

RUNNING HEAD: AGE DIFFERENCES FOR ALTERNATE MEDIA USE

Age Differences for Alternative Media Use

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The newspaper industry has seen remarkable changes in the last several years. Newspapers across the country are utilizing technologies that no media figure could have predicted as early as five years ago. Though the newspaper industry has kept a firm hold on its age 50 and older readers, its younger demographics are gravitating toward online and mobile delivery as their prime method of accessing news (Pew 2006). News organizations both large and small have rallied to gain a foothold on these new methods of news delivery. *The New York Times*, for example, created a Facebook page the day it became available and now boasts 180,000 followers. The Public Broadcasting Service recently opened an additional website called Engage, where users can post comments, upload their own video and even chat with reporters. Because of this site and other online initiatives, PBS.org now receives 877,000 daily visitors (Emmett, 2009).

However, because of the quick ascension of these technologies (i.e. smartphones, Facebook and RSS feeds), little research has been conducted surveying the uses and preferences of news consumers. Newsrooms everywhere wonder which alternative method of news delivery will be a fit for which readers.

With almost all forms of technology, a large variable regarding adoption and use is age. This study aims to understand the nuances of age in relation to current methods of news delivery. More specifically, it asks how age is related to the use and preferences of traditional and alternative methods of news delivery. The study, using a statewide survey of Alabama newspaper readers asks whether age differences are found in how readers access information from their local newspaper in different formats (print, online, through social media, etc.), in what

readers want from their paper in a mobile news environment, and how strongly age is related to differences in light of other factors (such as education, gender, income)

Twenty-four of the top 25 newspapers in the country reported declines in readership in 2009 (Shin, 2009), and many in the industry hope alternative news delivery will help news publications reverse this trend. By having data regarding the uses and preferences of readers, newspaper companies can tailor content to better reach the across age groups.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Though communications technology and news consumption are both fields rich with industry reports, few academic studies have focused on news consumption in regards to new technologies. A major reason for the lack of specific research is the speed in which these technologies have emerged. Most of the data regarding news preferences of varying age groups are part of national reports that encompass the news consumption habits of the entire American public. Research that does focus on the influence of age deals primarily with general communication technology use rather than specific news consumption. Because of this trend, the literature regarding this research topic will be divided into two sections: findings regarding news consumption and findings regarding communications technology.

News Consumption

The vast majority of the research in news consumption that includes differences among age groups comes from the Pew Center's industry reports. The organization's biennial news consumption survey in 2006 discovered obvious differences in age groups in regard to traditional and alternative methods of news delivery (Pew, 2006). The overall findings were a general lack of motivation on the part of young people to stay connected to the news. Only 38% of people

under the age of 30 reported that they enjoy the news, compared to 59% of people older than 50. Twenty seven percent of young respondents indicated they accessed no form of news yesterday while only 15% of those older than 65 reported going without any form of news yesterday. This trend of news apathy among young people was most evident in newspaper readership, with only 24% of young people reporting that they read a newspaper yesterday compared to 58 % of older people (65 and older). As far as content, young people reported preferring comics and puzzles over the obituaries, while the reverse was true for older audiences. Young people were also much more likely to look for news using a search engine than older people, 81% to 57% respectively. The young and old also differed greatly in the method in which they read a newspaper, with young people preferring to read online and older people preferring print only. However, those aged 30 to 49 were the most likely to read the newspaper online. In fact, the 30 to 39 age groups surpassed their younger cohorts in almost every technological aspect of news consumption.

There were, however, a handful of news consumption aspects that did not differ greatly across age. Young and old people were equally as likely to e-mail news stories, read blogs, and use both print and online versions of the newspaper. The Pew (2006) report also covered news consumption via cell phones, which also displayed the same trends found with most technological means of news access. Those age 30 to 39 were the most likely to use a mobile device for news (14 %) followed closely by those age 18 to 29 (13 %). Those age 40 to 49 were less likely (6 %) and the older demographics were the least likely to use this method (3 % for those age 50 to 64 and 1 % for those age 65 and older).

