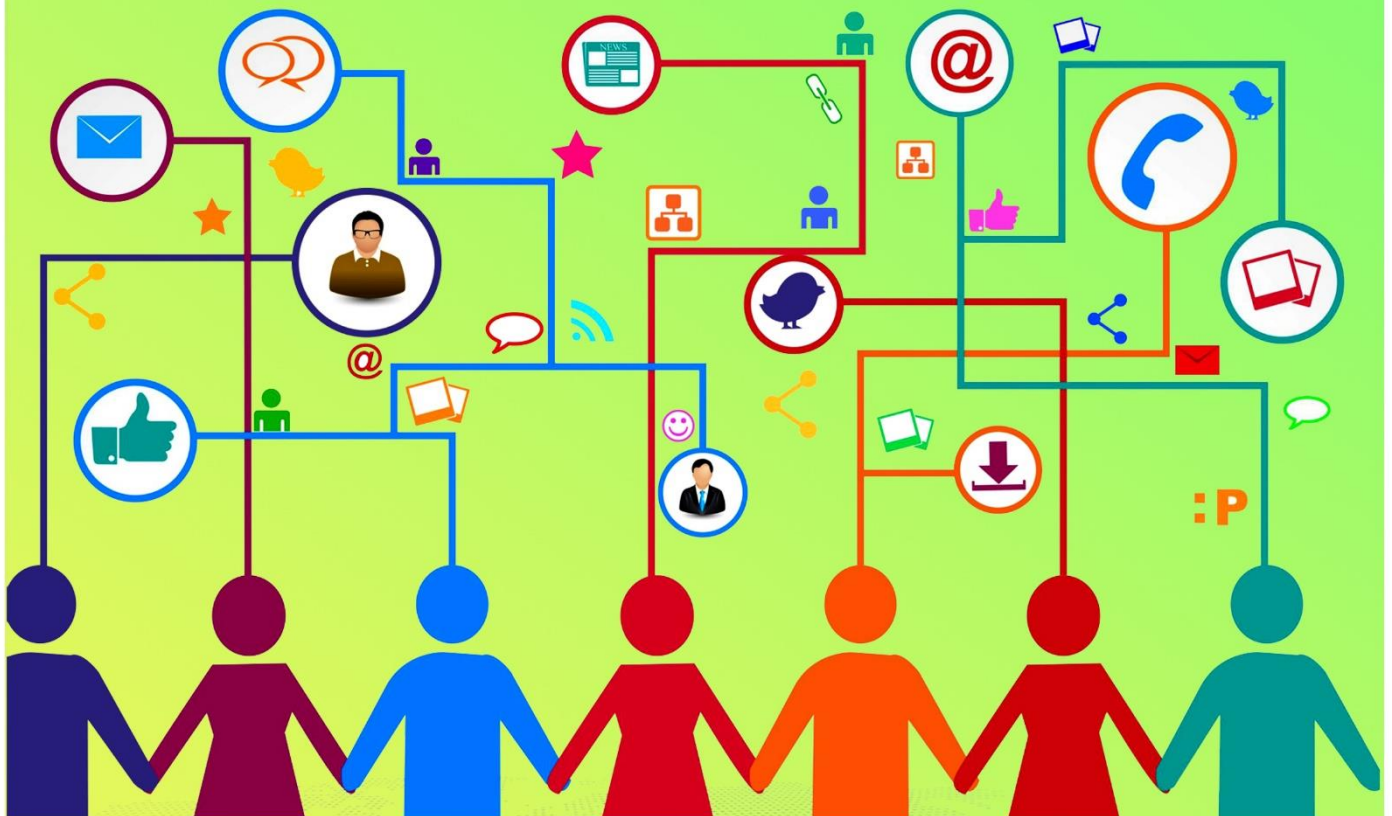


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## Chief Editor's Message



“Publish or perish” is a famous statement that describes the importance of research and publication in academia. Research and publication produce and disseminate new knowledge to the world. New knowledge paves the way for a developed society. Magazine of Media and Communication Studies is an attempt by the Department of Languages and Communication Studies to cultivate and nurture a research culture among our undergraduates. This magazine is published under the AHEAD ELTA/ELSE Development project. On behalf of the editorial board, I thank the World Bank and all the individuals involved in this work. They took part in publishing a magazine allowing undergraduates to publish their research findings. We hope this magazine will develop and provide more opportunities to the researchers on campus and outside.

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## **NEWS CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR OF UNDERGRADUATES OF TRINCOMALEE CAMPUS, EASTERN UNIVERSITY**

Ahalya David

The concept of media convergence is being explained by several scholars looking into various changing dynamics, significantly how media operation has been entirely changing with fast-growing technology. The Internet has dramatically changed the media environment, media industry, and professional practices of the field (Manovich, 2002). In the past 15 years, print newspapers have changed dramatically in content, design, and writing style in perhaps the most drastic manner, either in completing or complementing the emergence of online news outlets attracting advertising and revenue models that print media have jealously guarded for centuries (Tanikawa, 2017). This activity was previously limited to reading the newspaper, listening to a news bulletin on the radio, or watching TV. Today audiences can get an "instant happening" of the latest news, literally minutes old, on the Internet or receive updates on their smartphones, in their email inbox or on social network pages (Picard, 2009). It is clear that technology has not only changed how the print media industry worked in the past but has immensely changed how media content is being produced and circulated under one roof where a combination of print, TV, radio, Web, satellite etc. work together in one place.

