

THE INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON BANGKOK
NEWS READER CHOICES OF PRINT NEWSPAPERS
OR ONLINE NEWS SERVICES

A MASTER'S PROJECT
BY
PETCHANET PRATRUANGKRAI

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication
at Srinakharinwirot University
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AN ABSTRACT
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The objectives of this study were to determine which demographic factors influenced Thai news readers in Bangkok to read print newspapers or online news services, and to identify trends in reader preferences for news sources. Fifty men and fifty women were surveyed in Bangkok by means of a questionnaire in December 2007 and January 2008. The findings were that age was the most important demographic factor influencing news reader choices. Income had a limited influence on reader choices. A minimum level of computer literacy was required to give access to reading online news services, but intermediate to advanced levels of computer skill had a limited influence on reader choices. Education did not appear to influence reader choices. Clear trends in news reader preferences were found; reader preferences for print newspapers were in clear decline and preferences for online news services were in ascent. These trends are expected to extend into the future.

อิทธิพลของปัจจัยทางประชากรศาสตร์ที่มีผลต่อผู้อ่านข่าวในพื้นที่กรุงเทพมหานคร
ต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกอ่านสื่อหนังสือพิมพ์และสื่อข่าวออนไลน์

บทคัดย่อ
ของ
เพชรเนตร ปราชญ์เรืองไกร

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษธุรกิจเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ
พฤษภาคม 2551

เพชรเนตร ปราชญ์เรืองไกร. (2551.) อิทธิพลของปัจจัยทางประชากรศาสตร์ที่มีผลต่อผู้อ่านข่าวในพื้นที่กรุงเทพมหานครต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกอ่านหนังสือพิมพ์และสื่อข่าวออนไลน์.

สารนิพนธ์ ศศ.ม. (ภาษาอังกฤษธุรกิจเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ) กรุงเทพฯ: บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต.

อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาสารนิพนธ์: อาจารย์ลีลลยด์ เอ. ควิก

การศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อทราบถึงอิทธิพลของปัจจัยทางประชากรศาสตร์ที่มีผลต่อการเลือกอ่านหนังสือพิมพ์หรือสื่อข่าวออนไลน์ของผู้อ่านในพื้นที่กรุงเทพมหานคร และเพื่อศึกษาถึงผลกระทบในการตัดสินใจเลือกอ่านหนังสือพิมพ์และสื่อข่าวออนไลน์ต่อยอดขายของหนังสือพิมพ์ในพื้นที่กรุงเทพมหานคร ขอบเขตของการวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้สุ่มตัวอย่างจากกลุ่มผู้อ่านทั้งหนังสือพิมพ์และสื่อข่าวออนไลน์เพศชายจำนวน 50 คน และเพศหญิงจำนวน 50 คน โดยการทำแบบสอบถามระหว่างเดือนธันวาคม 2550 และ เดือนมกราคม 2551 ผลการศึกษพบว่าปัจจัยทางประชากรศาสตร์ที่มีผลต่อการเลือกอ่านหนังสือพิมพ์หรือสื่อข่าวออนไลน์ของผู้อ่านในพื้นที่กรุงเทพมหานคร โดยเฉพาะปัจจัยทางด้านอายุมีผลต่อการเลือกตัดสินใจมากที่สุด รองลงมาคือรายได้ และความสามารถในการใช้คอมพิวเตอร์ ยกเว้นปัจจัยทางการศึกษาที่ไม่มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกอ่านหนังสือพิมพ์หรือสื่อข่าวออนไลน์ ทั้งนี้จากการสำรวจพบว่า การตัดสินใจในการเลือกอ่านหนังสือพิมพ์หรือสื่อข่าวออนไลน์มีความสัมพันธ์กับยอดขายหนังสือพิมพ์ เพราะผู้อ่านมีแนวโน้มที่จะอ่านหนังสือพิมพ์ลดลง และหันมาอ่านสื่อข่าวออนไลน์มากขึ้น ซึ่งจะทำให้ยอดขายหนังสือพิมพ์ลดลง นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่าผู้อ่านมีแนวโน้มที่จะอ่านสื่อข่าวออนไลน์เพิ่มขึ้นอย่างต่อเนื่องในอนาคต ซึ่งจะส่งผลต่อยอดขายของธุรกิจสิ่งพิมพ์เช่นกัน

The Master's Project Advisor, Chair of Business English for International Communication Program, and Oral Defense Committee have approved this Master's Project as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master's Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakharinwirot University.

