

## **NEWSPAPERS: TEENAGERS AND THEIR NEEDS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Newspaper is by far the most comprehensive printed medium among teenagers. The way newspaper represent the information will be able to generate more inputs to teenagers after they read various issues discussed. The objectives of this study are to identify the types of news which are chosen by teenagers; and to investigate the factors which are associated with the teenagers' acceptance to the newspaper. A total of 387 teenagers, aged between 16 and 17 years old, who were students from 10 national secondary schools in the Federal Territory, Kuala Lumpur were selected to be the respondents of this study. Results shows that entertainment news seem to be the teenagers' preferred choice. At the same times, the findings*

*indicates that the contents of the newspapers have fulfilled the needs of the teenagers. However, the correlation test shows that the relationship between cognitive are moderate, weak for the affective, personal and escapism and there is no relationship between social needs and acceptance. As a conclusion, entertainment news has become the main choice of news among the teenagers. Meanwhile, the factor which is strongly associated with the teenagers' acceptance is cognitive. It is hoped that the results of this study will be able to assist the newspaper institutions to publish contents relating to education and knowledge, which are connected to entertainment so that the newspapers could be one of the leading learning references, besides the school textbooks and printed references in order to fulfill various needs of the teenagers.*

**Key words: newspapers; needs; teenagers; news**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Unlike the other media, newspaper is in fact treated as an information tool, a guide and as a tutor to the teenagers. If a teenager reads the newspaper, it will enable him or her to become a human being who possesses civic-conscious values, tolerance and closeness to the community (Jeffres, 2007). Why? It is because newspaper is well-read as it functions as a medium of information (McQuail, 2005), it also possesses a high level of credibility (Schweiger, 2000; Jarvis, et. al., 2009), could be trusted, accurate, convincing, fair and complete (Flanagin and Metzger, 2000), true and authentic (Beaudon and Thorson, 2002), and because of the news reported in the newspaper is based on valid sources between the authority, experts in various fields, and the industry (Cozma, 2006). Teenagers should not limit themselves to their aims of reading the newspaper although they spent 30 minutes reading it (Malthouse and Calder, 2002). Reading will help them to develop their minds and souls toward educated, disciplined, possessing positive qualities and independent human beings. The objectives of this research are to 1. identify the types of news which are chosen by teenagers; and 2. investigate the factors which are associated with the teenagers' acceptance to the newspaper.

## **THE CONTENT OF NEWSPAPER**

Although the newspaper has to compete with various types of mediums, it seems to be the choice in order for the public to obtain reliable information (Chyi and Lewis, 2009). The contents full of information such as information on current issues taking place in the country (Mior, 2006), sports and entertainment (D'Haene, et. al., 2004), accidents and conflicts (Owens, 2007), business and sports (Maier, 2010), health news and cancer

diseases (Len-Rios, et. al., 2010), politics (De Waal and Schoenbach, 2008; Raeymaeckers, 2004; Nafise, 2008) and economy (Raeymaeckers, 2004; Riffe and Reader, 2007). The analysis is comprehensive compared to other mediums (Linlin, 2005), in addition to news published a brief and recent nature (Heflin, 2010). But, some studies have shown that teenagers seem to read certain sections of their choice. Lim (1984); Samsudin (1994); Schlagheck (1998); D'haenes and Jankowski (2004), found that teenagers are only interested in entertainment news such as music, dance styles and cartoons as a form of relaxation and also to fill up their leisure (Mohd and Mohd, 2005).

### **TEENAGERS' NEEDS TOWARDS THE NEWSPAPER**

Readership Institute (2002), in its report stated that readers will only read the newspaper if the content fulfills their needs. However, what does needs mean? Katz, et. al., (1973), explained that needs are very closely related to cognitive, affective, personal, social and escapism. Cognitive needs are conceptualized as the tendency to gain information and education so as to increase the understanding of the information given. An earlier study carried out by Katz, et.al., (1973), information on politics, economy, and social in the newspaper is able help create the readers' understanding. Their study was supported by Larkin and Grotta (1977); Kippax and Murray (1980); Houghton (1982); Lichtenstein and Rosenfeld (1984); Bogart (1984); Jeffres and Atkin (1996); Schlagheck (1998); Lynn, et. al., (2008), identified that teenagers read the newspaper since the contents are able to meet their cognitive needs. Hence, based on past researches and surveys, the first hypothesis is formed: There is a relationship between teenagers' cognitive needs and their acceptance of the newspaper.

