record method in determining newspaper reading preferences was done by Lakshmi Panicker in 1994. Her study demonstrated that the feasibility of using the read 'N' record method in determining what readers actually read. In that study, she compared the results of both the read 'N' record survey and that of the questionnaire survey. She found that the two methods came up with different results suggesting that one of the two methods was better than the other. However the read 'N' record method appeared to be

³⁷ Rajeev V.K., *A Study on the Readership of Political News in Malayalam Newspapers*, Dept. of Mass Communication, University of Calicut, 1996, p 60.

³⁸ Sreela K. Nair, *A Study on the Impact of News on Crime Against Women in Malayalam Newspapers*, Dept. of Mass Communication, University of Calicut, 2003, p 69.

³⁹ Anil M., *The Status of Environmental Reporting in Malayalam Dailies*, Dept. of Mass Communication, University of Calicut, 1997. p 63.

advantageous as it discovers what people actually read, rather than they say they do.⁴⁰

STUDIES ON THE READER - EDITOR GAP

The field of gatekeeping in newspapers has been a subject of scores of studies in the west since early 1950s. In early studies, researchers (White 1950, Geber 1956) focused on large number of items that failed to gain entry and on the reasons for exclusion.⁴¹ In those studies there was a tendency to emphasise the subjective character of news selection decisions. Later, more attention was given to systematic influences on selection that can be considered as either organisational or ideological. The former refers primarily to bureaucratic routines, the latter to values and cultural influences which are not purely individual and personal but which stem from the social setting of news activity.

Subsequent research clearly demonstrated that the content of news media usually follows a predictable pattern and that different organization behave in a similar way when confronted by the same events and under equivalent conditions. There appears to be a stable perception on the part of news decision makers about what is likely to interest an audience and a good deal of consensus within the same social-cultural setting (Hetherington, 1985). A condition for this generalization is one of limited diversity within the media systems a whole.⁴²

Gatekeeping Studies

Although the first gatekeeping studies presumed that news selection was guided by an expert assessment of what would interest audiences, there has been mixed support for this view. Research comparing audience interests in news topics and editorial judgement of the same subject matter has shown wide mismatching (Bogart 1979, Hargrove and Stempel 2002, Robinson and Levy, 1986).⁴³ A comparison

⁴⁰ Lakshmi Panicker, *A Study on the Feasibility of Read 'N' Record in Determining Newspaper Reading Preferences*, Dept. of Mass Communication, University of Calicut, 1994, p 35.

⁴¹ Cited by James A. Anderson and Timothy P. Mayor, *Mediated Communication: A Social Action Perspective*, Sage, London, 1988, pp 106-108.

⁴² Cited by Arthur Asa Berger, *Essentials of Mass Communication Theory*, Sage, London, 1995, p 31.

⁴³ Cited by James A. Anderson and Timothy P. Mayor, *Mediated Communication: A Social Action Perspective*, Sage, London, 1988, pp 211-220.

between editors and readers of 'top stories' as polled in the USA for 1995-1999 showed 48 per cent agreement and no correlation between audience interest in news and actual coverage (Tai and Chang, 2002).⁴⁴ Based on the findings they concluded that US editors did not give audiences what they wanted.

If that is the case in the US, what is it like in India? Do Indian newspapers provide news which meets the needs and expectations of their readers. In other words, do readers of Indian newspapers pay a similar attention and importance to news as ascribed to by the editors?

Answers to these questions are not available yet. Therefore, this study seeks to explore and determine the degree of consonance between editorial practices and reading preferences in the context of Indian newspapers with specific reference to Malayalam dailies.

⁴⁴ Tai and Chang, 'Top Stories: The Reader - Editor Agreement', *Journalism Quarterly*, July 2002, p 22.

THE STUDY METHOD

THIS STUDY seeks to determine the extent of convergence between the various categories of news content programmed by Malayalam newspapers and their readers' preferences in reading such content. Such an effort will provide valuable insight into the relationship between Malayalam newspaper's news programming practices and reader's reading patterns and preferences.

OBJECTIVES

Thus this study attempts to clarify whether newspaper readers' attach a similar kind of importance to various news content categories as decided upon and displayed by the editors. More specifically the objectives of this study are :

1. To find out newspapers news programming practices in relation to various categories of news content
2. To find out the readers' preferences in relation to the various categories of news content
3. To ascertain the relationship between the news programming practices of the selected dailies and readers' preferences in reading the programmed content.

The above objectives call for a content analysis of sampled dailies and a survey among their readers.

Through content analysis, the newspaper's news programming practices as manifest in the news selected and displayed on various pages will be ascertained. As described in the first chapter, the manifest content relating to local, regional, national and international events in different areas of life undoubtedly is a product of the news values and the editorial policies of the newspapers concerned. After ascertaining the manifest content through content analysis, the study will conduct a survey among the readers of the newspapers concerned to determine their preferences in reading various categories of the news content. The last and most

important part of the study is to investigate the nature of relationship between the news programming practices of the newspapers and their readers' news reading preferences.

The results of such an analysis would indicate whether the news reading preferences match with the editorial judgements.

As similar studies have not been done yet, this study is conceived as an exploratory one. Hence it was decided to confine the study to Malayalam dailies which command a large readership among the Indian language newspapers.

SAMPLED DAILIES

The two leading Malayalam dailies namely, *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* were purposively selected from among the dailies published in Kerala as of 2005. The choice of these two dailies was based on the criteria of circulation. According to ABC report of July-December 2005, *Malayala Manorama* topped the chart with a gross circulation of 13,95,191 copies. And, *Mathrubhumi* with a daily circulation of 10,40,183 copies had the second position.⁴⁵ Together, these dailies account for more than 65 per cent of the total readership in Kerala. Hence, a detailed study of these dailies was considered sufficient to investigate the study objectives.

The two sampled dailies have in fact been the leading news providers to millions of their readers ever since their establishment. Both the dailies have multi editions and a network of news bureaus across India and abroad. A fierce and healthy competition between them has helped each one maintain and increase its readership despite the slow and steady growth of other Malayalam dailies such as *Kerala Kaumudi*, *Deshabhimani*, *Madhyamam* and *Mangalam* etc.

The sampled dailies have high quality printing facilities and latest technologies for the transmission of data between various units. Both the dailies are published simultaneously from several centers in Kerala and outside.

⁴⁵ *Audit Bureau of Circulation Report*, Jan-June 2006 ABC, Mumbai 2006.

For this study, the Kottayam district edition of the dailies was purposively chosen as Kottayam occupies a prominent place in Kerala's mass media scenario. The origin of journalistic activity in the district can be traced back to the middle of the 19th century. *Jnananikshepam*, the first newspaper published by the natives, was brought out from CMS press in Kottayam in 1848. Situated in the middle of Kerala, Kottayam remains a major centre of newspapers and periodicals. Six prominent dailies namely *Malayala Manorama*, *Mathrubhumi*, *Kerala Kaumudi*, *Mangalam*, *Deshabhimani*, *Madhyamam* and *Deepika* are being published from here besides over thirty periodicals. A brief profile of the sampled dailies is detailed below.

Malayala Manorama: *Malayala Manorama* was established in 1888 by Kandathil Varghese Mappilai at Kottayam. The first issue of *Malayala Manorama* was published on 22nd march 1890. *Malayala Manorama* became a bi-weekly in 1901, a tri-weekly on 2nd July 1918 and a daily a decade after.

A part of the family owned private limited company, Malayala Manorama Publications, the daily has 16 printing units in India and abroad. And, it has consistently retained the top position in daily circulation and readership for the last thirty years in Kerala. K.M. Mathew is the Chief Editor and Mammen Mathew, the Editor. In 2007, the Manorama group launched a 24-hour electronic news channel called the MM News and four FM radio stations in Kerala.

Physical Parameters of the Daily: Size: Full dummy (52 cm deep 32 cm wide); Number of pages: 18 and above; Number of columns:8; Column width: 4.2 cm; Supplements and weekly features, on all days except Tuesday (varies from one edition to another).

Editions and Circulation: Thiruvananthapuram-1,42,112; Kollam-1,20,835; Kottayam-3,47,194; Kochi-2,07,859; Thrissur-1,31,180; Palakkad-90,120; Malappuram-79,760; Kozhikode-1,10,591; Mumbai-29,684; Chennai-9,301, Bangalore -18,871; New Delhi-11,739; Kannur-95,945

Total Circulation: **13, 95,191** (ABC – July - December 2005).

Mathrubhumi: The *Mathrubhumi* daily was launched on 18th March 1923 as a tri-weekly by a group of patriots headed by K.P. Kesava Menon. It grew into a full-fledged daily in 1930.

Mathrubhumi, currently owned by the Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Company Limited has 13 printing units in Kerala and outside. Though *Mathrubhumi* daily led in circulation during the sixties, it lost the top position to its main rival *Malayala Manorama* at the end of seventies. But thereafter, it has maintained the second position in circulation and readership. The Mathrubhumi group publishes several other specialized periodicals besides owning a book publishing division and four FM radio stations.

Physical Parameters of the Daily: Size: Full dummy (52 cm deep 32 cm wide); Number of pages: 18 and above; Number of columns: 8; Column width: 4.2 cm; Supplements and weekly features appear on all days except Tuesday (varies from one edition to another).

Editions and Circulation: Thiruvananthapuram-1,24,867; Kollam-79,992; Kottayam-1,22,222; Kochi-1,44,374; Thrissur-1,37,302; Palakkad-72,975; Malappuram-71,358; Kozhikode-1,58,721; Mumbai-23,004; Chennai-5,726; Bangalore -5,954; Kannur-1,28,392

Total Circulation: **10, 40,183** (ABC-July-December 2005).

CONTENT ANALYSIS METHOD

Content analysis is the most versatile research method available for investigating any problem in which the content of communication serves as the basis of inferences. Though being used in a variety of disciplines and areas of specialized enquiry such as biography, linguistics, archaeology, art, music, philately, international relations and information sciences, its wider application remains in its turf i.e., the media studies, in particular newspaper studies.

It won't be wrong, in fact, to say that the content analysis of newspapers is as old as the history of content analysis itself. Its distant antecedents could be found in the studies of Speed (1893), Mathews (1810) and Tenney (1912), which were devoted

to the evaluation of press performance and trends in its contents. Following these pioneering studies; content analysis emerged as a systematic, objective and quantitative method for studying and analyzing the manifest content communication for the purpose of measuring variables.

Study in Two Laps

As is well known, the editorial judgements based on the editorial policies of the newspaper would remain constant in selection and display of news content. But the end product of such judgements would vary depending upon the news value of the news stories that break each day. Thus the newspapers' content and the way it is displayed on the pages vary from one day to another. Therefore, content studies meant to investigate programming practices of newspapers must not be restricted to a single day. At the minimum, such studies must be carried out for two days spread across a sufficiently longer period. Hence in this study, the content analysis was carried out for two purposively chosen days during August 2005. The first lap of the study was on August 2nd 2005. A fortnight later, the second lap of the study was conducted, i.e., on August 18th 2005.