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May, 2008

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Petchanet Pratrangkrai

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Since the 1990s, communication technology has played an important role in society and business. People's life styles have been affected by changes in technology: cell phones are replacing telephones, email is replacing regular mail and news services are moving online. The new technologies have created opportunities for businesses, but also new challenges: computers are replacing typing and fax machines, retail businesses are progressively moving from stores to online sales (e-commerce), and advertising is increasing its expenditure in electronic media and decreasing it in print media. The newspaper business, one of the world's oldest media businesses, has been affected by the new technologies. People can now read news in print newspapers and in online newspapers (Phoemsap, 1997, pp. 1-3). *The Economists* (2006) said, "Of all the old media, newspapers have the most to lose from the Internet. The rich world newspapers are now an endangered species. The business of selling words to readers and selling readers advertisers, which has sustained the newspaper's role in society, is falling apart."

Newspapers are a significant medium that provide information to the public (Inkochasarn, 1996, p. 1). If this business was seriously harmed by a change in technology, people would be seriously affected, due primarily to the fact that newspapers are one of the most powerful media that provide information to people (Schudson, 1995, pp. 21-23).

In 2005, the World Association of Newspapers or WAN (2005) said, "Today, technology is creating new challenges and opportunities for traditional media. Never before has so much information been so accessible to so many. By the end of the 1990s, some 700 websites provided online news; today there are thousands."

Since the first online news appeared on the Internet in 1992 (WAN, 2005), online news services have become more technologically sophisticated than ever before (Lewis, 2006). Online news services have drawn readers from traditional print newspapers because of their many advantages. Online news services are readily accessible and convenient, easy to read and quick to use, free or cheaper than print newspapers, updated faster, and come from a diverse number of sources (The PEW Research Center, 2006). These advantages are challenging the print newspapers because the income from their major sources of revenues (advertising and circulation)

is dramatically declining as readers transfer to online newspapers (The Economists, 2006). In the book "Vanishing Newspaper", Philip Meyer calculated that, "The first quarter of 2043 will be the moment when newsprint dies in America as the last exhausted readers toss aside the last crumpled edition" (Cited in The Economist, 2006).

Similar to other media, major revenues of newspapers traditionally came not only from circulation, but also from advertising. According to the Economist (2006), "Circulation has been falling in America, Western Europe, Latin America, Australia and New Zealand for decades. In Switzerland and The Netherlands, newspapers have lost half of their classified advertising to the Internet."

This decline in circulation and loss of advertising income has plagued newspaper industries in many countries, including Thailand.

At the staff meeting of The Nation Multimedia Group, (one of Thailand's leading newspapers enterprises) on 15 January 2007, Group Editor in Chief, Mr. Suthichai Yoon pointed out that readers were gradually increasing their demand for online news services, and decreasing their demand for print newspapers (Yoon, 2007). However, no specific study in Thailand has provided concrete figures. Yoon continued to state that the company targeted becoming the first choice for both Thai and foreign online news

service readers as core revenue-advertising moves to online newspapers. He further said that the Nation Multimedia Group's advertising revenue decreased approximately 30% between 2004 and 2006 as advertisers shifted to online newspapers.

Most advertising companies would agree that the Internet is becoming a more important medium for advertising (Warshaw, 2006). Classified advertising is quickly moving online. The Economist cited Jim Chisholm, of IMedia, a joint venture consultancy with the IFRA newspaper trade association, who predicted that a quarter of print classified advertising would be lost to digital media by 2016. Overall, IMedia said that newspapers claimed 36% of total global advertising value in 1995 and 30% in 2005. It predicted that print newspapers would lose another five percentage points by 2015 (The Economist, 2006).