The Pew Center's biennial report in 2008 (Pew, 2008), compiled from a national survey of 3,162 respondents, also found significant age differences in news consumption. For this

report, audiences were broken down into four segments: integrators, net newsmers (short for internet news users), traditionalists and disengaged. To designate respondents into these four groups, the researchers factored each respondent's interest in the news, frequency of news use and the type of news sources he or she utilized. Traditionalists preferred to use standard print media to get their news, and this segment was most popular in the 35 to 49 and 50 to 64 age groups. Net Newsmers preferred online and mobile news delivery, and this segment normally fell in the 25 to 34 and the 35 to 49 age ranges. Integrators utilized both print and online media, and this segment is generally within the 35 to 49 and 50 to 64 age range. This survey also found an increase in online news use and reports of reading a newspaper yesterday throughout all age groups from 2006 to 2008. Even more encouraging to the news industry, the survey found that online news significantly gained readers from the 25 to 34 age group (from 9 % in 2006 to 19 in 2008). The study (Pew, 2008) also found e-mail news stories and RSS feeds were equally as popular among younger and older consumers. However, the researchers found that older people were less likely to have a custom webpage in which they received news. The survey also found an increase in blog readership among those 65 and older who do go online for news. Overall, the survey found that most age groups wanted a broad overview rather than personalized news with younger people straddling the fence (48 % want overview while 44 % want personalized). Researchers also found that younger news consumers were more likely than their older cohorts to be news grazers, picking single stories from various news web sites.

In his article, "Missing the Mark: Why Online Newspapers Fall Flat with Younger Readers," Chuck Lenatti (2009) offered some insight as to why younger readers do not stick with a single newspaper's website. He divided age into four segments: millennials, generation Xers, baby boomers and the matures. Though he admitted newspaper readership is down across the

board, he claimed there is a stark difference between younger and older readers (millennials spent an average of 1.1 hours a week reading the newspaper while matures spent an average of 4.3). He also stated online readership is not compensating for the disparity either. Lenatti placed the blame on newspapers for making so much of their online content available only to subscribers. He pointed to Pew Center's (2006) finding of younger people looking for news via search engines. He explained, since most young people find news via search engines, they gravitate to web sites that offer news for free. Content that cannot be found has no value, he said. Lenatti also points to the trend of younger people being the most likely to utilize social media as another factor in news publications' lack of readership. He argued that younger people gravitate toward social media for news because they feel engaged by these media, a luxury that newspapers often neglect. Lenatti said older readers are used to this one-sided form of engagement. However, younger readers need to feel a reciprocal form of communication with their sources of news.

Oscar Westlund (2008) also looked at the use of 3G enabled smartphones to access news multimedia in his article, "From Mobile Phone to Mobile Device." Westlund analyzed data from five national surveys conducted in Sweden, one of the leading countries in the world for technology adoption. He found that between 2005 and 2007 there was a decrease throughout all age groups in the number of people who did not use smartphones to access news. The largest decrease was found in those ranging from age 15 to 19 (from 92% in 2005 to 78% in 2007) and those ranging from age 30 to 39 (from 89% to 79%). Most of the other age ranges decreased by around five percentage points, with the 60 to 75-year-old range decreasing by two percentage points. Swedish people who believe smartphones are a useful way to access news made up a small amount of the sample. However, there was a significant increase from 2005 to 2007 in

their perceptions of the smartphone's usefulness for news information. Again, the highest was with the 30 to 49 age range, which increased from 4% in 2005 to 21% in 2007 compared to 3% to 11% for those ages 50 to 65.

Communication Technology Use

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration's report, "Digital Nation," (2010) included a survey of 50,000 households to offer a view of the current use of computers and broadband connections throughout America. This survey found that senior citizens still lag behind younger people in Internet use. In regards to high-speed Internet access, 46.1% of those older than 55 reported having broadband access in their homes in 2009 compared to 80.8% of those age 18 to 24. The most popular reasons given by senior citizens for not having high-speed Internet access were "don't need it," and "too expensive."