The descriptive data of lap I and II was independently prepared to check whether the news programming practices of the two dailies were similar across two laps. While auditing the newspaper's programming practices with the reader's reading practices, the lap I and II data was merged to constitute the aggregate data.

To ascertain the reader's preferences in reading various news contents programmed on August 2nd and 18th, a survey among the readers was conducted the very next day, i.e., on August 3rd and 19th respectively.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was a news item. Each item was counted as a single unit including its headline, body and pictures. Pictures with captions were also counted as news items. Here in this study, the content was classified into various categories of news as given below.

I. Generic Categories of Content

1. **Straight News:** Matter of fact rendering of events/happenings as they unfold.
2. **Features:** This includes content which does not follow the news style in presentation and is displayed with or without pictures. These are not matter of facts pieces; they elaborate, define or explain and provide background information with or without comments, observations and arguments.
3. **Letters:** Express the views of the reader.
4. **Editorials:** They express the views of the Editor/Newspaper.

II. Geographic Categories of Content

1. **Local News:** News originating from the district headquarters or the place of publication and elsewhere with relevance to the area of publication.
2. **Regional News:** News originating from within the state of Kerala, and which has relevance to the State.
3. **National News:** News about the Nation (India) irrespective of its origin.
4. **International News:** News originating outside India with an international significance. News relating to India having international importance also come under this category.
5. **Others:** Those which do not come under the above defined category.

III. Subject Matter Categories of Content

1. **Domestic Politics:** News about domestic political organizations, politicians, political affairs, political corruptions and scandals
2. **International Politics and Diplomacy:** News about politicians and political parties of countries other than India and about foreign diplomatic relations between and among nations, visit of dignitaries, signing of protocols/agreements etc.
3. **Crime and Terrorism:** News on and about robbery, murder, theft, terrorism, terrorist organizations and efforts to end terrorism etc.

4. **Trade Unions:** News about trade unions, trade union leaders and their activities.
5. **Social Unrest:** News on and about strikes, hartal, bandh, protest meets and marches, police actions on agitators and the like.
6. **Human Interest:** News about odd events, incidents, people and strange happenings.
7. **Education and Social service:** News on and about education, educational institutions, teachers, students, academic activities and about social service activities of institutions and committed persons.
8. **Religion:** News about religions, religious institutions and their activities.
9. **Trade, Industry and Commerce:** News about trade organizations, industry, budget, share markets, financial institutions, inflation and other economic affairs
10. **Accidents and Disasters:** News on and about accidents of all kinds involving humans from all over the world and about natural calamities.
11. **Science, Information Technology and Others:** News on and about the scientific world and Information on technology, new inventions, scientists and other categories.
12. **Military:** news on and about military activities, war and development of new artilleries.
13. **Sports:** News on and about Sports events and sports persons.
14. **Art, Culture & Entertainment:** News on and about various art forms, artists, all kinds of cultural forms, film and TV.

Inter-Coder Reliability

As it is mandatory to determine the intercoder reliability value in content analysis studies, two coders independently coded the news items into three content categories - geographic, generic and subject matter. Using the Cohen's Kappa coefficient formula, the inter coder reliability between the two coders was assessed. Acceptable reliability calls for a coefficient of 0.8. The test of inter-coder reliability

yielded the following co-efficient in respect of the three content categories which were over and above the acceptable co-efficient of 0.8.

1. Geographic category of news: 0.896
2. Generic category of news : 0.885
3. Subject matter category : 0.888

READERSHIP STUDY PROCEDURE

Research has helped in developing techniques by which newspaper content or for that matter the content of broadcasting networks and films can be studied. Techniques to understand the composition of the audience of mass media have been developed. Despite these developments in communication research, media professionals and practitioners continue to ask themselves questions such as, what stories interest my audience. Am I providing content that interest them? And how do my audiences use the content?

Unfortunately an answer to these questions seems to be elusive. Techniques to collect such information as, how many people use a medium, who uses it and to what demographic group the audience belong, have been developed. But techniques to gain knowledge of the usage patterns of content by the audience have not been perfected yet, particularly in the case of the print medium.

While gadgets like the 'audimeter', 'Television meter' and 'people meter' have proved useful in providing almost precise and near dependable data on the usage pattern of radio and TV, the print media continue to rely on surveys for information on the usage pattern of their content.

But surveys cannot attain the precision of electronic devices in determining how newspapers are read , which stories are read in what sequence, do readers give them the same importance to stories as given by the editors, what type of stories are read and to which one do the readers give top priority? To these and similar questions, surveys gather information by asking questions.

Responses are determined by what questions are asked and how they are asked. Innumerable experiments have been conducted to study how response patterns are

affected by changes in question stimuli. Researchers are aware of the loopholes inherent in questionnaire surveys. Close-ended questions force respondents to conform their answers to one of the choices determined by the researcher, while open-ended questions bring a variety of responses that make data analysis difficult.

These are just a few problems inherent in surveys undertaken to determine the news reading patterns among the readers. Other problems such as 'tendencies to select extremes', 'perseverance in the physical location of responses', 'response bias' produced by response acquiescence set have all been studied and warned against.

Researchers have evolved techniques to overcome these deficiencies in questionnaire surveys. The two such methods commonly used are 'aided recall' and 'self-administered' readership survey.

The aided recall method is restricted to assessing the readership of selected items. Here the interviewer shows clippings of particular items and finds out which stories the respondent remembers to have read. In the self-administered readership survey the respondents answer pre-determined set of questions.

Hybrid Aided Recall Method

This study used a hybrid method in which the respondents were administered a structured questionnaire to elicit data on their socio-demographic variables as well as newspaper reading habits. In addition, the study adopted a novel aided recall method to ascertain readers' reading patterns and preferences of news content. The novelty of this method being, that the respondents were supplied with a copy of their previous day's newspaper wherein each news item had been chronologically numbered. And, they were instructed to scan the newspaper and mark the news items read by them the previous day in all the pages. This method was bound to give far more accurate responses as the readers' had with them the copy of the daily which they had read the previous day. As a result, it was easier for them to recall with greater certainty the order in which they read the various news items. Using this novel method, the data was collected in two laps.

As pointed out in the introductory section of this chapter, there was a need to conduct the readership survey to determine the extent to which the news programming practices match reader's preferences in reading the content programmed by the dailies in lap I and II, ie, on August 2nd and 18th respectively. Accordingly, readership survey was conducted among the readers of *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* in two laps. The lap I readership survey was done on August 3rd and the lap II survey on August 19th.

The investigator prepared a questionnaire to elicit information regarding the demography and reading habits of the respondents. The questionnaire was pre-tested and a code sheet was prepared to mark the reading patterns of the readers during the survey.

Sample for Survey

A multi-staged sampling procedure was adopted to arrive at the sample for the survey. As Kottayam district editions of *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* were chosen for the content analysis, the readership survey had to be conducted among the readers of Kottayam district editions. Therefore, a quota of 150 readers was assigned to each of the dailies. Given the fact that the Kottayam district editions' readers are spread across Kottayam town and four other municipalities, samples from each of these areas had to be selected.

The Kottayam municipality being comparatively larger in its geography and population, it was divided into two areas – Kottayam I and Kottayam II. A quota of 25 respondents each was fixed for Kottayam I and II and the other four municipalities namely, Changanasseri, Vaikom, Kanjirappalli and Pala.

In each of the six areas, one residential locality was purposively chosen so as to include readers belonging to divergent socio-economic backgrounds. In the next stage of the sampling procedure, a list of regular subscribers of the two dailies was obtained from the news agents of the respective areas, and from each list a random sample of 25 respondents was chosen to constitute the ultimate sample of 150 for each daily in both the laps.

The respondents were administered a structured questionnaire to gather data on their socio-demographic traits and media reading habits (see Appendix - I). To ascertain the reading patterns and preferences, the study, as explained earlier, adopted a novel method better than the most commonly used aided-recall method. In that, to make the recall easier and at the same time accurate, the respondents were supplied with a copy of their previous days newspaper in which each news item had been chronologically numbered. And, they were asked to mark the news items they read in all the pages the previous day.

The respondents of the first lap (August 3rd) were again approached to collect data of the second lap on August 19th. The marked copies of the lap I and II newspapers were collected and the chronological number of items identified as “read” by each of the respondents had been assigned a number.

The lap I and II data relating to the reader’s reading practices was merged to constitute the aggregate data. The content analysis data and readership data was compared to realize the study objectives.

The data was subjected to appropriate statistical tests to ascertain the significance of the study results as detailed in the succeeding chapter.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

In the absence of any major study on the relationship between news programming practices and reader’s news reading patterns, the present study assumes importance. Yet another salient feature of the study lies in its two fold methodology of conducting content analysis and comparing its results with results of the readership survey. This study perhaps for the first time employed an improved aided recall method by presenting the readers with a copy of the newspaper they read the previous day to identify the news items read by them.

This study, being exploratory in nature is confined to Malayalam press and its readers. This remains a limitation of the study. The reader sample was small and confined to one locale. Notwithstanding these limitations, this study provides pointers to conduct studies on a large scale to ascertain whether the news reading patterns and preferences of readers’ match with the news programming practices of Indian dailies.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

THE STUDY objectives called for a content analysis and a readership survey of the selected Malayalam dailies namely, *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi*. While content analysis was carried out to meet the first objective of determining the news programming practices of the selected dailies, readership survey was aimed at finding out readers' preferences in reading the programmed content and their reading patterns. Yet another objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between news reading pattern and preferences.

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DATA

As detailed in the earlier chapter, content analysis of *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* was carried out in two laps, Aug 2nd and Aug 18th of 2005. The unit of analysis was a news item, with or without pictures.

Each item was independently read and classified by two coders into the generic, geographic and subject matter categories of news. Using the method developed by Cohen (1966), the coding decisions of the two coders was compared to determine the inter coder reliability. According to this method, acceptable reliability calls for a co-efficient over 0.80. The merged data (Lap I and Lap II) was subjected to this test. The intercoder reliability between the coders was significantly high: 0.885 for the generic categories; 0.896 for the geographic categories and 0.888 for the subject matter categories of news content.

To examine whether the contents of lap 1 would be similar to the contents of lap II in the sampled dailies, the analysis was done without merging the data of the two laps. Wherever it was essential to establish the statistical significance of the similarities and differences in the content of the two dailies across various content categories, the data was subjected to Chi square test of significance. That being the case, lap I and lap II data of the sampled dailies has been compared and contrasted as such to describe their news programming practices. While correlating the sampled dailies' news programming practices with readers' reading patterns and preferences, the

content analysis data of lap I and lap II has been merged to constitute the aggregate data.

In the succeeding units, the first objective of the study pertaining to news programming practices in respect of various content categories has been realized by ascertaining the Ad- News space ratio, quantum of news across pages, quantity of news programmed under three content categories. Also, the aggregate data of lap I and II of the two dailies has been correlated to examine the nature of relationship between the news programming practices of the two dailies.