With growing technology, media convergence has influenced the development of media in Sri Lanka and how it produces news content for consumers. The Sri Lankan media landscape is broadening and becoming highly complex and diverse compared to 25 years ago. Out of eight top four media outlets identified by the Media Ownership Monitoring, at least five companies, such as Capital Maharaja Organization, Asia Broadcasting Corporation, Power House, Wijeya Newspapers, and EAP Broadcasting Company have more than one medium -- TV, Radio, Newspaper under one roof. All of them are digitally connected -- they make cross-posting on digital platforms. Almost all media outlets use social media platforms to engage audiences and promote their new programs (Mom, 2018).

Sri Lanka had a population of 21.46 million in January 2021. Among them, 10.90 million are internet users, and the number of internet users in Sri Lanka increased by 800 thousand (+7.9%) between 2020 and 2021. The number of social media users is 7.90 million in Sri Lanka increased by 1.5 million (+36.8%) of the total population in January 2020 (DataReportal-2021).

Every citizen in Sri Lanka is exposed to vast information and news from mainstream media and various internet sources, including social media. As Rasmin noted (2021), with an endless

number of choices available, it has become tough to differentiate factual, objective, unbiased and fair news from fabricated, manipulated, misleading, sensational, non-inclusive and persuasive content.

News reading aims to train news consumers to think like journalists (Miller, 2010). But the emergence of social media is a question of the critical thinking habits of people. The introduction of social media has sparked much discussion regarding media viewers' critical thinking abilities. Because individuals remain in their comfort zones and bubble filters and do not consider alternative views while the media broadcasts their messages, the target audience shrinks. It has been simpler to stay in this filtering bubble since the emergence of social media. Thus, citizens must be able to make rational judgments about all media messages (Lesley and Farmer, 2019). Fleming (2013) argues that the need for a specialised category in media literacy that focuses exclusively on the news rests on the premise that news plays a vital role in democracy and news providers, therefore, have unique responsibilities to inform self-governing citizens.

News consumption is a central aspect of everyday life in modern societies (Thompson, 2018). Children and young people today are growing up around the world and are processing information from more comprehensive sources than ever before. At the same time, rapid developments in the online content system, such as the growing role of advertising and algorithms in determining news feeds and search results, can be challenging even for adult news consumers (Bennett, 2008).

This study found the factors affecting the news consumption habits and behaviours of undergraduates in Sri Lanka. In addition, the research explored the ability of undergraduates to distinguish reliable and authentic news sources from falsehood and misinformation and, more broadly, explores the issues involved in the news consumption behaviours of young undergraduates on the following factors: knowledge of the media ecosystem, knowledge about new media structure which includes content, ability to distinguish news from other information neighbourhoods, personal control and mindful consumption, knowledge and skills on verification and ability to detect newsworthy content. To collect the data, a survey methodology was employed, and primary data was collected through Questionnaires. Participants were invited to participate in a web-based online survey. Sample was selected randomly from undergraduates of students from the Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, via existing WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups and all available social media networks.

The survey has brought out essential findings on news consumption behaviours of undergraduates at the Trincomalee Campus of Eastern University in Sri Lanka. It is revealed that all respondents have a habit of using media daily. Undergraduates consume news for various purposes: 31.8% of respondents consume news to get to know about public events around them, and the rest were interested in world affairs (29%) and political decisions (22.4%). The highest number of undergraduates spend less than 30 minutes consuming news daily. Almost 15% of respondents used media to refer to news for 45 minutes to 1 hour a day. A significant number of undergraduates (9.25%) responded that they do not use any news media.

It is registered that fewer undergraduates consume news for more than 5 hours per day. Undergraduates spend more time on social media to receive news. For instance, 21.35% of respondents spend more than 5 hours daily consuming social media news. However, 18.25% agreed that they consume news from their favourite news channels, while the majority (43.95%) of the people were neutral.

**Most undergraduates believe that all mainstream media are accountable, fair, balanced and factual to the audience.**

It is revealed that social media is the primary source of news consumption among undergraduates (55.8%). Television comes second (43.2%), and radio comes third (2.8%). They use news websites (7.7%), printed newspapers (2.1%), and word of mouth (0.5%). Furthermore, it is found that the undergraduates heavily use Facebook (43.35%) and YouTube (36.05%). Some participants (26.15%) use WhatsApp, while some (24.1%) use Viber. Only 20.5% of them use Instagram as their information source. It is revealed that 9.25% do not use any news media.