Thayer and Sukanya (2006) looked at the communication preferences of differing age groups on the Internet. These researchers surveyed 174 people of varying ages in regards to their online communication with coworkers, strangers, friends, and family. The authors found those ages 20 to 30 were the most frequent of Internet users, particularly in regard to chatting and online games. Those in the 50 to 64 age range primarily used the Internet for news, weather and research. The authors also found a significant difference in the amount of communication with friends and strangers. Young people were much more likely than middle aged respondents to communicate with friends and strangers. There was no statistically significant difference in communication with family and coworkers online.

Researchers in the United Kingdom (Buse, 2009) took a specific look at the different ways retired people use the Internet. This researcher conducted interviews with eight retired couples living in England. They found these couples to be much less likely than younger people

to browse the Internet. None of the older couples downloaded music or used chatrooms. Most of them used the computer for e-mail and information searches. Several of the interviewees said most of their online activities were some variation of their Internet tasks at their former job (genealogy was also a popular activity among the couples). The researchers said most of the couples drew conclusions about Internet use that were similar to many conceptions of television viewing. Most of the couples described computer activity as passive and lacking culture. The retired couples were also much less likely than younger users to combine the Internet with other activities.

Pfeil, Arjan, and Zaphiris (2009) investigated the differences between age groups in regards to social networking sites. They performed a content analysis of 6,000 profiles on MySpace by collecting data from a webcrawler. The data included age, gender, number of posts and number of friends. The analysis found that older people have far fewer friends than their younger cohorts. However, the older users' friends varied much more in age range. The age groups also differed greatly in the amount of blog posts their MySpace page had. Older users had 28% fewer blog posts than younger users. The researchers claimed this trend was because of the need for younger users to display their social popularity. Also, most older users reported joining MySpace simply to stay in touch with their grandchildren. Younger users were also found to have far more posts with multimedia such as videos or music.

Hargittai and Hinnant (2008) focused on young people's use of the Internet. The researchers were specifically concerned with "capital enhancing" activities on the Internet, which they defined as activities geared around health services, finances and political knowledge. One could argue that news web sites would provide information in all three of these categories. These researchers conducted a national telephone survey with 270 respondents ranging from age

18 to 26. Overall, they found a correlation between knowledge of the internet and capital enhancing activities. They found higher education to be associated with more self-reported skills regarding the Internet. Those respondents with less education were less likely to engage in capital enhancing activities. Also, respondents who use the Internet more at work or home report more familiarity with the medium. However, whether a respondent was classified as a veteran or rare user did not relate to the amount of capital enhancing activities.

The Pew Center (Pew, 2009) also published a report regarding mobile device use in the United States. This report, gathered from a nationwide survey of 3,553 respondents, divided its sample into two broad categories: those motivated by mobile technology, which made up 39% of the respondents, and those attracted to stationary media, making up 61% of respondents.

Each category consisted of several subcategories (Pew, 2009). For the 39% drawn to mobile technology, there were five subcategories: digital collaborators, ambivalent networkers, media movers, roving nodes and mobile newbies. Digital collaborators made up 8% of the “motivated by mobility category.” These respondents had the most technological assets, and they were the most enthusiastic and confident about mobility. These respondents were predominantly in their 30s, male, well educated and financially well-off. Ambivalent networkers made up 7% percent of the category. These respondents have folded mobile devices into their lives but expressed concern regarding too much connectivity. They reported that they often feel that a break from mobile devices is good. These respondents were normally men in their late 20s, and this subgroup was ethnically diverse. Media movers made up 7% of the category. These respondents reported that they have a wide range of communication technologies and use their devices primarily for social exchanges. Demographically, they were primarily male in their mid 30s and of middle income. Roving nodes made up 9% of the category. They reported using

basic mobile technology (texting and e-mail) to manage their lives (e.g. keeping their business schedule organized). This group consisted largely of females in their late 30s who are well-educated and well-off. Mobile newbies made up 8% of the category. They reported being new to the mobile phone and having the lowest amount of technological assets. However, they claimed to enjoy having a mobile device. This subgroup consisted mainly of women, age 50, with low education and income.