In 2005, 42 Thai and English-language newspapers were published in Thailand (The Public Relations Department, 2005). The circulation of each newspaper varied depending on its popularity among readers and its target audience. The top ten newspapers in Thailand based on circulation in 2005 are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Top Ten Thai Newspapers by Circulation

Rank	Name	Website	Circulation (estimate)
1	Thai Rath	www.thairath.co.th	900,000
2	Daily News	www.dailynews.co.th	800,000
3	Kom Chad Luek	www.komchadluek.net	700,000
4	Matichon	www.matichon.co.th	600,000
5	Khao Sod	www.matichon.co.th/khaosod	400,000
6	Krungthep Turakij	www.bangkokbiznews	80,000-100,000
7	Phoojadkarn	www.manager.co.th	80,000
8	Bangkok Post	www.bangkokpost.com	75,000
9	Post Today	www.posttoday.com	60,000
10	The Nation	www.nationmultimedia.com	60,000

Sources: AC Nielsen, Hong Kong, the Public Relations Department, Thailand, and Wikipedia 2005

All of the above print newspapers also publish online to serve the increasing demand of online readers. However, print newspapers' competitors are not only online newspapers. Other websites present news for their webpage visitors (The Economists, 2006).

Other online news services include television channels, news service networks and cable news services, and other international online news providers and even such sites as hotmail, sanook, hunsa and panthip.

As a result of rising competition, some Thai newspapers are developing responses to that competition. Yoon (2007) said that due to rising computer literacy in Thailand, Thais are accessing online news in larger numbers than in 2001. The access rate is predicted to increase gradually along with educational development and literacy in the country. The Library of Congress-Federation Research Division (2005) reported that Thailand's literacy rate was 92.5% in 2005; however, the computer literacy rate was not available.

Yoon (2007) also said that the advantages of online news will force print newspapers, which have not adjusted themselves to the changes in readers' behavior, to change their practices or face difficulty. For example, the print newspapers could only report the 2007 New Year's bomb blasts in Bangkok in 12 to 24 hours, the online newspapers reached readers within 10 to 15 minutes.

According to Yoon (2007), print newspapers must reinvent themselves as online news services and provide other new-media services such as mobile phone news in order to satisfy the demands of readers with changing lifestyles

The Economist (2006) said that newspapers have not yet started to close in large numbers, but it is only a matter of time. By the 2020's, half of the rich world's general print newspapers may become bankrupt and close permanently.

However, the Economists argued that the Internet has not yet hurt print newspapers as much as one might think. The content of the news published in print newspapers and the quality of journalism may also affect circulation and advertising revenues as much as competition from online news services. This idea challenges the researcher, a journalist at *the Nation* newspaper, to investigate the impact of online news services on print newspapers in Thailand.

Most research related to the impact of the Internet in Thailand has focused on e-commerce, few, if any, have focused on the Internet's impact on the newspaper industry. This research aims to investigate that impact. If the Thai newspapers industry is to reinvent itself as an online, multi-media news and information service provider, satisfying the demands of readers with changing lifestyles, the industry must clearly

understand the present and future needs of the reading public. Two elements are central to that understanding: demographic factors that influence readers' choices of news sources and the extent to which readers' behaviors are shifting to online news services. Information on the first element will help the Thai newspaper industry better define the news and information "products" to offer to its various "publics". Information on the second element will help the industry determine the "speed" with which necessary changes must be made.

This leads directly to this study's two research questions.

Research Questions

The two research questions for this study are:

1. Which demographic factors influence Thai news readers in Bangkok to read print newspapers or online news services?
2. What are the trends in Thai news reader preferences for print newspapers or online news services?

Significance of the Study

This study provides valuable information on the impact of online news services on print newspapers as well as their publishers, journalists, advertisers, and readers.

Newspaper professionals will be able to use the findings to adapt their business models to take into consideration the impact of new online technologies, demographic factors influencing readers' choices of news sources and the extent to which readers' behaviors are changing. Advertisers will be better informed of changes in the Thai news and information market and thereby be better equipped to spend their budgets wisely. Finally, researchers in the fields of journalism, communication, marketing, and technology, will find this research of value to their work.