It has been found that undergraduates consume more news during the pandemic. Precisely, 50% of the participants consume more news during the Covid-19 period (50%) and elections (43.4%); 31.1% of respondents consume news while any natural disaster happens, and 19.4% of respondents consume news if any national incidents occur; 16.1% of undergraduates more likely to consume news when any changes happen in government regulation whereas 11.3% of respondents consider sports events and 6.4% of respondents likely to consume news if any gossips are spreading regarding a celebrity. But 12.1% of respondents stated that they do not have any memorable moments to describe why they consume news.

Undergraduates rely more on Television (53%) to consume news on following situations primarily such as when any changes happen in cabinet portfolio (59.2%), during parliament debates on current affairs (56.6%), during any emergency announcements by the government (50%), national security issues (45.4%), during any conflict, riots & violations occur (44.9%), during pandemic (42.9%) and when any natural disasters (29.1%) occur.

The study reveals that almost 72.97% of undergraduates have fake news experience, which can be divided into very frequently (11.41%), frequently (26.61%) and rarely (34.45%). Regarding consumption patterns of undergraduates, 33% of undergraduates do not like to overthink when they consume news, and 14.6% try to avoid situations requiring critical thinking.

Respondents were asked some questions to get to know how they are knowledgeable about the news media ecosystem. Most respondents (80%) are unaware of the News Media Ecosystem in Sri Lanka. Out of 191 respondents, 47% directly stated that they did not know about the questions, 33% of respondents gave wrong answers, 25.3% of respondents have the idea that most media outlets in Sri Lanka work as non-profit businesses and most of them are owned by the government, and 74.85% of respondents did not have any idea about complaining about the issues related to the accuracy of the content presented in print media. Of the respondents, 43.15% did not know there is a self-regulatory body to complain against print media content in Sri Lanka. There are other questions which are related to the media ecosystem asked in the questionnaire are media outlets which are owned by the same companies (conglomerate), cable-based media in Sri Lanka, media companies which have publicly owned gossip sites, websites in Sri Lanka which are positioned in the top 10 of Alexa ranking, editor's responsibility in published items, possible effects on the dependence on advertising of news for money making, fact-checking organisations in Sri Lanka. These are the main questions which were mentioned in the survey. More than three-quarters of undergraduates are less literate in the media ecosystem of Sri Lanka.

This study concluded that undergraduates consume news for various purposes. The majority of them consume news to get to know public events around them and world affairs. Moreover, this project concludes that undergraduates consume more news during pandemics, especially during the Covid-19 period and elections. Significantly, it is revealed that social media is the primary source of news consumption for undergraduates, Television comes second, and radio comes third. Few undergraduates use news websites and printed newspapers too.



Furthermore, the study concluded that many undergraduates do not use any news media. Most undergraduates prefer Facebook as the first on their priority list of social media and use YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram. All respondents have a habit of using media daily and consuming around 45 minutes to 1 hour of news media daily. This study reveals that most of the respondents have fake news experience and are unaware of the News Media Ecosystem in Sri Lanka. The majority of undergraduates cannot distinguish news from other information neighbourhoods. Therefore, it is interpreted that more than half of the undergraduates are not news literate.

## PORTRAYING REALITY IN ASHOKA HANDAGAMA'S *VIDU*

**By D.K.G.C.M.Wijerathne**

People living in society face various kinds of social problems. The human community has to endure many hardships to carry out their daily lives. Such difficulties have become themes for film productions. The themes typically used for film productions are losing loved ones, perpetuating illicit work, poverty, war, racial segregation, and class divisions. Realities are the things in life that are commonly observed and verified to exist, consistent and not random or influenced by conformity or mass hysteria; something that is perceived as real and physically experienced by the senses. Reality is relative. We can understand reality as all our experiences and knowledge of the world that helps us determine how things appear to us - the state of the world as it is rather than you might want it to be. Reality is the sum or aggregate of actual or existent within a system instead of that which is only imaginary.

When we talk about realistic cinema, the following directors pioneered the beginning of realistic Sinhala cinema. Dr Lester James Pieris, Dr D.B.Nihalsinghe, Vasantha Obeysekara, Dharmasena Pathiraja, and Sumithra Peries are prominent directors in realistic Sinhala cinema. Their cinema practice has been continued by young, new-wave film directors, such as Prasanna Vithanage, Vimukthi Jayasundara, Ashoka Handagama, Sudath Mahadivulwewa, Jayantha Chandrasiri, and Sanjeewa Pushpakumara. Ashoka Handagama reserves an important place in Sri Lankan cinema because he constructively addresses common social issues through his films. This article will review how Ashoka Handagama's film *Vidu* represents social realities. *Vidu* is his first children's film. It portrays several social problems realistically.