Those preferring stationary technology (Pew, 2009) were also divided into several subcategories: desktop veterans, drifting surfers, informational encumbered, technologically indifferent and off the network. The desktop veterans were content with their desktop computer and a high-speed connection, and they placed mobile technology in the background. This subgroup consisted mainly of women in the early 40s of middle income and average education. The informational encumbered made up 10% of the category. These respondents were firmly rooted in old media. This subgroup was two-thirds male and consisted mainly of people in their early 50s of average education and lower-middle income. The technologically indifferent made up 10% of the stationary technology category. These respondents were not heavy internet users, and they reported that they do not enjoy the intrusiveness of cell phones. This subgroup is primarily women in their late 50s of low income and education. Fourteen percent of the stationary technology category consisted of respondents labeled “off the network.” These people reported not owning a cell phone (though many used to) and not going online. This subgroup consisted mainly of older women with low income and had a high share of African Americans.

Given the prior literature regarding news use and preferences, it is clear older demographics are more inclined to access news. However, younger demographics seem to gravitate far more to alternative forms of news delivery and seek news in far more various

means. Young people seek out these new forms of communication as a means of social interaction, while older people seem to be interested primarily in the productivity of these new methods. In regards to alternative news delivery, middle-aged news consumers exhibit the highest amount of interest in news content via online and mobile devices. If these trends are considered, younger demographics will likely seek more alternative forms of news delivery than older demographics, which will likely stay grounded in traditional methods of news access. Also, young people will likely utilize a larger variety of news tools, especially in regards to mobile devices. Given prior findings of news preferences among age groups, it is likely younger demographics will seek out more engaging content such as blogs while older demographics will prefer more traditional, pragmatic content such as weather updates.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research is intended to gain understanding regarding the behaviors of Alabama newspaper readers and how these factors relate to age. More specifically, this study aims to find an answer to the question: How does age relate to the way Alabama readers access their news from their local newspaper and what information they want from that paper in a digital delivery format? Of particular concern are audience members' use and preferences regarding "alternative news delivery," which describes methods of accessing news outside of print materials (online, social networking and mobile devices).

Three primary research questions will be asked:

RQ1 Are there age differences in how readers access information from their local newspaper in the different formats?

RQ2 Are there age differences in the type of content that readers want from their local newspaper in an online and mobile news delivery environment?

RQ3: How strong a predictor is age when other factors (education, gender, income) are controlled for in examining differences in how people access news and what they want from mobile/online delivery?

METHOD

The method used to answer these questions will be an analytical survey conducted online. The entire research project, from inception to completion, took place over one academic semester and was conducted by a team of graduate student researchers with supervision from a media researcher and a former news executive at a large daily newspaper. A survey method was chosen because it offered access to the broadest number of subjects and to a variety of information in the most economic and expedient fashion. Researchers wanted to gain knowledge of respondents' behaviors, opinions and demographics throughout the state of Alabama and to reach the audiences in a naturalistic setting where they normally access their news, at least the news they receive online. The survey method is strong at reaching those in a vast geographic area and at gathering information in a realistic setting (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

The survey method has been the staple of media audience research for many years. Dozens of past studies that have looked at ways people access news have used a survey method (Garvis, Stroud & Gilliland, 2009) (Patterson, 2008). The Pew Center's biannual report (Pew, 2004, 2006 , 2008) also utilized this method. By choosing a survey, the findings can be examined in light of similar research conducted nationwide (Pew Center2009).

An analytical survey was chosen because of the importance of observing the interrelationship of variables regarding news use. In this case, the independent variable was age of Alabama newspaper readers and the dependent variables were ways of accessing information from a local newspaper and preferences for online/mobile news content. The survey was conducted online mainly for reasons of costs and expedience. Also, the online method offered great ease in the collection and analysis of the data provided by the respondents, a strength of the online method (Luther, 2009).