Scope of the Study

In order to insure that a broad cross section of Thai newspaper readers were included in the study, 100 respondents in the Satorn/Silom Road business area, the Maruay Library at the Stock Exchange of Thailand, the Siam Square shopping area, and the Prae Pittaya Bookstore at the Central Ladproad department store were surveyed by means of a questionnaire. Twenty-five respondents were surveyed at each location.

Definition of Terms

- Demographic factors: the characteristics of human populations and population segments that influence news readers in Bangkok to choose print newspapers or online news services, particularly age, education, income and computer literacy
- Print newspapers: publications printed and distributed daily, bi-weekly or weekly, containing news, editorials, regular commentary by local and syndicated columnists, advertising, and other items of general interest, and folded instead of being bound
- Online news services: news, information and advertising similar to that contained in print newspapers but provided on the Internet or via other technologies such as sms, and updated rapidly and allowing interactivity with readers

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the development of print newspaper and online news services and aims to provide an understanding of the effects of online news services on print newspaper sales. The conceptual framework of this study is based on reader behavior. The first part provides a brief history of Thailand's newspapers, from print newspapers to online news services. The second part outlines the primary characteristics of print newspapers and journalists. The third part outlines the characteristics of online newspapers and news services. The fourth part explores reader behavior and demographic factors that affect purchasing decisions. The fifth part discusses the relationship between reader behavior and the impact of online news services on print newspaper sales. The last part presents related previous research.

Brief History of Thailand's Newspapers

Thailand's first newspaper, the Bangkok Recorder, was found in 1844 by Dr. Bradley, an American missionary. In 1858, King Rama IV created the first Thai owned newspaper called *The Government Gazette*. The role of the press gradually changed

from serving the highly educated to providing information and pleasure for ordinary people. Thai newspapers have played important roles in conveying the people's opinions (The Public Relations Department, 2001).

Thai newspapers are available nationwide. In 2005, 42 Thai and English-language newspapers were published in Thailand (The Public Relations Department, 2005). The circulation of each newspaper varied depending on its target audience and its popularity among its readers.

Thailand's newspapers faced new challenges when the first Thai online news services appeared in 1994. In the early 2000s, approximately 700 online news services from domestic and overseas sources were found in the country (Sappai boon, 2001, p. 341). By 2007, almost every newspaper in Thailand had its own website to increase readers' accessibility and to increase revenues from advertising. The technological revolution is creating new challenges and opportunities for print newspapers.

A newspaper reading survey of the Office of National Statistics of the Information of Communication Technology Ministry (2003) reported that 21.6 million from a total of 57.8 million Thais above the age of six read newspapers. The Bangkok

metropolitan area and nearby provinces had the highest number of newspaper readers, 65.1% of all Thai newspaper readers were found there.

In summary, the newspaper industry in Thailand has grown and adapted to the changing needs of the reading public since its creation in the mid-19th century. In the early 2000s, new technology forced the industry to face the new challenge of international, instantaneous online news services. Three quarters of Thais read newspapers, the majority of which lived in the greater Bangkok Metropolitan Area. The future of the Thai newspaper industry will depend on the industry's ability to adapt again to changing reader needs and behaviors.

Characteristics of Print Newspapers

Print newspapers are publications printed on sheets of paper and distributed, at stated intervals, daily, bi-weekly, and weekly. The sheets are folded, not bound.

Print newspapers convey information on passing events, advocate opinions, and offer analysis by local and syndicated elements. Print newspapers also circulate news, advertisements, proceedings of legislative bodies, and public announcements

(Wikipedia, 2005).

Print newspapers are considered traditional means of conveying information to communities. Quelch and Klein (1992) said that print newspapers may target the local communities in which they are published, regional readers or national audiences. The tradition of being close to their readers has made print newspapers trusted and accepted by their reading communities.

According to Bogart (1984), print newspapers are generally read carefully. Readers take time to read them and read in a relaxed way.

Journalists have one of the most important jobs in any society. Journalists give people the information they need to understand the world around them and to make decisions about their lives. People depend on journalists to provide clear and correct information about their communities, their governments, businesses, sports, health and other facets of life. All information from print newspapers thus influences people's opinions and decisions (Eng & Hodson, 2001, pp. 1-2).