Richard Rushton (2011), in his study "The reality of the film", argues that films are part of reality. He describes films as part of the real people typically inhabit, part of their world, and part of their lives. This attempt to acknowledge film's reality can be called "film reality". Unfortunately, film scholars and students are invariably drawn towards trying to determine what a film represents by looking at films as, at best, a secondary mode of being, so that any claim for the reality of films is most often met with either the blank stare of bafflement or outright repudiation. Only by opening oneself up to the experimentation, hypothesising, reverie, and imagination presented by films can one hope to accept the films' realities. It has to be taken that films are part of reality, not things that have to live up to an already-conceived reality or mirror reality, represent or reflect reality, or, conversely, 'criticise' reality. Only if people give up on the understanding that films are somehow severed from reality can they

begin to account for the realities that film themselves. In this article, I explored how the social reality concept is positioned in a film and the factors contributing to constructing reality. Explaining how I used it in my writing will help highlight the idea of reality. As mentioned in this text, experimentation, hypothesising, reverie, imagination and observations of facts help to build the reality of the film.

Poverty, prostitution and political influences are among the significant social problems in Sri Lanka. This review reveals how *Vidu* produced these three social issues to contribute to the construction of reality and how Handagama realistically constructed these three outstanding social issues in *Vidu*.

The first social issue portrayed in *Vidu* is poverty. Poverty can be described as a social problem in Sri Lanka as a developing country. This social problem in Sri Lankan society varies from region to region. In this film, Handagama depicts the social issues of the people living in the coastal areas. The two main characters used by the director to portray the social problem realistically are Vidu and his mother. Through these two characters, the director has used various techniques to highlight the stability of their lives. The director realistically portrays multiple social problems that occur due to poverty. Vidu's mother, engaged in a massive struggle to better her fatherless child, is subjected to different pressures from society. A single mother with a child becomes a victim of a powerful man and suffers from adopting her child. The film realistically portrays poverty as well as the following social issues.

The second social issue Handagama gives his attention to is prostitution. Prostitution is a compelling social issue in Sri Lankan culture because it is illegal in Sri Lanka compared to other countries. Although it is unlawful activity, the lives of many young people have become victims of this trade. According to Mohottala Kularatne (2016), poverty, parental emigration, child abuse, and domestic violence are the main reasons for prostitution in Sri Lanka. "Contemporary Social Issues, Challenges and Development in Sri Lanka", Among these factors, many people are tempted to sell their bodies because of poverty. Therefore, prostitution is one of the real social issues portrayed in *Vidu*. For her unlimited love for her son, the mother sells her body to earn money for her son's future. This social problem of prostitution is found in urban areas than in rural areas. Therefore, the director portrays the coastal region as the story's setting. Through this film, the director has built the social reality through social issues. The social realities are generated in the viewer's mind through this film, which highlights the reality by using some of the significant social problems of society. South Asians believe

prostitution is an unethical and illegal activity. The effort made by the filmmaker, Ashoka Handagama, to portray the fate of such a mother and her child in this society is immense. The filmmaker's attempt to represent an unspoken social issue in Sri Lankan Sinhala cinema is enormous.

The third issue he discusses in this film is political coercion. Political coercion is a prevalent issue concerning political influence in Sri Lanka. The bourgeoisie oppressing the lower classes poses many problems for the helpless people of such social classes. But the general public rarely talks about such incidents. In such a context, the filmmaker makes an excellent effort to speak of such an issue in Sinhala cinema. Most people do not like to talk about the oppression of other ordinary people in the face of power. *Vidu* depicts the grievances of a mother and a son under such political influence. *Vidu* has to live in this world as a fatherless son because a politician abuses his mother. Because of this politician, *Vidu*, who does not have a birth certificate because he does not have a father, cannot even inherit his schooling. How many people in our society abandon women and live luxurious lives, leaving them alone with children? How many such helpless women and children are there in this society? Doesn't *Vidu* convey the real social impact of such miserable lives? This film raises the above questions.

In conclusion, Asoka Handagama, a talented new-wave filmmaker, discusses burning social issues in his films. *Vidu*, as his first children's film, is not exceptional. Even making a children's film, he has not forgotten to continue his style of touching on critical social issues, such as poverty, prostitution, and political coercion.

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## **EMPOWERING THE COMMUNITY AND PERCEPTION OF FARMERS ON AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS IN 'RANGIRI SRI LANKA RADIO' STATION**

G.W.P.R.WIMALASIRI

The quality of life that people enjoy at present has been made possible greatly by the informative, educative and persuasive role played by mass media. Radio is one of the most popular and widely used means of mass communication because of its outstanding features such as interactivity, ability to develop a dialogue, ability to lobby the contribution of residents with lesser production expenses and extreme adaptability. "Radio has a more personal type of presentation and in reaching many people of low literacy level" (Orusolvasagan, et al., 2017) and "the world's poorest communities" Jayaratne (2012).

The radio, which started its journey as mere broadcasting support for war missions, now has become an inevitable aspect of the day-to-day life of the people. Radio is effective when compared with other mass media, not only informing the people but also creating awareness regarding social issues and the need for social reformation, developing interest and initiating actions.

Radio communication has continued to gain momentum globally. According to the Fact Book (2010), more than 44,000 radio stations exist and operate worldwide. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2011) supports this assertion, which indicates that radio accounts for 86% of the total listenership time globally. The institute further found that radio listenership is eight times that of TVs in the global arena (UIS, 2011); 25 out of 51 countries (49%) have radio channels available on a combined platform, while 13% are available on cable only and 8% on satellite only (UIS, 2011). Currently in Sri Lanka, approximately fifty (50) radio channels are functioning under government and private ownership.