However, there are limitations associated with this particular method. Like with most surveys, this research will not be able to establish causality. It can only signify whether or not these variables are related. Also, several drawbacks are associated with online surveys. For instance, the researchers have no control on the data-gathering procedure (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Because the research is conducted online, it also faces inevitable problems of failing to reach certain demographics that traditionally have limited access to the Internet. In addition, online surveys must be relatively low in the length of time required to complete the questionnaire. This is done to combat mortality (or drop-out problems). As Luther stated, "If the survey is too long, respondents might be tempted to exit the site mid-way through the survey" (Luther, 2009, p. 137).

Population/Sample

The theoretical population for this research is all Alabama newspaper readers, and, ideally, the research would be generalizable to all Alabama newspaper readers. A probability sample utilizing simple, stratified or cluster sampling would allow for a representative sample to be dissected from this population. The Pew Center's (2009) research, for example, used systematic random sampling from a list of landline and cell phone numbers gathered from

random digital dialing. This method is similar to simple random sampling and the most popular among media telephone surveys (Wimmer & Dominick, 2009). For this particular project, however, a number of drawbacks plagued the selection of a particular sample frame. There are few available lists that include all Alabama newspaper readers. For example, a list of all the subscribers to newspapers belonging to the Alabama Press Association was a possible sample frame. However, this list would alienate readers who access the newspaper online or buy it from a vendor. It would also be incredibly difficult to get all APA newspapers to hand over a list of all their subscribers, for reasons of both ethics and the busy schedules of newspaper executives. A nonprobability sample, or a sample without random selection (Peirce & Martinez, 2009), seemed to be the only feasible route. Another option was to gain a convenience sample from those who responded to a print advertisement in each participating APA newspaper. However, because the main focus of the research is the use of non-print news sources, a print advertisement seemed to alienate a large amount of Alabama newspaper readers who get their news strictly from online sources. These respondents are the most likely to utilize alternative forms of news delivery such as Twitter or iPhone applications. Also, print ads in all APA newspapers would be difficult to accomplish due to the costs to either the researchers or the newspapers themselves. And, again, the project's fate would be tied to the leisure time of newspaper executives.

Ultimately, an online advertisement for the survey was chosen as a method of gathering a convenience sample as well as a snowball sample. The convenience sample was accomplished by contacting the executives of newspapers associated with the Alabama Press Association. This organization was chosen because it offers comprehensive online directory of all participating newspapers. The newspaper executives were asked to provide space on their website for an advertisement for the survey as well as promote the research on their Facebook and Twitter

accounts. The researchers obtained a snowball sample, defined as asking respondents to forward the survey to other qualified respondents (Peirce & Martinez, 2009), by promoting the survey on each researcher's Facebook and Twitter pages. Though an online convenience sample alienates many print-oriented readers, it does provide the researchers with a large amount of technologically-inclined readers. Though many of the respondents may not adequately represent the average Alabama reader, they can, however, signify to newspaper executives where the rest of their readers might be headed in terms of alternative news consumption.

Operationalization of Variables

The constructs needed to answer the research questions are age, use and preferences. Age was measured by a single item borrowed from past surveys (Pew 2006, 2008). The uses construct concerns the method respondents used to access their news, methods such as RSS feeds or e-mail alerts. The different categories rated by respondents were taken from Pew Research (2008) with several categories added regarding social networking (Barker, 2008). The preferences construct concerns what particular types of news content respondents would like to see in alternative news delivery formats, content such as in-depth news stories or traffic updates. These categories were composed after discussion among the researchers.

The construct of age, the main grouping variable in this study, was measured by respondents choosing one of the following responses from a multiple choice question: 19 to 24; 25 to 29; 30 to 34; 35 to 49; 50 to 64; and 65 or older. These were the same sections used in the Pew Center's reports (2008), allowing the researchers to compare the data to similar studies conducted nationwide (the first age group of the Pew Center's research began at age 18, because of Alabama law the current research was required to begin at age 19). These sections also offer a

higher response rate for the specific question because respondents are much more likely to identify which age group they belong to rather than divulging their exact age.