Another factor why the teenagers readily accept the newspaper is due to their affective needs. Affective needs is when the teenagers' need to obtain entertainment and to shift their attention from something that is not of their interest. A study by Vincent and Basil (1997); Lin, et. al., (2003); Raeymaeckers (2004), found that news in the entertainment section, sports and cartoons helps the society to obtain entertainment and also to distract their attention. Thus, the second hypothesis is created: There is a relationship between the teenagers' affective needs and their acceptance of the newspaper.

Personal needs seem to be the third need found by Katz, et. al., (1973) in their study. Personal needs refer to the development of identity, personal, and the urge to achieve self-esteem. As teenagers, they need current information to make them educated individuals. Vincent and Basil (1997); and Lewis (2008), found that that the newspaper content is unable to increase the teenagers' confidence, create teenagers' awareness on time management, express their own style respected by the society around them.

This shows that the content of the newspaper has been able to meet the teenagers' personal needs. Therefore, the third hypothesis is formed: There is a relationship between the teenagers' personal needs with their acceptance of the newspaper.

Social needs involves the processes of developing and maintaining a social relationship with other individuals. Results of the surveys carried out by Towers (1986); Shu-Chu (2001); Lin, et. al., (2003) and Readership Institute (2009), show that the newspaper is able to assist the social relationship needs of the readers. The newspaper is found to have given a more complete news as compared to the news on television (Raeymaeckers, 2004). Hence, this leads to the fourth hypothesis: There is a relationship between social needs and teenagers' acceptance of the newspaper.

The need to release one's emotions (escapism) refers to the needs to release tension and the needs to overcome loneliness. Raeymaeckers (2004), and Johannson (2008), found that entertainment news like cartoons, and television highlights printed in the newspaper could overcome the feelings of boredom, loneliness, and teenagers' stressful life. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis could be formed: There is a relationship between teenagers' escapism and their acceptance of the newspaper.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study makes use of a questionnaires. The sample is made up of 387 respondents. The respondents are multiracial teenagers aged between 16 and 17 years old from 10 secondary schools in the Federal Territory, Kuala Lumpur.

In order to measure the teenagers' needs toward the newspaper, a total of 35 items (which are divided into five needs' factors namely: cognitive, affective, personal, social, and escapism) based on the study of Katz, et. al., 1973, 'On the use of mass media for important things' was used. Besides that, in order to identify the newspaper's acceptance by the teenagers which are mainly related to needs, 35 items which comprises of six factors are adopted. Five out of six factors are benefits of usage, users' perceptions, attitudes toward usage, intentions toward usage, barriers on usage. These factors are adapted from the 'Development of an instrument to measure the acceptance of internet technology' by consumers by Gardner and Amoroso (2004). The sixth factor, peripheral usage factor was developed by researchers from the review of literature.

Finally, in order to test the first and second research objectives, a descriptive statistics method has been used. It is used in order to identify value percentages, mean, average and standard deviations, which seemed to the main statistical descriptive procedure (May, 2004). Meanwhile, in order to test the research hypotheses, correlation tests together with Pearsons' Product-Moment is used in the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results of the study based on respondents' demography and the types of news chosen by teenagers. In addition to that, this section will also discuss the research hypotheses, that will determine the relationship between the teenagers' needs and their acceptance of the newspaper.

### *Respondents' demography*

This section discusses the respondents' demography, which include age distribution, gender, and their ethnic background. The statistical data on age distribution presented in Table 1 revealed that teenagers of 16 years of age (80.6%) exceed the teenagers who are 17 years (19.4%). Besides, 63% of the sample are females. This shows that most of the respondents are females. Meanwhile, in the distribution of race, Malays respondents represent the largest percentage of those involved in the study with the highest percentage (66%). This is followed by Chinese respondents (21.4%), Indians (11.6%) dan other races (0.8%) respectively. From the study, it can be concluded that the research sample represents two age groups, two gender category, and three main ethnic groups in Malaysia, and other races, which involve foreign citizens such as Indonesians.