The research was conducted to determine the perception of farmers of agricultural programs of RSLR, whether the agrarian programs of RSLR have empowered the farmers, and how those programs have empowered them. Required data were gathered using the In-depth interview method, and the Diffusion of Innovation theory was used to guide the study. For this study, the particular geographical area, "Palagala Grama Sewa Division", has been selected as an area where most villagers are farmers. To collect the required data, 30 (21-Males and 9-females) farmers out of 62 were randomly selected from "Palagala Govi Samithiya".

First, the Rangiri Sri Lanka newspaper was established in 2004 under the prestigious Rangiri Sri Lanka service, focusing on the historic Rangiri Dambulla Shrine. Later, Rangiri Sri Lanka

Radio was launched as the first Buddhist Radio in Sri Lanka on April 30, 2007. Rangiri Sri Lanka Media Network was established to highlight the Hela Buddhists' cultural values and the people's diversity and personality. Subsequently, Rangiri Sri Lanka functions on 96.7 for the hill country and Vayamba, 98.1 for Ruhuna and Uva and 107.2 for the Kandy and Colombo districts and functions through the internet ([www.rangiri.com](http://www.rangiri.com)).

The Vision of Rangiri Sri Lanka Radio is to expand the intellectual horizons of the audience, to provide a wealth of new knowledge as well as experience and establish national unity and peace and religion and life among different communities by promoting our own social and moral value system and national and cultural values.

Although Rangiri Sri Lanka Radio was established as a Buddhist radio channel, it is apparent through considerable evidence that from the very beginning onward, Rangiri Sri Lanka Radio has been used to broadcast live agricultural programmes. Especially farm broadcasting services (by the Department of Agriculture) used Rangiri Sri Lanka Radio to broadcast agricultural-related programmes from 2005-2011. The agricultural extension concerns disseminating relevant information to farmers to make their farming more productive. Concerning strategies adopted, the process of agricultural extension in Sri Lanka is made up of interpersonal as well as mass communication.

Accordingly, Rangiri Sri Lanka Radio broadcasts the following programs targeting the agricultural community in the country, expecting to improve their knowledge and uplift the farming community's living standard.

- Ran diyawara (Monday 8.30 AM to 10.30 AM)
- Boradiya Mankada (Saturday 7.00 PM-7.30 PM)
- Thuneththa (Wednesday 7.30 PM-8.00 PM)

Rangiri Sri Lanka radio is based on a geographical area where many find their bread and butter through agriculture. The farmers who live in Dambulla and the surrounding area usually visit Dambulla Economic Centre to sell their crops. It can be considered that these people are very much familiar with Rangiri Sri Lanka Radio, as they see the radio station every day, they see the billboards of the radio station. News related to their issues is being addressed by the radio. Hence Rangiri Sri Lanka Radio has a true potential to reach out to farmers in the area effectively and awaken the farming community through its agricultural programs.

At present, RSLR broadcasts only one program called “Boradiya Mankada” in the morning for 30 minutes every Friday and discusses agriculture-related issues and best practices. According to the observation made on program formats in the radio station, three programs broadcasted about agricultural matters also received the highest rating.

Most respondents stated that they listen to a particular program regularly. As the researcher identified through the interviews, most of them have a habit of listening to the radio as a part of their daily life, regardless of working in the farming lands or staying at home, apart from listening to the agricultural programs of RSLR. Most farmers attend to get the updates such as crop prices and agricultural knowledge about the industry’s best practices. Therefore, it is evident that the farmers have been able to get updates regarding the industry knowledge, and the radio streaming is capable of informing many farmers compared to interpersonal communication methods, such as meetings.

It is always beneficial for farmers because the radio programs deliberately address the timely issues that farmers face in a particular period. Also, the radio connects with the professionals in the industry to disseminate knowledge to farmers, which is challenging unless otherwise. It increases the synergy between the farmers, where they can be educated through the radio. Then they can share their knowledge rather than staying without knowing things. It provides the industry best practices for certain crop types and adequate knowledge for the farmers to cultivate those crops. More importantly, it raises the voice of farmers in the society where they are being recognised, and their issues are being addressed on a national level, attracting the concentration of relevant authorities as well.

The farmers pointed out some negative perceptions regarding the radio programs during the interviews, which could be insightful in this research scope. They mentioned the incompatibility of the radio programme schedule with their daily activities. Most farmers have a busy schedule in the morning, when the radio airs most of the agriculture programmes. Hence, it compromises the effectiveness of the relevant program where the target audience is not covered as intended.

Further, the lack of experience with new things, imagination and education are some aspects that keep the farmers from listening to radio programs. The absence of visual aids is one of the critical aspects which limits the farmers from understanding what is being discussed through the program. Moreover, the program's time period is not adequate for farmers to bring out their

problems to the professionals, creating a scenario where the issues of the farmers remain unattended.