Table 1: News Space and Advertisement Space in Sampled Dailies

Sampled Dailies	LAP I		Total Space in Col. Cm.	LAP II		Total Space in Col. Cm.	Aggregate of Lap I & II	
	News Space in Col. cm.	Ad. Space in Col. cm.		News Space in Col. Cm.	Ad. Space in Col. Cm.		News Space in Col. Cm.	Ad Space in Col. Cm.
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Malayala Manorama	3239	2361	5600	3191	4409	7600	6430	6770
	(57.84)	(42.16)	(100)	(41.9)	(58.1)	(100)	(48.7)	(51.3)
Mathrubhumi	3650	1950	5600	4205	2195	6400	7855	4145
	(65.1)	(34.9)	(100)	(65.7)	(34.3)	(100)	(65.5)	(34.5)

News Space and Ad Space

The content analysis of the two dailies showed that *Mathrubhumi* had devoted more space for news in comparison with *Malayala Manorama* in both the laps. As could be seen in Table 1, the total news space in *Mathrubhumi* was little more than 65 per cent of the total space in both the laps. In *Malayala Manorama*, the Ad-News ratio was not uniform across the two laps. In lap I, the news space was 57.84 per cent, where as in lap II it was a mere 41.9 per cent. On the whole, among the two dailies, *Mathrubhumi* devoted more space to news than the news space made available in *Malayala Manorama*.

Table 2: News Items in the Sampled Dailies

Sampled Dailies	LAP I No. of News Items (%)	LAP II No. of News Items (%)	Aggregate of Lap I & II No. of News Items (%)
Malayala Manorama	117 (41.5)	147 (48.1)	264 (45.0)
Mathrubhumi	165 (58.5)	158 (51.9)	323 (55.0)
Total	282 (100)	305 (100)	587 (100)

A corollary arising out of the Ad-News space ratio suggested that *Mathrubhumi* should have more news items in relation to *Malayala Manorama*. Infact, as could be seen in Table 2, *Mathrubhumi* had as many as 165 and 158 news items in lap I and II respectively. *Malayala Manorama* on the other hand had lesser number of items: 117 in lap I and 147 in lap II. From the data presented in Table 1 and 2, it follows that *Mathrubhumi* devoted more space to news and thereby programmed more news items as compared to *Malayala Manorama*.

Page-wise Distribution of News Items

On analyzing the distribution of news across pages it was found that both the dailies had no set pattern in displaying the news across the pages. However, some pages had a higher number of stories in both the laps.

As shown in Table 3, it was page 2 devoted to local news which by-and-large featured the largest number of items. The educational pages of both the dailies too had a high quantum of news items (The 11th page in *Mathrubhumi* and 10th page in *Malayala Manorama*). The pages which generally had very few items were the last pages like page 12, 13, 14 and above. These were the pages which had a high concentration of advertisements.

Table 3: Distribution of News Items in Pages

Page No.	Malayala Manorama			Mathrubhumi		
	LAP I	LAP II	Aggregate of Lap I & II	LAP I	LAP II	Aggregate of Lap I & II
	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)
1	7 (6.0)	11 (7.5)	18 (6.8)	8 (4.8)	8 (5.0)	16 (4.9)
2	20 (17.0)	25 (17.0)	33 (12.5)	19 (11.5)	21 (13.2)	40 (12.3)
3	13 (11.1)	14 (9.5)	18 (6.8)	8 (4.8)	13 (8.2)	21 (6.5)
4	14 (11.9)	23 (15.6)	37 (14.0)	5 (3.0)	5 (3.1)	10 (3.1)
5	8 (6.8)	5 (3.4)	13 (4.9)	14 (8.4)	14 (8.8)	28 (8.7)
6	6 (5.1)	6 (4.1)	12 (4.5)	7 (4.2)	6 (3.8)	13 (4.0)
7	15 (12.8)	8 (5.4)	23 (8.7)	9 (5.5)	25 (15.8)	34 (10.5)
8	4 (3.4)	12 (8.2)	16 (6.1)	3 (1.8)	13 (8.2)	16 (4.9)
9	3 (2.6)		3 (1.1)	17 (10.3)	4 (2.5)	21 (6.5)
10	17 (14.5)	7 (4.8)	24 (9.1)	23 (13.9)	13 (8.2)	36 (11.1)
11		23 (15.6)	23 (8.7)	25 (15.1)	10 (6.3)	35 (10.8)
12	1 (0.8)		1 (0.4)	1 (0.7)	9 (5.7)	10 (3.1)
13	8 (6.8)		8 (3.0)	19 (11.5)	9 (5.7)	28 (8.6)
14	1 (0.8)		1 (0.4)	7 (4.2)	1 (0.63)	8 (2.5)
15					4 (2.5)	4 (1.2)
16		1 (0.7)	1 (0.4)		3 (1.9)	3 (0.9)
17		10 (6.8)	10 (3.8)			
18		1 (0.7)	1 (0.4)			
19		1 (0.7)	1 (0.4)			
Total	117 (100)	147 (100)	264 (100)	165 (100)	158 (100)	323 (100)

Distribution of Geographic Categories of News

As pointed out earlier, the news items were read and coded under four geographic categories: local, regional, national and international.

As is well known, language dailies by-and-large are regional in their character and content programming practices. The dailies sampled for this study were no exception. The analysis of geographic categories of news revealed that in both the dailies the largest number of news items belonged to the regional news category followed by local news, national news and international news. This kind of a distribution is explicit in the data presented in Table 4. The number of regional news items programmed in lap I and lap II of both the dailies differed. For instance, in *Malayala Manorama*, 54.7 per cent of the total news items were that of regional news category in lap I. And, in lap II, the quantum of regional news jumped to a high of 70.7 per cent, the highest among the two dailies.

In the case of *Mathrubhumi*, on the other hand, such a high fluctuation was not present. In lap I, regional news items in *Mathrubhumi* accounted for 64.2 per cent of the news items. And, in lap II it slide to 59.5 per cent.

A similar kind of fluctuation was noticed in the case of local news across two laps in both the dailies. The share of local news in *Malayala Manorama* fluctuated from 24.8 per cent in lap I to a low of 18.4 percent in lap II. In the case of *Mathrubhumi* there was a reversal. In lap I, the local news accounted for 16.4 per cent of the news items; whereas in lap II the total news items' share rose to 26.6 per cent.

As pointed out earlier, on the whole national news had only a third place in the programming practices of both the dailies. *Mathrubhumi* was found to have more uniform practice in this regard. In both the laps, the share of national news was about 11.5 per cent, where as in *Malayala Manorama* there were minor variations with national news share fluctuating from 7.7 per cent in lap I to a low 4.8 per cent in lap II.

In the case of programming international news too, the two dailies differed with one similarity. The similarity being that both the dailies had programmed more number of international news items in lap I as compared to lap II. The largest number of

international news items was in lap I of *Malayala Manorama* (12.8 per cent), whereas in *Mathrubhumi* its share was 7.9 per cent. In lap I of *Malayala Manorama*, International news accounted for 12.8 per cent of the total news items. In lap II, the share of international news items plummeted to 6.1 per cent in *Malayala Manorama* and to 2.5 per cent in *Mathrubhumi*.

Table 4: Geographic Categories of News Items

Geographic Categories	Malayala Manorama			Mathrubhumi		
	LAP I	LAP II	Aggregate of Lap I & II	LAP I	LAP II	Aggregate of Lap I & II
	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)
1. Local News	29 (24.8)	27 (18.4)	56 (21.2)	27 (16.4)	42 (26.6)	69 (21.4)
2. Regional News	64 (54.7)	104 (70.7)	168 (63.6)	106 (64.2)	94 (59.5)	200 (61.9)
3. National News	80 (7.7)	7 (4.8)	16 (9.2)	19 (11.5)	18 (11.4)	37 (11.5)
4. International News	15 (12.8)	9 (6.1)	24 (6.0)	13 (7.9)	4 (2.5)	17 (5.3)
Total	117 (100)	147 (100)	264 (100)	165 (100)	158 (100)	323 (100)
$\chi^2 : 68.354, df -3, P < 0.001$				$\chi^2 : 8.625 df -3 P = 0.035$		

But in respect of the quantum of national and international news programmed the dailies differed. In *Malayala Manorama*, international news items had the third largest share of the newshole while national news items had the least share. On the contrary, in *Mathrubhumi* the third highest items in the newshole belonged to national news, and the least number of items belonged to international news category.

The distribution of news items under the four geographic categories in lap I and II of both the dailies was independently subjected to Chi square test of significance. The results indicated that the distribution of items in the four categories across the laps was statistically significant. From this it follows that the two dailies more or less adopt a set practice in programming various geographic categories of news. In that, both the dailies gave top priority to regional news followed by local news, in both the

laps. This finding is similar to the one detected by George (1967), Vilanilam (1981) and Ahmed and Subash (1985).

Distribution of Generic Categories of News

The generic news in both the dailies was coded into five categories: straight news, features, letters, editorials and others.

Since the daily newspapers have the prime function of reporting the day-to-day events to their audience, it is quite natural to expect the sampled dailies to pay prime importance to straight news. And, that was what the analysis revealed.

Table 5: Generic Categories of News Items

Generic Categories	Malayala Manorama			Mathrubhumi		
	LAP I	LAP II	Aggregate of Lap I & II	LAP I	LAP II	Aggregate of Lap I & II
	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)
1. Straight News	105 (89.7)	140 (5.2)	245(92.8)	155 (93.9)	144 (91.1)	299 (92.6)
2. Features	9 (7.7)	5 (3.4)	14 (5.3)	8 (4.8)	8 (5.1)	16 (4.9)
3. Letters	1 (0.9)	1 (0.7)	2 (0.8)	0	0	0
4. Editorials	1 (0.9)	1 (0.7)	2 (0.8)	2 (1.3)	2 (1.3)	4 (1.2)
5. Others	1 (0.9)	0	1 (0.4)	0	4 (2.5)	4 (1.2)
Total	117 (100)	147(100)	264 (100)	165 (100)	158 (100)	323 (100)
$X^2: 2.94$ df = 1 P=0.086				$X^2: 0.920$ df = 1 P = 0.337		

Note: As the frequencies of items under letters, editorials and others being less than five, these were collapsed with the features' category to determine the Chi square value. It is therefore the "df" is noted as 1.

The data given in Table 5 clearly demonstrates that the prime concern of both *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* in both the laps was on providing straight news about events and issues of the previous day to their readers. However, the quantum of straight news in the dailies differed. In *Mathrubhumi*, the straight news accounted for 93.9 and 91.1 per cent of the news items in lap I and II respectively. In

Malayala Manorama, on the other hand straight news accounted for a high 95.2 per cent in lap II as against a low of 89.7 per cent in lap I. The share of other four generic categories - features, letters, editorials and others - was minimal. In the case of *Mathrubhumi*, these four generic categories accounted for less than 10 per cent of the news items in both the laps. In *Malayala Manorama* these four generic categories had a higher share in lap I than lap II.