**Table 1: Respondents' Distribution According to Demography (n=387)**

<b>Profile</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Age		
16 years	312	80.6
17 years	75	19.4
Sex		
Female	246	63.6
Male	141	36.4
Race		
Malay	256	66.1
Chinese	83	21.4
Indian	45	11.6
Others	3	0.8

### *Types of news*

Based on Table 2, it is obvious that entertainment related news (74.4%) seem to be the teenagers' most preferred choice of news genre. This percentage shows that teenagers of these days are more interested in reading light news as compared to reading heavy news which include politics and economics that will provide them with additional information.

**Table 2: Respondents' Distribution According to the Types of News (n=387)**

<b>Types of News</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage*</b>
Entertainment	288	74.4
Crimes	246	63.6
Sports	218	56.3
Economics	47	12.1
Politics	32	8.3

\* Note: Percentages do not total up to 100 percent as the responses were more than one response.

Heavy news are just as important as it focuses on certain important issues such as everyday issues concerning society which is written in the form of an inverted pyramid which discusses the most important factors (Chamil, 2008). The results of this study show that teenagers choose entertainment news as their main reading materials, similar to the studies conducted by Lim (1984); Samsudin (1994); Schlagheck (1998); D'haenes and Jankowski (2004) which had generated similar findings.

#### ***Needs of Teenagers Toward the Newspaper***

All the 35 items which measure the five dimensions of needs above made use of the 4 point Likert Scale with the following scoring scale: 1 = Strongly Not important, 2= Not important, 3= Important and 4= Very important. The levels of needs are categorized as low, medium, and high. The division of scores for each level adopts the statistical approach based on the *cut point values* as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Scores on the Levels of Teenagers' Needs on the Newspaper**

<b>Needs</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Cognitive	0.00 – 2.52	2.53 – 2.90	2.91 – 4.00
Affective	0.00 – 1.97	1.98 – 2.43	2.44 – 4.00
Personal	0.00 – 1.72	1.73 – 2.15	2.16 – 4.00
Social	0.00 – 1.45	1.46 – 1.80	1.81 – 4.00
Escapism	0.00 – 1.87	1.88 – 2.96	2.97 – 4.00
Overall Mean Score	0.00 – 1.87	1.88 – 2.96	2.97 – 4.00

With reference to the table on the division of scores for each level of teenagers' needs in Table 3, Table 4 shows the level of overall needs of

teenagers which is categorized as medium in terms of the findings of the study with a mean score of 2.64.

**Table 4: Mean Score of Needs According to Dimensions**

<b>Needs' Dimensions</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Escapism	3.15	0.61
Cognitive	3.00	0.24
Affective	2.63	0.38
Personal	2.26	0.23
Social	1.88	0.20
Levels of Overall Needs	2.64	0.22

This shows that the contents of the newspaper which include politics, economy, and social meet the needs of the teenagers. It can be concluded that currently teenagers still accept the newspaper to satisfy their five basic needs. The findings of this study seems to contradict the study done by Linlin (2005); Nielsen Company, (2008) and Heflin, (2010), which revealed teenagers tend to accept the latest media such as blogs. It is because this particular technology has characteristics that could satisfy their needs as compared to the newspaper, which is said to have more credibility (Johnson and Kaye, 2002), the use of graphics and attractive pictures (Sturgil, et. al., 2010), and easy access and also accessible to other links in the process of extending information (Patterson, 2007).

Meanwhile, Table 4 shows that escapism needs has a mean score of 3.15 with a standard deviation of 0.61. Based on the mean score, indicating that the contents of the newspaper basically have met the teenagers' escapism needs. The results of this study support the findings of the study conducted by Henke (1985), McDonald (1990), Vincent and Basil (1997), Raeymaeckers (2004), and Johannson (2008), who have revealed the the newspaper is able to meet the readers escapism needs.