This study concludes that most farmers habituate listening to the radio in their daily lives and particular agricultural programs. The farmers can learn about the industry while updating crops-related diseases and improving agricultural practices.

Accordingly, perceptions regarding the agricultural programs of RSLR were aimed to be identified. The positive perceptions regarding the agrarian programs of RSLR override the negative aspects, such as incompatible programme scheduling. The agricultural programs of RSLR empower the farmers, where they are being taught about the industry's best practices and traditional agricultural practices. Community empowerment has become a must in farming and agricultural activities because farmers might face demotivating and critical incidents in their daily activities. The younger generation's stance on the farming industry's future, young farmers adopting the latest industry practices that have identified risks and more productivity than other farming methods, and those encouraged to adopt traditional agronomic practices through radio programs.



## **NEWSPAPER READING BEHAVIOUR OF THE UNDERGRADUATES OF TRINCOMALEE CAMPUS**

**Ms DMMR.Sammani**

Mass media” act out as a powerful “opinion maker”. The newspaper has gained more trust and closeness in the general public than any other media. A closer look at history reveals that the newspaper has played an influential role in various social junctures. With the advancement of new technology, the newspaper has become one of the most powerful communication media. Initially used by the literate elite, now, the newspaper caters to the social needs of everyone. Reading is an intellectual activity that is possible only if a man/woman forms a habit of reading and practices it from childhood. Reading habits are crucial in enabling a person to make effective decisions on any matter.

Many scholars have examined the newspaper reading habits of youngsters worldwide, and the findings conclude that girls and boys differ significantly in their reading habits and academic achievement. However, there are no studies conducted to find the tendency to read newspapers among undergraduates. Thus, a study has been undertaken to determine youngsters’ tendency to read newspapers.

The study was conducted using a survey research method, and 100 undergraduates aged between 20-24 were selected as the respondents for the study. Respondents are the undergraduates of all degree programmes from the batch of 2018/2019 who study at the Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka. Most of the respondents are female (89%), and a plurality of respondents are 21 years old (45%).

When asked about their interest in reading newspapers, a majority (90%) of the respondents said that they are interested in reading newspapers, and 10% of respondents said that they are not interested in reading newspapers. The respondents who are interested in reading newspapers also replied that they read newspapers whenever they have free time.

The undergraduates of the Trincomalee Campus representing the departments such as the Department of Languages and Communication studies, the Department of Business and Management studies, the Department of Computer Science, the Department of Physical Science, and the Unit of Siddha Medicine use the library facilities available inside the campus premises for their academic activities. However, 71% of the respondents have replied that they

buy newspapers from outside, 18% of the respondents use the library to read newspapers, 9% of the respondents use online resources for reading newspapers, and 2% of the respondents use all of the ways mentioned above to read newspapers.

When asked about the purpose of reading newspapers, as per the responses, they read newspapers to update their knowledge (52%) on the current events around them. Most of the undergraduates who read newspapers to update their knowledge are from the department of languages and communication studies. It is evident from the responses that these undergraduates read newspapers to update their knowledge on communication or media as it is a part of their academic activities. In contrast, others read newspapers to update their general knowledge; 32% of the respondents read newspapers to get information on some news stories, and 16% replied that they read newspapers for entertainment. Based on the responses, it could be said that the Trincomalee campus's undergraduates read newspapers for knowledge, information, and entertainment.

The majority of the respondents are Sinhala-speaking students (62%), and they prefer to read Sinhala language newspapers (68%) and English newspapers (32%). The Tamil-speaking respondents (38%) prefer to read Tamil language newspapers (65%) and English newspapers (35%). As per the respondents, they read Lankadeepa (56%), Lakbima (26%), Lanka (20%), Virakesari (68%), Thinakural (25%), Thinakaran (22%) and Daily News (20%). Further, 20% of the respondents use e-newspapers based on their preference.

The undergraduates of the Trincomalee campus prefer to read the front page (58%) of the newspaper they select based on their language preferences. However, they also read the inside pages considering the availability of their free time. They read jumping stories (48%), editorial (47%), sports news (39%), foreign news (36%), and other feature articles (36%).

The study also found that 13 female and five male students read newspapers at the campus library. Thus, it is apparent that female students use the library more than male students. The study also found that 10% of the whole respondents are not interested in reading newspapers. As per the undergraduates, they had stopped reading newspapers because of their lethargy and unwillingness (12%). Among those who don't like to read newspapers, 9% like to get news from other sources such as television (5%) and new media (4%); 3% of respondents don't read newspapers because of lack of time and because they are busy with assignment work; 2% of respondents do not read newspapers as they are not interested in newspapers that are available

at the campus library. One respondent mentioned that the Covid pandemic situation had caused a mental disturbance. Due to that, the respondent is not interested in anything, including reading newspapers. In contrast, another respondent stated that it takes too much time to read newspapers and therefore is not interested in reading. These respondents also share one common notion that newspaper is an ineffective medium for circulating news stories.