The uses were measured by asking respondents how often they use varying types of news delivery methods on a five-point rating scale (rated from “never” to “multiple times a day”). The respondent was asked, “Please indicate how often you get news from THE NEWSPAPER YOU IDENTIFIED ABOVE in each of the following formats. If you NEVER read the paper on your mobile phone or in e-mail, for example, just mark NEVER at the end of the row for that format.” The respondent is asked to rate how often he or she accesses local news through the following items: (1) the printed newspaper, (2) the newspaper’s web site, (3) e-mail alerts, (4) RSS feeds, (5) mobile device, (6) Facebook, and (7) Twitter.

News preferences were measured by asking respondents to rate which types of news they would like to see their local paper devote time to. These categories were drawn primarily from the Pew Center’s research (2006) as well as discussion from the researchers regarding what Alabama newspapers offer to their readers and previous research regarding social networking (Barker, 2008) and mobile news consumption (Westlund, 2008). For example, the Pew Center asked respondents if they had read a newspaper yesterday as a measure of use. Respondents rated the importance of each news type on a semantic Likert-type response format (from one equaling the lowest importance to five equaling the highest importance). The respondent was asked, “Of the choices above, which is your preferred way of getting news from this newspaper?” The drop down menu contains the items previously listed (i.e. printed paper, e-mail alerts or mobile device). An additional question also dealt with the preferences variable. Respondents were asked, “If THE NEWSPAPER YOU PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED could deliver unlimited information online or through a mobile application, how important would each

of the following be for you?” The respondent then rated the following items by importance: breaking local news, traffic updates, interactive mapping tools, sports updates, local weather, staff blogs, in-depth local news stories, local business offers and classified ads. Also, respondents were asked a forced choice question: “Of the choices above, which is your preferred way of getting news from this newspaper?” The drop down menu contains the items listed in the uses question (e.g. printed paper, e-mail alerts or mobile device).

The respondent was also asked eight demographic questions. Again, age was measured by the sections used in the Pew Center’s research (2006): 19 to 24; 25 to 29; 30 to 34; 35 to 49; 50 to 64; and 65 or older. The respondent also relayed his or her gender and ethnicity. A checklist question was used rather than a multiple choice, forced-answer question. Checklist questions generally offer a higher response rate when dealing with ethnicity because many see themselves as belonging to several ethnic groups. An open ended “other” category was also offered. Respondents were also asked to provide the county in which they live and describe that area in terms of the following items: rural area, small community, mid-sized community or major urban area. Respondents were asked to rate their education level, again by standards used by the Pew Center (2008) as well as the U.S. Census (National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 2010), and given an open-ended question to describe their profession. Respondents were also asked to rate their household income by one of these items: lower income, lower-middle income, middle income, higher-middle income, and high income. Middle income was divided into three categories to combat the tendency for most respondents to classify themselves as middle income. The variables of news use and preferences were also analyzed in regards to these additional demographics. This allowed the researchers to better understand if

age is a significant indicator of news use and preferences when other demographics are considered.

Procedure

The following describes the typical procedure of a respondent completing the survey. The respondent ran across the survey either through an online advertisement in a newspaper's web site or through a social networking site such as Twitter or Facebook. The researchers constructed the survey using SurveyMonkey.com. This product was chosen because it is free and allows for instant data collection and some data analysis. For purposes of refining the questionnaire, a pilot study was administered to students enrolled in a basic reporting class at the University of Alabama. The online survey consisted of five pages and normally lasted around five minutes. The first page of the survey involves a disclosure statement covering the purpose of the survey, criteria for eligibility and the confidential nature of the information. The first question read: "BEFORE YOU ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW, FIRST please identify the Alabama newspaper that you read most regularly, whether in print, online or in any format, from the drop-down list." The list included all newspapers in the state that are members of the Alabama Press Association. If the respondent's primary newspaper was not contained in the list, he or she was asked to write the name of the newspaper below the question. These questions were asked to differentiate the readers of newspapers in order to provide the publications with market-specific data. The second page consisted of the uses questions as well the additional forced answer question regarding the preferred method of accessing news. The third page consisted of the main preferences question asking respondents to indicate the importance of different categories of news content. The third page involved questions similar to those regarding uses, but asked respondents to think of their overall news consumption. This data was not used

because the results were identical to the local uses responses. The fifth page consisted of the eight demographic questions.