On subjecting the data to Chi square analysis, it was found that *Malayala Manorama* did not differ in programming of the various generic categories of news across the two laps. This is indicative of a similarity in the quantum of generic categories of news programmed by *Malayala Manorama* across different periods. Similar was the practice followed by *Mathrubhumi* as indicated by the Chi square results.

Analysis of Subject Matter Categories of News

The content was classified into 14 subject matter categories as described in the methodology chapter.

On analyzing the quantum of various subject matter categories of news programmed by *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* across two laps, it was evident that both the dailies had given priority, though of a varying nature, to the news categories such as domestic politics, education/social service, sports, arts/culture/entertainment, crime, trade unions, accidents/disasters and science/IT/others. The remaining subject matter categories had received relatively lesser importance by the dailies.

But the two dailies differed in their programming practices in lap I and lap II. For instance *Malayala Manorama* had programmed highest number stories (17.1 percent) on domestic politics in lap I against 10.2 per cent in lap II (see Table 6). The second dominant news was related to education/social service. The third, fourth and fifth place's belonged to arts/culture/entertainment, sports, trade/ industry/commerce and accidents/ disasters respectively.

Table 6: Subject Matter Categories of News Items

Subject Matter Categories	Malayala Manorama			Mathrubhumi		
	LAP I	LAP II	Aggregate of Lap I & II	LAP I	LAP II	Aggregate of Lap I & II
	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)
1. Domestic Politics	20 (17.1)	15 (10.2)	35 (13.3)	27 (16.4)	30 (19.0)	57 (17.6)
2. International Politics & Diplomacy	5 (4.3)	9 (6.1)	14 (5.3)	4 (2.4)	6 (3.8)	10 (3.1)
3. Crime & Terrorism	7 (5.9)	10 (6.8)	17 (6.4)	13 (7.9)	22 (13.9)	35 (10.8)
4. Trade Unions	8 (6.8)	12 (8.2)	20 (7.6)	11 (6.6)	16 (10.1)	27 (8.4)
5. Social Unrest	1 (0.9)	2 (1.4)	3 (1.1)	1 (0.7)	3 (1.9)	4 (1.2)
6. Human Interest	3 (2.6)	4 (2.7)	7 (2.7)	4 (2.4)	18 (11.4)	22 (6.8)
7. Education & Social Service	18 (15.4)	19 (12.9)	37 (14.0)	29 (17.5)	6 (3.8)	25 (10.8)
8. Religion	6 (5.1)	8 (5.4)	14 (5.3)	7 (4.2)	4 (2.5)	11 (3.4)
9. Trade, Industry and Commerce	8 (6.8)	7 (4.8)	15 (5.7)	10 (6.1)	10 (6.3)	20 (6.2)
10. Accidents & Disasters	8 (6.8)	10 (6.8)	18 (6.8)	10 (6.1)	15 (9.5)	25 (7.7)
11. Science , IT & Others	5 (4.3)	18 (12.2)	23 (8.7)	12 (7.3)	11 (6.9)	23 (8.7)
12. Military	5 (4.3)	6 (4.1)	11 (4.2)	6 (3.6)	7 (4.4)	13 (4.0)
13. Sports	10 (8.5)	12 (8.2)	22 (8.3)	15 (9.1)	3 (1.9)	18 (5.6)
14. Art, Culture & Entertainment	13 (11.1)	15 (10.2)	28 (10.6)	16 (9.7)	7 (4.4)	23 (7.1)
Total	117 (100)	147 (100)	264 (100)	165 (100)	158 (100)	323 (100)
$X^2 : 10.277$ df=17 P=0.892				$X^2 : 45.526$ df=16 P=0.001		

In lap II, on the other hand the largest number of news items belonged to the category of education/social service followed by science/ IT/ others (12.2 per cent). In lap I, science/IT/others accounted for a small share of 4.3 percent of the news items.

Tied for the fourth position were the news of trade union activities and sports (8.2 per cent each). The other important subject matter categories which had a fair share in both the laps were crime/terrorism, religion and military.

From the aggregate data for lap I & II , it follows that for *Malayala Manorama*, news relating to education/social service mattered most (14 per cent) followed by domestic politics (13.3 per cent), arts/culture/entertainment(10.6 per cent), science/IT/others (8.7 per cent), sports(8.3 per cent), trade unions (7.6) and accidents/disasters (6.8 per cent). The rest of the items had a relatively lesser share in the *Malayala Manorama's* news hole. Such differences however were not statistically significant (see Chi square result).

The case of *Mathrubhumi* was different in respect of its programming practices relating to the subject matter categories. The share of various subject matter categories in lap I and II was found to be statistically significant (see Chi square result). The comparison of the two laps data indicated that news on education/social service was the top subject matter category as it accounted for 17.5 per cent of the news items. The category of domestic politics was the second most salient one (16.4 per cent) followed by art/culture/entertainment (9.7 per cent).

The category of crime and sports were tied for the fourth position. The next important subject matter category in *Mathrubhumi* was science/IT/others.

In lap II, the first place belonged to domestic politics (19 per cent) followed by crime and terrorism (13.9 per cent) and news on human interest (11.4 per cent). The other important subject matter categories in lap II were news relating to trade union activities, accidents/disasters and trade/industry/commerce in that order. In lap II, sports was tied for the eighth position though it had ranked third in lap I.

In the aggregate data of lap I and II domestic politics had the lion's share (17.6 per cent) of news items. The second most predominant news was that of news relating

to crime/terrorism and education/social service (10.5 per cent each). The next important positions were that of the news concerning trade union activities, accidents/disasters, science/IT/others and arts/culture/entertainment. The other categories of news items in the aggregate data had relatively lesser salience.

Pictorial Support

The practice of providing pictures to support news stories as well as presenting them independently with cut lines as a page brightening device is a popular practice among dailies worldwide.

From the analysis, it emerges that the incidence of providing news stories with pictures was confined to a few stories in both the dailies. The highest incidence was in *Malayala Manorama* as compared to *Mathrubhumi* (see Table 7). The practice of publishing pictures alone as independent news stories was also relatively high in *Malayala Manorama*.

Table 7: Pictorial Support for the News Items

News Stories	Malayala Manorama			Mathrubhumi		
	LAP I	LAP II	Aggregate of Lap I & II	LAP I	LAP II	Aggregate of Lap I & II
	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)	No. of Items (%)
With Picture	19 (16.2)	18 (12.2)	37 (14.0)	12 (7.3)	10 (6.3)	22 (6.8)
Without Picture	93 (79.5)	126 (85.7)	219 (83.0)	151 (91.5)	147 (93.5)	298 (92.2)
Picture Only	5 (4.3)	3 (2.1)	8 (3.0)	2 (1.2)	1 (0.7)	3 (1.0)
Total	117 (100)	147 (100)	264 (100)	165 (100)	158 (100)	323 (100)
$X^2 : 2.118 \text{ df}=2 \text{ P}=0.347$				$X^2 : 0.417 \text{ df}=2 \text{ P}=0.812$		

The programming practices of the two dailies in publishing pictures with stories and independently differed between lap I and II. But the differences were not statistically significant. Thus it follows that the practice of publishing news without pictures, with pictures, and pictures only across two laps was similar between the dailies. In that,

the aggregate of lap I and II indicates incidence of publishing stories without pictures was varied from 83 per cent of items in *Malayala Manorama* to 92.2 per cent of items in *Mathrubhumi*. As a result, *Malayala Manorama* had provided pictorial support to 14 per cent of stories as compared to *Mathrubhumi* which had provided pictorial support to 6.8 per cent of stories. The incidence of publishing pictures alone as independent stories was the highest in *Malayala Manorama* followed by *Mathrubhumi*.

Having ascertained the programming practices of the two sampled dailies in respect of various content categories across two laps, the analysis will now correlate the aggregate data of lap I and II of the dailies in respect of the three content categories. Such a correlation will point out to the degree of relationship between the two dailies in respect of their news programming practices. This aspect forms the focus of the succeeding section.

CORRELATION OF EDITORIAL PRACTICES BETWEEN DAILIES

The aggregate data of lap I and II presented in Table 4 to 7 is taken to represent the programming practices of the sampled dailies in relation to various geographic, generic, and subject matter categories of news. And, the quantum of news programmed therein reflects their editorial practices in giving varying importance to events that unfolds on a daily basis at home and in far away places in a plethora of subject areas.

This section seeks to ascertain the possible existence of linear relationship between the editorial programming practices of the two sampled dailies. For this purpose, the aggregate data of the three content categories of the two dailies has been described independently in the light of the results of the Pearson correlation test.

Editorial Practices: Geographic Categories of News

The data presented in Table 8 points out that the sampled dailies being regional in character and content carried far larger number of regional news than local, national and international news stories.

Table 8: The Editorial Practices: Geographic Categories of News

Geographic Categories	Malayala Manorama	Mathrubhumi
	Total no. of Items (%)	Total no. of Items (%)
1. Local News	56 (21.2)	69 (21.4)
2. Regional News	168 (63.6)	200 (61.9)
3. National News	16 (6.2)	37 (11.5)
4. International News	24 (6.0)	17 (5.2)
Total	264 (100)	323 (100)

Pearson $r = 0.989$; $P = 0.01$ (Two Tailed)

The share of regional news accounted for a high of 63.6 per cent of total items in *Malayala Manorama* as against 61.9 per cent in *Mathrubhumi*. They had attached the second important position to local news. News relating to events and issues of international significance had a third dominant position in *Malayala Manorama* in contrast to the fourth position this category had in *Mathrubhumi*. Similar was the case of national news which had the third dominant position in *Mathrubhumi* as against the fourth position it had in *Malayala Manorama*. These minor differences notwithstanding, the Pearson correlation test showed that the programming of four geographical categories of news by the two dailies correlated highly with one another indicating to similarities in their editorial practices.

Editorial Practices: Generic Categories of News

As seen Table 9, both dailies carried more number of straight news (92.8 and 92.6 per cent respectively) than other categories such as features, letters, editorials and others. Both dailies had given second most priority to features (5.3 and 4.9 per cent respectively). The Pearson correlation test indicated that the programming of five generic categories of news by the two dailies correlated almost perfectly with one another showing similarity in their editorial practices.

Table 9: The Editorial Practices: Generic Categories of News

Generic Categories	Malayala Manorama	Mathrubhumi
	Total no. of Items (%)	Total no. of Items (%)
1. Straight News	245 (92.8)	299 (92.6)
2. Features	14 (5.3)	16 (4.9)
3. Letters	2 (0.8)	0
4. Editorials	2 (0.8)	4 (1.2)
5. Others	1 (0.4)	4 (1.2)
Total	264 (100)	323 (100)

Pearson $r = 1.00$; $P = 0.01$ (Two Tailed)

Editorial Practices: Subject Matter Categories of News

Of the 14 subject matter categories of news, education/social service stories as well as events and issues of domestic politics were the most dominantly programmed news content in both the dailies. As could be read from table 10, news concerning education/social service which had the largest share (14 per cent) in *Malayala Manorama* had the second priority in *Mathrubhumi's* content programming practice.