However, most respondents (90%) believe that a newspaper is an effective medium for disseminating knowledge and information among the audience and is accessible to everyone. They also hold the idea that newspaper helps readers to update themselves; it is a trusted, accurate, cheap, and reliable source to gather news and gives rare and significant information in a detailed manner. Newspaper gives voice to the voiceless and space to the different parts of society. Newspaper can increase the reading skills of their readers, and it develops readers' power of thinking and imagination. Readers can read it again and again for more clarification.

The study concludes that the undergraduates of the Trincomalee campus representing the 2018/2019 academic year have a higher tendency to read newspapers. They prefer to read the front page more than other pages, and they buy the newspaper for their reading purposes and read it whenever they get free time. The undergraduates prefer to read the newspaper in their mother tongue over the English language newspapers. The study also suggests that future researchers can do their research on the effectiveness of newspaper reading programs on television.

**THE ADVERTISEMENTS, ARE THEY EFFECTIVE AS THEY PROMISED TO BE:  
PUBLIC AWARENESS ADVERTISEMENTS ABOUT COVID 19 IN SRI LANKA.**

**Upeksha**

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 disease, more than half of the world was on lockdown, which profoundly impacted our daily life routine. The virus has disrupted economic, educational and social relations. Various methods were put forward to raise awareness about this virus. The World Health Organization (2020) has expressed concern about the pandemic's mental health and psychological consequences. It speculates that new measures such as self-isolation and quarantine have affected people's usual activities, routines, and livelihoods, increasing loneliness, anxiety, depression, insomnia, harmful alcohol and drug use, and self-harm or suicidal behaviour (World Health Organization 2020).

During this time, educating the public about Covid 19 became essential because people were unaware of the virus and their safety. Television is an effective medium for bringing information to the public. It conveys the relevant messages to the people easily and quickly. In that sense, television advertising is a powerful communication strategy. Public awareness advertising is an awareness campaign in which no profit is made but makes the public aware of the current situation and provides a good education. In addition, the aim is to change the attitudes and behaviours of the people through that awareness. Therefore, this public awareness advertising is crucial in controlling the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Worldwide, television advertising has been used to inform and educate people. For instance, Port Harcourt, the Rivers State Government and other private and corporate organisations have utilised the television medium to create awareness and sensitise the people about Covid 19. A look at campaigns aired by some television stations, such as Rivers State Television (RSTV), Silverbird Television (STV), Wazobia Television. The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) telecasted various campaigns in commercials, jingles and discussions in English and indigenous languages to continually inform, educate and remind the people of the need to adopt hygienic practices and keep a reasonable distance from one another. A similar public awareness advertising campaign has been taking place since the beginning of the Covid outbreak in Sri Lanka. However, limited to no studies have taken place to check their effectiveness.

Thus, a study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the Health Promotion Bureau's public awareness advertisements broadcast on television. The Health Promotion Bureau (HPB) is the centre of excellence in Sri Lanka for health education, health promotion and publicity of

health information. The study focused on analysing the content of the ten selected advertisements and the audiences' perception of them. An online questionnaire was distributed among purposively selected 80 students to receive their perspectives. The sample was selected from the Faculty of Communication and Business studies students in the 2015/16 academic year at the Trincomalee Campus of Eastern University. The main reason for selecting campus students for this study was that they were well educated and had a good level of intelligence. In addition, they provide information to their family. Therefore, the reliability of the information provided by them is high. Ten public awareness advertisements broadcast by the Health Promotion Bureau on state-owned TV and private TV channels in Sinhala, Tamil, and English were studied. Each of the ten public awareness advertisements airs 0.31 minutes. Thus, they are expected to quickly carry relevant data and information to their target audiences.

When asked which television programs they received the awareness of Covid 19, the participants mentioned four: interviews, health promotion programs, news reporting, and public awareness advertisements. The public awareness advertisements come in third place on the list. Most participants (58%) received Covid 19 information from news reporting, whereas the health promotion programs reached second (21%). The public awareness advertisements had only 13% of the participant reach. These data confirm that the public awareness advertisements on Covid 19 were not as effective in reaching the audience as expected. From all the programs mentioned above, most participants (90%) have learnt the Covid 19 prevention measures such as maintaining social distance, wearing masks, avoiding physical contact with people and keeping their hands sanitised.

The ten Public Awareness Advertisements aired by Health Promotion Bureau provided three common themes. These themes are social responsibility regarding the prevention of Covid 19, awareness about health behaviours and maintaining mental health. For instance, four advertisements provided social responsibility messages; four were on practising healthy behaviour; the last two were on maintaining good mental health.

The four advertisements on social responsibility represented business and work environments. Advertisement-01 is an event that takes place in a salon. A woman comes to a salon for her beauty treatments. This advertisement highlights social responsibility and educates the public on the importance of wearing a mask and the concept of keeping hands clean. Advertisement-02 is an event that takes place in a restaurant. This advertisement shows social responsibility and the importance of following good hygiene practices which control the spread of the covid

19 virus. Advertisement-03 explains to the viewer how to act responsibly in a crowded place like an office. It also points out that the spread of the disease can be controlled by isolating oneself from others if there are any symptoms. Finally, advertisement-04 is an event that takes place in a bank. The advertisement shows that people can control the spread of the virus by keeping and using the personal equipment they need daily.