RESULTS

Demographics of the sample

In total 1,046 respondents completed enough of the survey to be used for meaningful data analysis as of the survey closing date of April 18, 2010. Not every respondent filled out all demographic questions, so the percentages below representing the demographics of the sample are based on the valid answers for each question, which in every case is below the 1,046 total surveys.

Of the 952 respondents who reported their age, most were either in the age ranges of 35-49 (N = 251, 26.4% of the valid responses) or 50-64 (N = 269, 28.3%). Because we recruited some college students, the next largest age category was 19-24 (M = 191, 20.1%), followed by those 65 and older (N = 105, 11.0%). The remaining 135 (14.2%) were between ages 25 and 34.

Respondents were evenly split by gender, with 446 men (51.0% of those who indicated a gender) and 429 women (49.0%). For ethnicity, respondents could check all that applied, meaning the percentages add up to more than 100%. The vast majority of the sample indicated that they were White (91.4%), while only a few identified as African American (7.0%), Native American (1.9%), Hispanic or Latino (1.5%), Asian-American (1.2%), and Pacific Islander (0.3%).

Most reported living in mid-sized communities (49.5%), followed by small communities (20.2%), large urban areas (17.0%) and rural areas (13.3%). In terms of economic status, the majority identified themselves as middle class (45.7%), while a third reported being upper

middle class or upper class (33.3%) and a fifth reported being lower middle class or lower class (21.0%). Finally, two thirds of the sample had an undergraduate degree or higher. Of the 962 who indicated an education level, 30.4% had earned an undergraduate degree, 9.4% had done additional graduate work but not earned an advanced degree, and 24.0% had an advanced degree. Another 29.8% had done college undergraduate work but not completed a degree. This number likely was influenced by the college student recruits in the sample. Only 6.4% said they had not at least attended college. Overall, the sample had relatively high levels of education.

While these demographics do not mirror those of Alabama as a whole, they likely are similar to the demographics of Alabama's newspaper readers, especially those who can be reached through an online mail survey. Still, caution should be exercised in trying to generalize descriptive data in the survey to all Alabama newspaper readers. Further, the relational analyses done below should be viewed in light of the demographics of this convenience sample.

RQ1: Are there age differences in how readers access information from their local newspaper in the different formats?

To answer this question, respondents were broken into three age groups and compared on their reported frequency of use of their local newspaper in different formats. Of the 1046 respondents, 94 (9.0%) did not answer the question on age. Of the 952 who did provide an age, they were divided for analyses below as follows: 284 (29.8%) were ages 19 to 29, 294 (30.9%) were ages 30 to 49, and 374 (39.3%) were 50 or older. Higher numbers on the use scores indicated greater frequency of use of that format. Because there were three groups, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare means by the age groups.

As Table 1 shows, clear age differences are present in how frequently people connect with their local newspaper in different formats. For the print version, readers age 50+ reported using this format significantly more frequently than those 19-29 and those 30-49. For the Website, those 30-49 reported using the format significantly more than those age 19-29 or 50+. For mobile devices, the 19-29 age group reported using the format significantly more than 50+. The 30-49 age group also reported using the format significantly more than the 50+ group, but slightly less than those age 19-29. The 19-29 and 30-49 age groups also reported significantly more use of RSS feeds when compared to those age 50+. As for use of Twitter, the 19-29 age group reported significantly more use of this format than those age 30-49 or 50+. This was also the case for Facebook. However, the 30-49 age group were close to the 19-29 age group in use of this format. No significant difference was found for the use of e-mail alerts.