The first place in *Mathrubhumi* belonged to domestic politics (17.6 per cent) which in *Malayala Manorama* had the second place in its news hole. The other important categories, though differing in their share of news hole were news on trade unions, accidents/disasters, science/IT/others, crime/terrorism and sports.

News items on and about social unrest, international politics/diplomacy, religion, military and human interest were the least preferred ones in the programming practices of both the dailies. However, the Pearson correlation co-efficient test indicated that both dailies follow more or less a similar programming policy for the subject matter categories of news.

Thus from the above analysis it follows that there existed minor differences in the quantum of different categories of news programmed by the Malayalam dailies. But

on a broader level as demonstrated by the Pearson correlation test their programming practices were by-and-large similar in assigning varying prominence to the different categories of news content.

Table 10: The Editorial Practices: Subject Matter Categories of News

Subject Matter Categories	Malayala Manorama	Mathrubhumi
	Total no. of Items (%)	Total no. of Items (%)
1. Domestic Politics	35 (13.3)	57 (17.6)
2. International Politics & Diplomacy	14 (5.3)	10 (3.1)
3. Crime & Terrorism	17 (6.4)	35 (10.8)
4. Trade Unions	20 (7.6)	27 (8.4)
5. Social Unrest	3 (1.1)	4 (1.2)
6. Human Interest	7 (2.7)	22 (6.8)
7. Education & Social Service	38 (14.0)	35 (10.8)
8. Religion	14 (5.3)	11 (3.4)
9. Trade, Industry and Commerce	15 (5.7)	20 (6.2)
10. Accidents Disasters	18 (6.8)	25 (7.7)
11. Science , IT & others	23 (8.7)	23 (7.1)
12. Military	11 (4.2)	13 (4.1)
13. Sports	22 (8.3)	18 (5.6)
14. Art, Culture & Entertainment	28 (10.6)	23 (7.1)
Total	264 (100)	323 (100)

Pearson $r = 0.75$; $P = 0.01$ (Two Tailed)

Having ascertained the first objective of the news programming practices of the selected dailies, the study will now focus on the second objective of determining readers' preferences in respect of the various content categories. As a pre-requisite to the second objective, readership aspects such as the readers' demographic

features, reading habits, credibility assessment of the newspaper have been determined. Subsequently, the readers' preferences in reading the news content have been gauged to ascertain the second objective of the study. These details form the crux of the next section beginning with sample description, followed by longevity/frequency of reading, reading satisfaction, newspapers' credibility and readers' preferences in reading various content categories.

READERSHIP DATA: SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

As explained in the earlier chapter, a quota sample of 150 each was drawn from among the readers of *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* in Kottayam district. Thus, the total sample size was 300. In lap I of the study, each member of the sample was individually contacted and administered the questionnaire (see appendix) on August 3rd 2005 to elicit data relating to their demographic features and news reading habits. To ascertain their preferences in reading news content programmed by the dailies, they were supplied with a copy of the previous day's newspaper (August 2nd) and were asked to mark the items read by them. The respondents of lap I were met again on August 19th to collect lap II data of the study.

The analysis of the demographic data revealed that male readers constituted 65.3 percent of the sample and the rest were female (see Table 11). The mean age of the sample was 38.2 years. In terms of education, graduates constituted 40 percent of the sample.

Those with Pre-Degree (Plus two) formed 28 per cent of the sample while those with higher qualification of PG and above accounted for 17 per cent of the sample. Readers with qualification up to secondary (SSLC) school formed the smallest proportion (15 per cent) of the sample. Occupation wise teachers constituted the largest group (27.3 per cent) followed by merchants\traders 9.3 per cent, housewives (13.7 per cent) and students (7.7 per cent). Other occupations had a smaller share in the sample.

Table 11: Sample Description

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	196	65.3
Female	104	34.7
Total	300	100
Age (Years)	Mean – 38.2	Median – 36
		Range – 72
Education		
Up to SSLC	45	15.0
Pre-Degree (+2)	84	28.0
Degree	120	40.0
PG and Above	51	17.0
Total	300	100
Occupation		
Students	23	7.7
Housewives	41	13.7
Farmers	30	10.0
Teachers	82	27.3
Engineers	19	6.3
Doctors	14	4.7
Self-Employed	14	4.7
Trade/Merchants	58	19.3
Jobless	14	4.7
Others	5	1.7
Total	300	100

Table 12: Longevity and Frequency of Reading

Variables	Manorama (N = 150)	Mathrubhumi (N = 150)
Longevity of Reading		
Mean	33.5	22.8
Median	30.4	20.1
Range	55.0	35.0
Other Dailies Read	125 (83.3%)	110 (73.3%)
Frequency of Reading		
7 days a week	133 (88.6%)	131 (87.3%)
6 days a week	12 (8%)	15 (10%)
5 days a week	4 (2.6%)	3 (2%)
4 days a week	1 (0.6%)	0
3 days a week	0	1 (0.6%)
2 days a week	0	1 (0.6%)
Total	150 (100%)	150 (100%)

Longevity and Frequency of Reading

The analysis showed that the sampled readers had been reading the sampled dailies for more than two decades. As indicated in Table 12, the mean longevity of *Malayala Manorama* readers was as high as 33.5 years. The reading longevity of *Mathrubhumi* readers was however restricted to 22.8 years. One reason for the low

longevity among *Mathrubhumi* readers could be that the Kottayam edition of the daily was launched only in 1995. The longevity range was a high of 55-22 years for *Malayala Manorama* and 35-33 years for *Mathrubhumi*.

And, reading their newspaper was a daily habit among a large majority of both *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* readers. As shown in table 12, as many as over 88 per cent of *Malayala Manorama* readers and over 87 per cent of *Mathrubhumi* readers were in the habit of reading their newspaper seven days a week. Those who did not read the newspaper daily constituted a small part of the sample of both the dailies. A majority of readers of both the dailies stated that they read other dailies too.

Satisfaction Levels in Reading

The study also gauged the satisfaction index of the sampled readers of both the dailies in respect of the three content categories of news. For this purpose, the readers had been asked to indicate their level of satisfaction as fully satisfied, partially satisfied and not at all satisfied. These three levels of satisfaction were given a score of 2, 1 and 0 respectively. These scores were summed and an index of satisfaction for each of the four geographic categories of news was determined.

Table 13: Index of Satisfaction of Geographic Categories of News

Geographic Categories	Index of Satisfaction	
	Malayala Manorama	Mathrubhumi
1. Local News	227	197
2. Regional News	202	167
3. National News	184	153
4. International News	207	125
Mean Satisfaction Index	205.0	160.5

Index of Satisfaction of Geographic Categories of News

The satisfaction index data presented in Table 13 indicates that *Malayala Manorama* readers were more satisfied with all the four geographic categories of news as compared to *Mathrubhumi* readers.

In both the dailies, the highest satisfaction index was with the local news which was a high of 227 in *Malayala Manorama* and 197 in *Mathrubhumi*. The second highest satisfaction score (207) in *Malayala Manorama* was with International news; where as in *Mathrubhumi*, it was with regional news (167). The lowest satisfaction index (184) in *Malayala Manorama* was with national news. In *Mathrubhumi*, on the other hand, it was international news which had the lowest readers' satisfaction (125).

Table 14: Index of Satisfaction of Generic Categories of News

Generic Categories	Index of Satisfaction	
	Malayala Manorama	Mathrubhumi
1. Straight News	199	188
2. Features	214	122
3. Letters	186	140
4. Editorials& Others	183	128
Mean Satisfaction Index	195.5	144.5

Index of Satisfaction of Generic Categories of News

Using a similar methodology, the index of satisfaction of generic categories of news in both the dailies was determined. As detailed in Table 14, the data suggests that *Malayala Manorama* readers were far more satisfied with the various generic categories of news as compared to the readers of *Mathrubhumi*. However, there were differences in the index of satisfaction between the two dailies in respect of each of the generic categories. The highest satisfaction in the case of *Malayala Manorama* was with features followed by straight news, letters, and editorials/others. But among *Mathrubhumi* readers the highest satisfaction was with straight news followed by letters, editorials/others and features.

Table 15: Index of Satisfaction of Subject Matter Categories of News

Subject Matter Categories	Index of Satisfaction	
	Malayala Manorama	Mathrubhumi
1. Domestic Politics	217	225
2. International Politics & Diplomacy	195	140
3. Crime & Terrorism	205	188
4. Trade Unions	202	179
5. Social Unrest	205	186
6. Human Interest	204	174
7. Education & Social service	208	196
8. Religion	202	227
9. Trade, Industry and Commerce	209	178
10. Accidents & Disasters	223	198
11. Science , IT & Others	214	178
12. Military	210	141
13. Sports	188	239
14. Art, Culture & Entertainment	200	119
Mean Satisfaction Index	205.42	183.28

Index of Satisfaction of Subject Matter Categories of News

The index of satisfaction for the subject matter categories of news was also determined (see Table 15). As in other categories of news, here too *Malayala Manorama* readers were more satisfied with the various subject matter categories as compared to the readers of *Mathrubhumi* except in the case of domestic politics. In the case of domestic politics *Mathrubhumi* readers were more satisfied (225) compared to *Malayala Manorama* readers (217). In all the other subject matter categories *Malayala Manorama* was ahead of its counterpart.

Credibility of the Newspapers

To find out the perceived credibility of each newspaper, the readers were asked to assess their newspaper's credibility as fully credible, partially credible, credible and not at all credible. As seen in Table 16, the credibility score for *Malayala Manorama* was higher as compared to *Mathrubhumi*. No reader reported his/her newspaper not at all credible.

Table 16: Credibility Range of the Newspapers

Newspapers	Credibility Range				
	Fully Credible	Partially Credible	Not at all Credible	Credible	Credibility Score
Malayala Manorama	183	53	0	58	294
Mathrubhumi	138	70	0	68	276

PAGE-WISE READERSHIP

Based on the items marked as read on each of the pages by the respondents of *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi*, the readership of each page was determined. As reported in Table 17, in both the laps, the front page (page 1) of *Malayala Manorama* had the highest readership ranging from 131 to 97 respectively.

But in the case of *Mathrubhumi*, it was page 3 featuring news of the district, which had the highest readership in lap I (127) and lap II (130). The second highest readership however belonged to page 1. In *Malayala Manorama*, the second most read page in lap I was the 10th page which normally devoted to obituaries, while the third most read page was the third page which features the district news.

Table 17: Page-wise Readership of the Dailies

Page No.	Readership in Malayala Manorama		Readership in Mathrubhumi	
	Lap I	Lap II	Lap I	Lap II
1	131	97	121	105
2	97	81	71	81
3	106	91	127	130
4	102	21	42	44
5	81	71	66	92
6	50	4	39	55
7	61	8	22	51
8	35	41	2	13
9	3		41	37
10	121	41	97	51
11		48	112	57
12	39	31	6	45
13	97	27	91	57
14	54	6	14	41
15				37
16		41		25
17		81		
18		41		
19		35		

This page had the highest readership in lap II. The educational page of *Mathrubhumi* which is generally the 11th page had the third highest readership in lap I of *Mathrubhumi*. But in lap II, the third position belonged to the 5th page, i.e., the Opp-ed page. Such variations in the readership of the pages across two laps were present in the two dailies. However, the most read pages could be identified as page 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 11 and 13th which are devoted to news of the most important happenings, news of the district, news of the state, obituaries, news on education/social service and national news respectively, though not on the same order.