Four advertisements were on practising healthy behaviours. Advertisement-05 is about the importance of wearing a mask correctly and maintaining social distance. The setting is a tuition class. This public awareness advertisement raises awareness about wearing a mask to be safe from the virus and control the virus's spread. Advertisement-06 promotes the importance of maintaining regular hand hygiene, highlighting cleaning hands after using public transportation. Advertisement-07 is based on an event that takes place in a school. This public awareness advertisement informs the public about good habits, such as covering the nose and mouth with the elbow when coughing or sneezing, to control saliva scattering to prevent the spread of the virus. Advertisement-08 is a cartoon animated advertisement presented by Health Promotion Bureau. This advertisement is presented using a story-telling style. This public awareness advertisement informs the public about the healthy habits to be followed while leaving home. In addition, they will be made aware of how to keep their mind calm.

Vesak is a religious festival celebrated by Sri Lankan Buddhists, but the country had to be locked down to control the spread of the coronavirus. As a result, people could not go to the temple, imprisoning them in their houses. Being locked down inside the houses created much stress for people. Public awareness advertisement 10 shows how to maintain good mental health by doing religious activities from home. The advertisement-10 is about "How do we keep our minds calm?". This advertisement helps to build positive thinking conveying the message that human civilisation has had to face good and bad times. However, these bad times will pass, and good times will come. This advertisement shows the importance of keeping the mind focused and engaging in religious activities when the mind is restless. It also tells people to build new expectations and work hard to achieve them.

In conclusion, this study reveals that the public awareness advertisements produced by the Health Promotion Bureau contain important messages that convince people to act to prevent the Covid 19 pandemic. However, the audience reaction indicates that these advertisements are not as effective as they expected. Thus, a future study needs to find out why they are not that effective.

## **OVER-THE-TOP PLATFORMS AND YOUNG VIEWERS**

**Anusha Pathirana**

Over-the-top (OTT) is a platform that delivers movies and television series over the internet without traditional broadcast, cable, or satellite pay-TV providers. Unlike cable or satellite providers, OTT transmits the contents via a high-speed internet connection. The accessibility of OTT content is one of the many reasons why it's so popular among movie audiences. Streaming OTT, customers only require a high-speed internet connection and a connected device that supports apps or browsers. Smartphones and tablets can download OTT apps to stream on the go. Consumers can access OTT content from desktop-based apps or web browsers. The most common examples include Roku, Apple TV, Firestick, and more. Game consoles, like PlayStation, also often support OTT apps. OTT viewing has become popular due to Netflix's strong growth from the mere broadcast of old movies and television shows.

The internet is rapidly changing the entertainment industry. People went to theatres to watch movies in the past, but now, people can watch high-quality movies by sitting in their living rooms. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and the worldwide lockdowns let movie viewers choose online platforms to watch movies as they were not allowed to go to places like theatres.

Many researchers, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, conducted scientific studies on the usage of OTT for watching movies and other Television series, and they found out that viewers have shifted their interest from theatres to OTT platforms as they were not allowed to go to public places due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 infectious disease. Patnaik et al. (2021) did a study on the Rise of OTT Platforms: Effect of the C-19 Pandemic as it is important to know the extent of increase in the popularity of OTT platforms during the pandemic to know their future scope, and they say that it is evident that since the launch, OTT platforms have only observed an upward curve in their popularity and usage but, due to the pandemic there has been an exponential increase in its popularity due to the change in consumption patterns of people for entertainment through various media platforms. They also examined the opinions of people regarding OTT platforms, their consumption patterns, and their comparison with cinema to see if OTT platforms were slowly taking over the most popular conventional medium of entertainment. It was found that people used OTT more than any other platforms out of

TV and YouTube to pass their time or for entertainment. Most of them experienced an increase in their consumption times and were looking forward to movies being released on OTT simultaneously in cinemas. People were also okay with watching movies on OTT rather than cinema. But for some, it depended on the film. This research has shown a vast scope for OTT platforms in the future, and the pandemic has played a significant role in it.

Many other scientific studies focus on the factors that affect the viewer's preferences toward OTT and OTT as an upcoming platform to watch movies. At this juncture, a study was conducted to examine the preference of young viewers who study at the Department of Languages and Communication Studies, Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka.

The researcher found out that all respondents are aware of the OTT platforms and mostly use HBO and Netflix. All of the respondents had no account to access Netflix, but they exchanged their passwords with each other and watched movies together using their laptops. Although the OTT platforms are accessible to everyone most of the respondents have started to use OTT platforms mostly during the pandemic situation. The pandemic situation is one of the reasons for Younger's attraction towards OTT platforms and preference for different languages, convenience, quality, cheap internet packages, can watch movies again and again from online downloading any time, and smartphone penetration.





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