Table 4 also shows that cognitive needs has a mean score of 3.00. This indicates that the contents of the newspaper have met the teenagers' cognitive needs. Teenagers who read the newspaper do not only release their tension and overcome their boredom, but also are able to widen their knowledge and increase their understanding toward the information given. The results of the study are comparatively similar to the findings of the study conducted by Jeffres and Atkin (1996); Schlagheck (1998) and Lynn, et. al., (2008), who have identified the newspaper is able to meet the readers' cognitive needs.

The results shows the cognitive needs ( $r=0.429$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) which has a positive relationship and significant, but average where the newspaper acceptance is concerned. Hence, the research hypothesis is accepted. This result explains that the teenagers have not really accepted the newspaper. This is because it is found that it still lacking in term of publishing materials that could meet the cognitive needs of the readers, especially teenagers although there is a variety in its contents. It is interesting to note that the newspapers' contents are basically information which inform readers, but is unable to create readers' understanding. The information should be discussed at length so that it could help the teenagers to increase their knowledge and understanding on the information given after reading it. When enhancement takes place, there will be no question of teenagers shifting their interest to other types of media so as to satisfy their cognitive needs.

The findings of the study also revealed that, there is a significant and positive relationship between affective needs and teenagers' acceptance of the newspaper ( $r=0.349$ ,  $p=0.00$ ), but it is rather weak where the newspaper's acceptance is concerned. However, the research hypothesis is accepted. The research findings show that teenagers do not really accept the newspaper whole-heartedly. Based on the findings of the study, it seems that teenagers are not simply accepting newspapers as a medium which could satisfy the teenagers' affective needs. However, if the newspaper focuses on the teenagers' affective needs, then they would be inclined to readily accept the newspaper. It cannot be denied that the newspaper's contents have entertainment elements such as cartoons and sports columns, but unfortunately this information is still inadequate to satisfy their affective needs who always need something different from what usually appears in the newspaper.

Based on the correlation test, results of the study revealed that teenagers' personal needs ( $r=0.380$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), which has a positive and significant relationship with the teenagers' acceptance of the newspaper. Hence, the research hypothesis is accepted. The findings show that the teenagers accept the newspaper, however the level of acceptance is weak. This is because the content of newspapers are still lacking in terms of information which are related to teenagers' personal needs such as constructing teenagers' desirable identities and personality, and educating them to increase their self-esteem. Due to the lack of such information, the teenagers are not ready to accept the newspaper entirely.

The findings indicates that there is no correlation between social needs and acceptance ( $r=-0.027$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Therefore, the research hypothesis is rejected. The study shows that the newspaper still lacks publishing contents that could help meet the social needs of the teenagers to the maximum. Teenagers need information suitable to their age and interest.

So that they can make use of the information to start their daily conversations and to build stronger relationships.

The results of the study revealed that the relationship between the needs to express feelings and acceptance is found to be weak, ( $r=0.232$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Although the relationship is weak, the relationship and teenagers' acceptance still exists. Therefore, this dimension is still considered important, and it is found that its existence in the newspaper is able to meet teenagers' escapism needs. Hence, the research hypothesis is accepted. This is also in line with the results as mentioned earlier in Table 4, which clearly reveal that escapism needs are the first needs existed in the newspaper. This also indicates that the newspaper could still be a medium for teenagers to release their tension and at the same time to overcome their boredom.

## CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, entertainment news has become the main choice of news among the teenagers. Teenagers prefer news which is light, such as reading cartoons to fill their leisure. The correlation test indicates the existence of a relationship between certain needs' dimensions such as cognitive and acceptance of the newspaper among teenagers. The relationship is still of medium level and weak in the affective, personal and escapism. In spite of this, the findings of the study also reveal that there is no relationship between social needs and acceptance. It is suggested that the cognitive, affective, personal and escapism need to be maintained in each section of its contents. At the same time, social needs' dimensions should be reconsidered in each content material publication. If all five needs are found in the newspaper contents, the level of acceptance of teenagers toward the newspaper could increase significantly. Furthermore, the newspaper companies should also take a more positive responsibility by providing more news on education and knowledge which are based on entertainment and cartoon, which could increase knowledge and enhance the teenagers' understanding of the information provided.

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