READERSHIP OF CONTENT

Having examined the various parameters of the reading habits of the readers of the two sampled dailies, the focus now will be on assessing the second objective of readers reading preferences in respect of the three content categories. In the succeeding units the readers' preferences of *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* in reading various content categories will be correlated.

The reading preferences were ascertained by determining the readership of the various content categories programmed by the sampled dailies. The readers' were met first on August 3rd, 2005 to collect data relating to readership of the news items programmed in August 2nd 2005 (Lap I) editions of *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi*. To collect data on lap II, they were met again on August 19th 2005. Each time they were supplied with a copy of the previous day's edition of their favourite daily and were asked to mark the items read by them. The marked items were coded in terms of the various content categories and the frequency data so gathered was merged to constitute the aggregate data.

The aggregate data, as reported in Table 18 to 21 presents the readership of the various content categories by *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* readers.

Table 18: Readership of Content

Sampled Dailies	Number of Items Programmed	Number of Items Read (%)
Malayala Manorama	264	85 (32.1)
Mathrubhumi	323	83 (25.6)

The data in Table 18 startlingly revealed the abysmally low readership of the news programmed by the dailies. In *Malayala Manorama*, out of 264 news items programmed in both the laps, only 85 were read which works out to 32.1 per cent of the news stories. In *Mathrubhumi*, the readership was much lower: Out of 323 news items only 83 were read which accounts for a low 25.6 per cent. This finding subscribes to the fact that readers do not go by the importance ascribed to news items by the editors. Instead they are very selective and restrict the reading to a handful of news items. Therefore, readers' reading preferences don't appear to match with the total quantum of news selected and programmed by the dailies.

Readership of Geographic Categories of News

The distribution of the 85 items read by *Malayala Manorama* readers across four geographic categories of news are reported in Table 19. The data reveals that nearly 66 per cent of the items read in *Malayala Manorama* and nearly 58 per cent of the items read in *Mathrubhumi* belonged to the regional news category.

Table 19: Geographic Categories of News: Readers' Preference

Geographic Categories	Malayala Manorama	Mathrubhumi
	Total no. of Items Read (%)	Total no. of Items Read (%)
1. Local News	16 (18.8)	14 (16.9)
2. Regional News	56 (65.9)	47 (56.7)
3. National News	7 (8.2)	15 (18.1)
4. International News	6 (7.1)	7 (8.3)
Total	85 (100)	83 (100)

Pearson $r = 0.980$; $p = 0.05$ (Two tailed)

The readers of the two dailies however tended to slightly differ in reading the other three geographic category of news. For instance, in *Malayala Manorama*, local news was the second most read category (18.8 per cent) followed by national news (8.2 per cent) and international news (7.1 per cent). This order however differed in the case of *Mathrubhumi*. Here, the second most read geographic category was national news (18.1 per cent) followed by local news (16.9 per cent) and international news (8.3 per cent). These minor differences notwithstanding, the Pearson Correlation (two tailed test) revealed that the readership of the four geographic categories of news in *Malayala Manorama* correlated highly with the readership of *Mathrubhumi*.

Readership of Generic Categories of News

The data relating to the readership of generic categories of news is reported in Table 20, where in the categories of letters, editorial and others have been clubbed together as only one item each in both the dailies was reported to have been read by the readers.

Table 20: Generic Categories of News: Readers' Preference

Generic Categories	Malayala Manorama	Mathrubhumi
	Total no. of Items Read (%)	Total no. of Items Read (%)
1. Straight News	79 (92.9)	76 (91.6)
2. Features	5 (5.9)	6 (7.2)
3. Letters, Editorials & Others	1 (1.2)	1 (1.2)
Total	85 (100)	83 (100)

Note: Editorials and others collapsed into the letters category for analysis

Pearson $r = 1.00$; $p = 0.01$ (Two tailed)

Of the 85 read items in *Malayala Manorama* and 83 read items in *Mathrubhumi*, over 92 per cent of the items belonged to the straight news category. The other two categories of features and letters/editorials/others had second and third readership in both the dailies. Such a facial linearity of readership between *Malayala Manorama*

and *Mathrubhumi* stood validated when the data was subjected to Pearson Correlation test (Two tailed).

Readership of Subject Matter Categories of News

An examination of the distribution of the 85 items read in *Malayala Manorama* and 83 items read in *Mathrubhumi* across 14 subject matter categories also revealed that the reading pattern was similar in both the dailies. The data reported in Table 20 highlights that it was news on domestic politics that had the highest readership in both the dailies. It accounted for 23.5 per cent in *Malayala Manorama* as against 18.5 per cent in *Mathrubhumi*.

The news on education/social service was the second most read category in both the dailies. But the readership of this category was relatively higher (14.5 per cent) in *Mathrubhumi*. The third most preferred subject matter was crime and terrorism which had a readership of 12 per cent in *Mathrubhumi* as against 10.5 per cent in *Malayala Manorama*. The fourth most read category was news on and about accidents/ disasters in *Mathrubhumi* (9.6 per cent) as well as in *Malayala Manorama* (7.1 per cent). However, in *Malayala Manorama*, there were four other items tied for the fourth position. These items are science/IT/others, military, sports, and art/ culture/entertainment.

Barring a couple of categories such as human interest stories, science/IT/others, military and art/ culture/entertainment, the readership of the rest of the categories in *Malayala Manorama* was more or less similar to the readership in *Mathrubhumi*. The Pearson correlation (two tailed) test also indicated that the readership of the 14 subject matter categories between the two dailies correlated positively with one another.

The Pearson correlation test amply pointed out that the distribution of the items read by the readers of the two sampled dailies across the categories of geographic, generic, and subject matter groupings was similar.

Table 21: Readership of Subject Matter Categories of News

Subject Matter Categories	Malayala Manorama	Mathrubhumi
	Total no. of Items Read (%)	Total no. of Items Read (%)
1. Domestic Politics	20 (23.5)	15 (18.1)
2. International Politics & Diplomacy	5 (5.8)	3 (3.6)
3. Crime & Terrorism	9 (10.5)	10 (12.0)
4. Trade Unions	2 (2.4)	3 (3.6)
5. Social Unrest	1 (1.2)	1 (1.2)
6. Human Interest	2 (2.4)	7 (8.4)
7. Education & Social Service	10 (11.8)	12 (14.5)
8. Religion	2 (2.4)	2 (2.4)
9. Trade, Industry and Commerce	4 (4.7)	6 (4.9)
10. Accidents & Disasters	6 (7.1)	8 (9.6)
11. Science, IT & Others	6 (7.1)	3 (3.6)
12. Military	6 (7.1)	2 (2.4)
13. Sports	6 (7.1)	7 (8.4)
14. Art, Culture & Entertainment	6 (7.1)	4 (4.8)
Total	85 (100)	83 (100)

Pearson $r = 0.822$; $p = 0.01$ (Two tailed)

TEST OF PROPORTION

Further, there was a need to ascertain whether there were similarities in the news programmed by editors and the quantum of news read by the readers in respect of each category of the four content groupings. More precisely the need was to examine the probability of the similarity noticed between items programmed and

items read in the sampled dailies in respect of each news category. Such an examination was essential to realize the third objective of the study. For this purpose, the data was subjected to the test of proportion and the z value was determined using the formulae;

$$z = \frac{p_1' - p_2'}{\sqrt{pq \left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}}$$

Here, $p = \frac{n_1 p_1' + n_2 p_2'}{n_1 + n_2}$ and $q = 1 - p$

p_1' = Proportion of the category of news programmed in and read by *Malayala Manorama* readers.

p_2' = Proportion of the category of news programmed in and read by *Mathrubhumi* readers.

n_1 = The sample size of *Malayala Manorama*.

n_2 = The sample size of *Mathrubhumi*.

If the determined z value falls between +1.96 and -1.96 area of the normal curve, it points out to the existence of similarity of proportion of news programmed by the editors and read by the readers of the sampled dailies. The data relating to news items programmed and read in the two dailies and the z value results in respect of the three content categories are reported in Table 22–24.

Test of Proportion: Geographic Categories of News Programmed and Read

The test of proportion in respect of the four geographic categories of news in the two dailies revealed that only in the case of regional news, there exist a dissimilar pattern in the news programmed by the editors and read by the readers.

Such a conclusion stems from the fact that the z value in this case was 2.0929 which was higher than the critical limit of +1.96. Following such an interpretation of the z value, the pattern of news programmed and read in respect of local, national and international news was similar.

Table 22: Test of Proportion: Geographic Categories of News Programmed and Read

Geographic Categories	Malayala Manorama		Mathrubhumi		Test of Proportion Results (z)
	Items Programmed	No. of Items Read	Items Programmed	Items Read	
1. Local News	56	16	69	14	1.0781
2. Regional News	168	56	200	47	2.0929
3. National News	16	7	37	15	0.2177
4. International News	24	6	17	7	-1.0966
Total	264	85	323	83	

Test of Proportion: Generic Categories of News Programmed and Read

A comparison of the proportion of the three generic categories of news programmed and read in *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* indicated to the existence of a similar pattern in both the dailies (see Table 23). In other words, the three generic categories of news programmed in the two dailies and the proportion of items in respect of each of the categories read by the respective readers was similar.

Table 23: Test of Proportion: Generic Categories of News Programmed and Read

Generic Categories	Malayala Manorama		Mathrubhumi		Test of Proportion Results (z)
	Items Programmed	Items Read	Items Programmed	Items Read	
1. Straight News	245	79	299	76	1.7551
2. Features	14	5	16	6	-.1013
3. Letters, Editorials & Others	5	1	8	1	-.7746
Total	264	85	323	83	

Test of Proportion: Subject Matter Categories of News Programmed and Read

When the 14 subject matter categories, programmed and read in *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi*, were subjected to the test of proportion, it was found that there were differences in the pattern of news programming practices and news reading preferences only in the case of two subject matter categories. As could be seen in Table 24, these two categories being domestic politics and military which had yielded an z value of 2.9568 and 2.027, higher than the critical limit of +1.96. The case of the remaining 12 subject matter categories was similar.

The test of proportion results by-and-large matched with the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient test. Thus from the analysis of the news programmed by the editors and the readers' reading preferences, two broad conclusions relating to the third objective could be drawn. The first being that the quantum of news read by the readers of *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* is abysmally low compared to the news programmed by the editors. Instead they have their own priorities in deciding upon what to read and what not to.

The second conclusion that could be derived is that there is a greater convergence between the news programming practices followed by *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* and the reading preferences of their readers. The greater the quantum of news programmed, the greater the chances of it being read.