Table 1:

Means for frequency of use for each format of local newspaper, divided by age

Format	19-29	30-49	50+	Sig. F =
Print	2.45	2.59	3.15	36.64***
Website	3.12	3.73	3.26	19.44***
Email	1.69	1.82	1.65	1.55
Mobile	1.87	1.73	1.26	23.96***
RSS	1.86	1.88	1.57	5.74**
Twitter	1.84	1.37	1.18	30.12***
Facebook	1.97	1.80	1.39	17.92***

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

In order to test the overall preferred way of connecting with a local newspaper, the same age groups were compared by the methods they reported to use most often. Cross tabs were conducted on age group and the most preferred method. A Chi-Square analysis found that significant age differences emerged ($X^2 = 71.82$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$). The print newspaper's highest users were those age 50+ (58.9 %). Those ages 30-49 preferred the newspaper's website (53.1 %). Alternative forms of news media had the highest amount of users from the 19-29 age group (21.6 %). Both the 30-49 and the 50+ age groups displayed a significant preference to one particular format. Most of the respondents age 19-29 were split between a preference for the print newspaper and a preference for the online newspaper.

Table 2:

Preferred way of connecting with the local newspaper, by age group

Format	19-29	30-49	50+
Print	38.7%	33.6%	58.9%
Website	39.7%	53.1%	35.7%
Alternate forms combined	21.6%	13.4%	5.4%

RQ2 Are there age differences in the type of content that readers want from their local newspaper in an online and mobile news delivery environment?

To answer this question, the same three age groups were compared on their ratings of likelihood of seeking online or mobile news content in the following areas: local news, interpretive maps, traffic updates, local sports scores, weather updates, blogs, in-depth news stories, timely offers from local businesses and classified ads. Higher scores indicated a greater

likelihood of seeking online news content in these formats. Again, an ANOVA was used to compare means by age group.

As Table 3 shows, clear age differences were observed in regards to the type of news content respondents preferred. Those ages 30 to 49 reported a significant preference for local news updates, followed closely by the 19 to 29 age group. Those ages 19 to 29 reported a significant preference for interactive maps. For traffic updates, the 19 to 29 age group reported a significant preference for this type of content, followed closely by the 30 to 49 age group. Those ages 19 to 29 reported a significant preference for local sports scores.

Table 3:

Means for the preference of varying types of news content.

Type of News Content	19-29	30-49	50+	Sig. F
Local News	4.22	4.29	3.80	17.05***
Interpretive Maps	2.74	2.44	2.31	8.39***
Traffic Updates	3.04	2.97	2.65	7.18**
Local Sports	3.20	2.94	2.55	16.53***
Weather Update	3.83	3.82	3.67	1.66
Blogs	2.54	2.33	2.12	9.64***
In Depth Local News	3.31	3.48	3.21	3.53*
Local Business Offers	2.69	2.51	2.37	5.09**
Classified Ads	2.15	2.22	2.09	.823

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

There was no significant difference regarding the importance of weather updates among any of the age groups. Blogs were significantly preferred by those ages 19 to 29. In depth local

news was rated as important by all three groups, with the 30 to 49 age group preferring it the most. Timely offers from local businesses were significantly preferred by the 19 to 29 age group. No significant difference was found for classified ads.

RQ3: How strong a predictor is age when other factors (education, gender, income) are controlled for in examining differences in how people access news and what they want from mobile/online delivery?

To answer this question, regression analyses were run using age as an independent variable in a model that also included education level, gender, economic status, living area, and ethnicity. For six of the seven frequency of use variables (loaded in as dependent variables), age was a significant predictor of variation in the scores. For all but one of those six, age was the strongest predictor in variation in frequency of use scores. Therefore, these analyses indicate that age was strongly related to differences in ways people connect with their local newspaper when other demographic variables were controlled for.

For what people would want from their local newspaper in a mobile or online delivery format, age was not as strong a predictor across the board. In short, age dropped out as a key variable for five of the nine “want” variables when examined in the context of the other demographic variables. Age was still a significant predictor of variation in how important people rated their desire for breaking local news, maps, sports scores, and blogs. However, for the other five types of information – traffic updates, weather updates, in-depth local news, special offers from local businesses and classified ads – age was not a significant predictor in variation of scores.

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