Table 24: Test of Proportion: Subject Matter Categories of News Programmed and Read

Subject Matter Categories	Malayala Manorama		Mathrubhumi		Test of Proportion Results (z value)
	No. of Items Programmed	No. of Items Read	No. of Items Programmed	No. of Items Read	
1. Domestic Politics	35	20	57	15	2.9568
2. International Politics & Diplomacy	14	5	10	3	0.292
3. Crime & Terrorism	17	9	35	10	1.711
4. Trade Unions	20	2	27	3	-.1222
5. Social Unrest	3	1	4	1	0.2415
6. Human Interest	7	2	22	7	-.161
7. Education & Social Service	37	10	35	12	-.668
8. Religion	14	2	11	2	-.263
9. Trade, Industry and Commerce	15	4	20	6	-.216
10. Accidents & Disasters	18	6	25	8	-.0920
11. Science , IT & Others	23	6	25	8	0.920
12. Military	11	6	13	2	2.027
13. Sports	22	6	18	7	-.780
14. Art, Culture & Entertainment	28	6	23	4	0.361
Total	264	85	323	83	

* The obit category was deliberately excluded from the table since a page consisting of several obit items was considered as a single unit, while conducting the readership survey. For both newspapers 30% of the total readers stated that they had at least read one of the obit items in the page.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study sought to realize three objectives of (i) determining the news programming practices in relation to various content categories, (ii) detecting the readers' preferences in reading the content categories programmed by the editors and (iii) determining the relationship between the news programming practices and reading preferences.

To realize the first objective, the content of *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* was analysed. The second objective was realized by conducting a readership survey among the readers of the two dailies. By correlating the data of the content analysis with the data of the readership survey, the third objective was examined. The major findings are summarized below.

No Set Pattern in the Distribution of News across Pages

On investigating the various facets of the objectives, it was found that *Mathrubhumi* devoted more space to news and thereby programmed more news items as compared to *Malayala Manorama*. However, on analyzing the distribution of news across pages it was found that both the dailies had no set pattern. Some pages had a higher number of stories in both the laps. It was page 2, devoted to local news, which by-and-large had the largest number of stories. The educational pages of both dailies too had a higher quantum of news items.

Prime Focus on Regional News and Straight News

It is well known that most language dailies are regional in their character and content programming practices. The dailies sampled for this study were no exception. The analysis of the geographic categories of news revealed that in both the laps, the largest number of news items programmed belonged to the regional news category followed by local news, national news and international news. Thus the two dailies adopted a set pattern in programming various geographic categories of news. Like wise, the prime concern of both *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* in both the laps was on providing straight news about events and issues of the previous days to their readers.

SIMILARITIES IN EDITORIAL PRACTICES OF THE DAILIES

The two dailies however differed in their practices of programming various subject matter categories of news across two laps. In *Malayala Manorama*, news on domestic politics followed by education/social service, arts/culture/entertainment occupied the top three positions in lap I. But in lap II, there was a slight difference with education/social service taking the prime place followed by science/IT, domestic politics and art/culture/ entertainment. On the whole such differences were not statistically significant.

The news programming practices of *Mathrubhumi* in respect of the subject matter categories differed significantly from lap I to lap II. Here, along with domestic politics, education/social service and arts /culture/entertainment, the subject matter category of crime/terrorism had obtained a prominent place.

The incidence of providing news stories with pictures was confined to a few stories in both the dailies. The highest usage of pictures was in *Malayala Manorama* as compared to *Mathrubhumi*. The Practice of publishing pictures alone as independent news stories was also relatively high in *Malayala Manorama*.

Reader Satisfaction and Credibility Assessment

Readers' satisfaction with the programmed news content matters much in making newspapers popular. Also, readers' satisfaction with the programmed content plays the role of an intervening variable in the possible relationship between the news content programmed by the dailies and the content read by the readers. From this perspective, the study gauged the satisfaction index of the sampled readers of both the dailies in respect of the three content categories. On the whole, the analysis showed that *Malayala Manorama* readers were far more satisfied with all the four geographic categories of news as compared to *Mathrubhumi* readers. For unknown reasons, readers of *Mathrubhumi* were not deriving a high satisfaction from the programmed content.

Likewise, on analyzing the perceived credibility of the sampled dailies, *Malayala Manorama* achieved a higher credibility score than *Mathrubhumi*.

READING PREFERENCES OF CONTENT

To realize the second objective of assessing readers' preferences in reading the content programmed by the sampled dailies, this study examined the readership of the various pages and the quantum of news read by the readers in respect of the three news content categories. The analysis yielded the following results.

Most Read Pages: Page 1 and 3

From among the large number of pages, the readers of both the dailies had their own preferences in reading the pages across two laps. The most read page in *Malayala Manorama* was the front page. The other pages preferred were page 3, page 4, page 10, and page 17. But in *Mathrubhumi*, it was not page 1, but page 3 which had the highest readership.

The second highest readership however belonged to page 1 in *Mathrubhumi*. The other pages which had highest readership in *Mathrubhumi* were page 10, page 5, and page 2 and page 13.

Low Readership of Content

The study revealed an abysmally low readership of the news programmed by the dailies. While the readers of *Malayala Manorama* had read only 32.1 percent of the stories published, the readers of *Mathrubhumi* read less than 26 percent of the stories reported. This finding highlights the fact that readers do not read everything that is printed. Instead, they are very selective and read only a handful of news items. Thus it could be inferred that the reading preferences of readers do not match with the total quantum of news programmed by the dailies.

Similarities in Reading Preferences of Content Categories

Further it was found that the readers of the two dailies do not differ much in reading different categories of news-geographic, generic and subject matter. The readership of content under each of these categories was by-and-large similar as was detected when the data was subjected to Pearson correlation test.

Convergence in News Programmed and News Read

To realize the third objective, there was a need to examine the probability of similarity noticed between items programmed and items read in the sampled dailies in respect of each news category.

For this purpose, the data was subjected to the test of proportion. The results of which pointed out that the news programmed and read in respect of the three geographic categories was similar in *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi*. Similarly, the three generic categories of news programmed in them and the proportion of news read in respect of each of the three generic categories by the readers of the two dailies was similar.

The subject matter categories of news programmed and read was also subjected to the test of proportion. Barring two categories of subject matter, the rest of 12 categories, the proportion of news programmed and the proportion of news read matched in the case of the two dailies.

From such findings two conclusions could be drawn. First, the quantum of news read by the readers of the two dailies is abysmally low compared to news programmed by the editors. The second conclusion could be that of a greater convergence between the news programming practices followed by *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* and reading preferences of their readers.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

NEWSPAPERS are a product of professional endeavour. They are designed and packaged to serve the most important human need – the need to acquire information on all aspects of life in today's modern and fast changing society. In fulfilling this need, editors consciously strive to gather and disseminate news in ways to attract reader's attention and there by ensure that they read, comprehend and use it whenever and wherever needed.

The newsgathering and processing is a complex activity involving scores of stringers, reporters/correspondents, copy editors and editors who select and edit news and then display it on various pages using appropriate design elements. In doing so editors attach varying importance to the news items selected. While some are chosen to be displayed on front pages in bold headlines, some others are relegated to unimportant positions of the pages. Some items are chosen for special treatment for display in tinted or bordered boxes, colour heads and the like.

To help readers locate news relating to different subjects, editors pool stories belonging to various regions and subjects under page-specific standing heads such as national news, international news, sports, trade/commerce, education, obits etc.

In these and other pages, various design treatments are given suggesting which of the stories are more important than the others. Of late, some newspapers through navigators on page one, directly tell the readers that there are stories on certain pages that they must read. Such editorial practices are not static. Editors often modify their news programming practices in tune with readers' changing needs and expectations.

Such practices however are not known to bridge the reader-editor gap in respect of the news programmed and news read. Nonetheless, professionalism demands for a regular assessment of the news programming practices and readers' reading preferences. Such assessment would provide a better insight essential to make

news content match readers' news needs. Against this backdrop, the present study was conducted in the context of Malayalam press.

THE STUDY

The study focussed on assaying the news programming practices of *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* which continue to dominate the Malayalam press milieu. The dailies were examined in two laps to determine their news programming practices in relation to various categories of news content. At the same time, the study ascertained readers' preferences in the programmed news content. These two facets of the data was correlated to ascertain the nature of relationship between the news programmed by the editors and the news that was actually read by the readers. The data analysis revealed interesting and functionally relevant results.

The Editorial Practices

As found out in earlier studies, this study too unambiguously pointed out to the regional character of the Malayalam press in terms of its content with the regional news dominating in relation to national and international news. In addition, as could be expected, the prime concern of the leading Malayalam dailies was on providing straight news about events and issues that relentlessly unfold day after day.

In respect of various subject matter categories of news, the editorial practices tended to favour news of domestic politics as compared to other subject matter categories of news. Other subject matter categories received varying importance in the two dailies under investigation.

Satisfaction and Credibility

Were the readers satisfied with such news programming practices followed by their dailies? To obtain an answer the study gauged reader's satisfaction with the current editorial practices. The analysis revealed that *Malayala Manorama* readers were far more satisfied with its news programming practices as compared to the satisfaction of the *Mathrubhumi* readers. Here in lies a point for the *Mathrubhumi* to ponder as to why their readers do not derive satisfaction as much as *Malayala Manorama* readers do.

The study also assessed the credibility of the two dailies as pursued by their respective readers. The analysis indicated that both *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* readers held their newspaper to be quite credible in their content.

Editor-Reader Convergence and Divergence

The analysis of the data revealed that the readers of both the dailies had their own preferences in reading various pages. While *Malayala Manorama* readers met the general expectations of qualifying page one as the most read page, the *Mathrubhumi* readers had a different preference. They were found to prefer reading page three to the front page. This indicates to a mismatch between editorial practices and reading habits of the readers.

Such a mismatch was far wider when it came to the quantum of news programmed and the quantum of news read. The study revealed that the quantum of news read was abysmally low – 32.1 per cent of the stories published in *Malayala Manorama* and a further low of 26 per cent in the case of *Mathrubhumi*. The finding highlights the fact that readers do not read everything that is printed by the newspapers. One implication here is the fact that newspaper readers are far more selective than the editors are.

Flowing from this is another implication which calls for the editors to be far more imaginative and exacting in making their content match the information needs of their readers. Such efforts would certainly pay and make the content relevant to the readers.

Though the news read was extremely low, there was a convergence in the various categories of news programmed by the editors and the news read by the readers. This was the case in respect of the three categories – geographic, generic and subject matter.

Concluding Remarks

These broad findings and conclusions are tentative. Further research requires to be undertaken to validate the findings. It is suggested that similar studies be conducted using the same research designs in different locales. In addition, there is a need to conduct studies with an enlarged sample of newspapers as well as readers both in

the context of the Malayalam press and in the context of other language dailies including English. Such studies besides enriching research literature would also be of value to editorial managers and planners of Indian newspapers. Perhaps here, professional media organisations such as Indian Newspaper Society, Press Institute of India and National Readership Studies Council could undertake or commission studies of similar character both at the regional and national level.

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APPENDIX - I

QUESTIONNAIRE (English Translation of the Original Malayalam Version)

Sir/Madam

I am conducting a study on the readership aspects of Malayalam Dailies. I kindly request you to co-operate with this study

The investigator will provide you a questionnaire, which you need to fill up with information regarding your reading habits. After this exercise, the investigator will handover to you the previous day's newspaper, which you are reading regularly. You may please report the order in which you have read the various news stories in different pages. The investigator will record this. If you do not remember the exact order in which you read the stories, kindly admit that to the investigator.

I assure you that the information furnished by you will only be used for the study purpose.

Thanking you

M.S. Harikumar

PART - I

1. Name
2. Address
3. Sex
4. Age
5. Occupation
6. Education
 - (a) up to S.S.L.C
 - (b) Up to Plus Two
 - (c) Graduation
 - (d) Post Graduation and above

PART- II

7. State the name of the newspaper, which you read regularly
8. For how long you have been reading this newspaper?
9. Do you read any other newspaper other than the above said newspaper? If yes state the name of those newspapers.
10. How many days in a week do you read the newspaper? (Tick anyone only)
 - (a) All days ()
 - (b) Six days in a week ()
 - (c) Five days in a week ()
 - (d) Four days in a week ()
 - (e) Three days in a week ()
 - (f) Two days in a week ()
 - (g) Only one day ()

11. State your level of satisfaction in reading the following contents in the newspaper that you read regularly (For each news section tick any one of the three satisfaction levels)

News section	Fully satisfied	Partially satisfied	Not at all satisfied
Local News			
Regional News			
National News			
International News			

12. State your level of satisfaction in reading the following contents in the newspaper that you have read regularly (For each news section tick any one of the three satisfaction levels).

News sections	Fully satisfied	Partially satisfied	Not at all satisfied
Features			
Letters			
Editorial			
Straight news			

13. State the level of satisfaction you derive in reading the following contents in the newspaper that you read regularly (For each news section tick any one of the three satisfaction levels)

News sections	Fully satisfied	Partially satisfied	Not at all satisfied
1. Domestic politics			
2. International politics & Diplomacy			
3. Crime & Terrorism			
4. Trade union			
5. Social unrest			
6. Human interest			
7. Education/Social service			
8. Religion			
9. Commerce/Industry			
10. Accidents/Disasters			
11. Science/ IT/others			
12. Military			
13. Sports			
14. Art/Culture/Entertainment			

14. How credible is your newspaper? (Tick anyone as applicable in your case)

- (a) Fully credible () (c) Credible ()
 (b) Partially credible () (d) Not at all credible ()

APPENDIX - II

ചോദ്യാവലി

പത്രവായനാരീതി: ഒരു പഠനം

പ്രിയസുഹൃത്തേ,

പത്രവായനാരീതിയെപ്പറ്റിയുള്ള ഒരു പഠനത്തിനായാണ് താങ്കളെ സമീപിക്കുന്നത്. ഈ പഠനവുമായി സഹകരിക്കണമെന്ന് ദയവായി അപേക്ഷിക്കുന്നു. ഇതോടൊപ്പമുള്ള ചോദ്യാവലി പൂരിപ്പിക്കുകയാണ് ആദ്യം താങ്കൾ ചെയ്യേണ്ടത്. ചോദ്യാവലി പൂരിപ്പിച്ച് നൽകിയതിന് ശേഷം കഴിഞ്ഞദിവസം താങ്കൾ വായിച്ച പത്രം, ഇൻവെസ്റ്റിഗേറ്റർ താങ്കൾക്ക് കൈമാറും. കഴിഞ്ഞദിവസം ഈ പത്രം വായിച്ചപ്പോൾ താങ്കളുടെ വായനാക്രമം എന്തായിരുന്നു? ഇതാണ് ഇൻവെസ്റ്റിഗേറ്റർക്ക് അറിയേണ്ടത്. ഇൻവെസ്റ്റിഗേറ്റർ ഓരോ പേജുകളിലെയും താങ്കളുടെ വായനാക്രമം രേഖപ്പെടുത്തും. കഴിഞ്ഞദിവസം പത്രം വായിച്ചരീതി മുൻഗണനാക്രമത്തിൽ, ഓർമയിൽനിന്നും ചികഞ്ഞെടുത്ത് പരമാവധി കൃത്യതയോടെ വിവരങ്ങൾ നൽകണമെന്ന് അപേക്ഷിക്കുന്നു. ചില പേജുകളിലെ വാർത്തകളുടെ വായനാരീതി ഏതു വിധത്തിലായിരുന്നുവെന്ന് കൃത്യമായി ഓർക്കുന്നില്ലെങ്കിൽ അക്കാര്യം ഇൻവെസ്റ്റിഗേറ്ററെ അറിയിച്ചാൽ മതിയാകും.

താങ്കൾ നൽകിയ വിവരങ്ങൾ പൂർണ്ണമായും പഠനാവശ്യത്തിനായേ ഉപയോഗിക്കുകയുള്ളൂവെന്ന് ഇതിനാൽ ഉറപ്പ് തരുന്നു.

സഹകരണത്തിന് നന്ദി.

വിശ്വസ്തതയോടെ,

എം.എസ്. ഹരികുമാർ

ഭാഗം 1

- 1. പേര് :
- 2. വിലാസം :
- 3. സ്ത്രീ/പുരുഷൻ :
- 4. വയസ്സ് :
- 5. തൊഴിൽ :
- 6. വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ യോഗ്യത :

a. എസ്. എസ്. എൽ. സി.

b. പ്രീഡിഗ്രി/പ്ലസ് ടു

c. ബിരുദധാരി

d. ബിരുദാനന്തര ബിരുദധാരി

ഭാഗം 2

7. താങ്കൾ പതിവായി ഏത് പത്രമാണ് വായിക്കുന്നത്?

8. എത്ര നാളായി ഈ പത്രം വായിക്കുന്നു?

9. മുകളിൽ പറഞ്ഞ പത്രത്തിനുപുറമെ ഏതെങ്കിലും പത്രം/പത്രങ്ങൾ കൂടി താങ്കൾ വായിക്കാറുണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ട് എങ്കിൽ ആ പത്രത്തിന്റെ/പത്രങ്ങളുടെ പേര് എഴുതുക

10. ആഴ്ചയിൽ എത്ര ദിവസം താങ്കൾ പത്രം വായിക്കാറുണ്ട്?

a. എല്ലാ ദിവസവും

b. ആഴ്ചയിൽ 6 ദിവസം

c. ആഴ്ചയിൽ 5 ദിവസം

d. ആഴ്ചയിൽ 4 ദിവസം

e. ആഴ്ചയിൽ 3 ദിവസം

f. ആഴ്ചയിൽ 2 ദിവസം

g. ആഴ്ചയിൽ 1 ദിവസം

11. താങ്കൾ പതിവായി വായിക്കുന്ന പത്രത്തിലെ താഴെ പ്രസ്താവിക്കുന്ന വാർത്തകളുടെ അവതരണ രീതിയിൽ താങ്കൾക്ക് എത്രമാത്രം സംതൃപ്തിയാണുള്ളത്?

വാർത്താ വിഭാഗം	പൂർണ്ണമായും സംതൃപ്തി	ഭാഗികമായി സംതൃപ്തി	ഒട്ടും സംതൃപ്തിയില്ല
1. പ്രാദേശിക വാർത്തകൾ			
2. സംസ്ഥാനതല വാർത്തകൾ			
3. ദേശീയ വാർത്തകൾ			
4. വിദേശ വാർത്തകൾ			

12. താങ്കൾ പതിവായി വായിക്കുന്ന പത്രത്തിൽ താഴെ പ്രസ്താവിക്കുന്ന വാർത്താ വിഭാഗങ്ങളുടെ അവതരണ രീതിയിൽ താങ്കൾക്ക് എത്രമാത്രം സംതൃപ്തിയുണ്ട്?

വാർത്താ വിഭാഗം	പൂർണ്ണമായും സംതൃപ്തി	ഭാഗികമായി സംതൃപ്തി	ഒട്ടും സംതൃപ്തിയില്ല
1. ഫീച്ചറുകൾ			
2. കത്തുകൾ			
3. എഡിറ്റോറിയൽ			
4. സാധാരണ വാർത്തകൾ			

13. താങ്കൾ പതിവായി വായിക്കുന്ന പത്രത്തിൽ താഴെ പ്രസ്താവിക്കുന്ന വാർത്താ വിഭാഗങ്ങളുടെ അവതരണത്തിൽ താങ്കൾക്ക് എത്രമാത്രം സംതൃപ്തിയുണ്ട്?

വാർത്താ വിഭാഗം	പൂർണ്ണമായും സംതൃപ്തി	ഭാഗികമായി സംതൃപ്തി	ഒട്ടും സംതൃപ്തിയില്ല
1. ആഭ്യന്തര രാഷ്ട്രീയം			
2. അന്തർദേശീയ രാഷ്ട്രീയവും നയതന്ത്രവും			
3. കുറ്റകൃത്യങ്ങളും ഭീകര പ്രവർത്തനവും			
4. ട്രേഡ് യൂണിയനുകൾ			
5. സാമൂഹിക അരക്ഷിതാവസ്ഥ			
6. കൗതുക വാർത്തകൾ			
7. വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം, സാമൂഹിക സേവനം			
8. മതപരം			
9. വാണിജ്യം, വ്യവസായം			
10. അപകടങ്ങൾ, ദുരന്തങ്ങൾ			
11. സയൻസ്, ഐ.ടി., മറ്റ് വാർത്തകൾ			
12. സൈനികം			
13. സ്പോർട്സ്			
14. കല, സംസ്കാരം, വിനോദം			

14. താങ്കളുടെ പത്രത്തിന്റെ വിശ്വാസയോഗ്യത എത്രത്തോളം?

- a. പൂർണ്ണമായും വിശ്വാസയോഗ്യം b. ഭാഗികമായി മാത്രം വിശ്വാസയോഗ്യം
- c. വിശ്വാസയോഗ്യം d. വിശ്വാസയോഗ്യമല്ല

**CIRCULATION OF MANORAMA AND MATHRUBHUMI
(ABC REPORT- DECEMBER 2005)**

Editions	Circulation (July- December 2005) Average Daily Copies	
	<i>Mathrubhumi</i>	<i>Malayala Manorama</i>
Thiruvananthapuram	1,24,867	1,42,112
Kollam	79,992	1,20,835
Kottayam	1,22,222	3,47,194
Kochi	1,44,374	2,07,859
Thrissur	1,37,302	1,31,180
Palakkad	72,975	90,120
Malappuram	71,338	79,760
Kozhikode	1,58,721	1,10,591
Mumbai	23,004	29,684
Chennai	5,726	9,301
Bangalore	5,954	18,871
New Delhi		11,739
Kannur	1,28,392	95,945
Total	10,40,183	13,95,191

ABC-July- December 2005