Eng and Hodson (2001) also stated that professional journalists consider themselves as a bridge between the government, private organizations and the people. Journalists, therefore, must report the truth, inform people clearly about new matters, educate and entertain people, as well as protect the people's interests. Journalists

agree that to do their jobs they must have high ethical standards. If journalists are unethical, they may hurt their sources, their newspapers, their readers and society in general. Journalism can be a powerful tool for public service. With this power comes responsibility: the responsibility to be truthful, independent and fair to readers.

To be ethical, journalists must tell the truth, not exaggerate or create ill feelings, serve the public, not particular interests, be fair, be decent and sympathetic, respect people's right to privacy, respect sources, and seek the truth (Eng & Hodson, 2001, pp. 122-128).

In summary, print newspapers and journalists have special characteristics that influence the public's beliefs and actions. People give a high level of trust to newspapers because of their reliability and truthfulness.

Characteristics of Online Newspapers and News Services

Online newspapers are publications available online that provide the same, or similar, information as print newspapers, but with more rapid news updates and responses to readers' inquiries (Wikipedia, 2005). This was considered a revolution in mass media in the 1990s (Thiel, 1998). Online newspaper characteristics of hypertext,

interactivity, and multimedia platforms necessitated a new model of journalism and reader behavior (Massey & Levy, 1999, p. 138).

People's life styles have been affected by changes in technology, and demand for online information has increased. Traditional print newspapers as well as other news and information providers have been forced to provide their services online: newspapers published in print and online, websites with hyperlinks to other sources and sms news updating (Sappaiboon, 2001, pp. 342-343). Sappaiboon added that online news services were likely to increase due to new technologies and the developing characteristics of online reporting (Sappaiboon, 2001, p. 329).

By 2007, bloggers, people who write a weblog, a web page that serves as a publicly accessible personal journal of an individual (Webopedia, 2006), have created a virtual "blogosphere" of online news reporting, commentary and opinion done by private individuals, most of whom are not trained journalists or controlled by professional journalistic organizations.

Private "citizen journalists" have been given the means to upload their photos, videos and comments on breaking news events to multimedia news service providers that, in turn, include them in their reports. The Virginia Tech University Killing of April

2007 and the Southern California Wildfires of October 2007 are two notable examples.

The You-tube Debates of American Presidential Candidates for 2008, televised in 2007, are examples of the news media providing common people an opportunity to upload their video questions for the candidates to answer. The actual debates were then broadcast on network TV, cable TV and on the Internet.

Rogers (1995) explained that online media have individual characteristics and can be presented in various patterns to serve online readers.

These characteristics include:

1. Interactive characteristic: online news services can provide two-way instantaneous communication between a sender and a receiver. People can communicate with news services in real time, while print newspapers and readers must wait for successive editions for letters and replies to be published.

2. Multimedia characteristic: online news services can provide text and static, graphics, as well as animated graphics, video and audio support to news stories. Print newspapers can only provide text and static graphics.

3. Continuous change characteristic: online news services can provide

instantaneous updates on breaking news or “hot” issues. Print newspapers can only update “hot” stories in their next editions which may be 24 hours, or more away.

4. Ease of navigation characteristic: online news services provide easy and immediate access to information and links to other online publications with complementary information or varying perspectives. Print newspapers do not regularly provide this service, and when they do, reference is often made to other print sources. It should be noted that online reporting is also archived online and therefore easily retrievable. Print newspaper reporting is archived in its original form or in other non-digital forms. This makes retrieval tedious. This may change in the future, but much time will be required to digitalize tens of decades of print journalism.

In short, online newspapers and news services have their own particular characteristics that attract readers. However, these characteristics used by bloggers could be a threat to traditional journalistic ethics. Bloggers, many of whom are not trained journalists, can publish their views instantaneously and globally online and represent their views as fact. This in itself may make some online news services more attractive to some readers who may seek more sensational or less mainstream

reporting. This may influence the extent to which newspapers readers in Bangkok are, or are not, shifting to online news services.

Reader Behavior and Demographic Factors

Readers are consumers in the sense that they read what they choose to read.

This excludes, of course, what they are required to read: materials for student homework, assignments, contracts, wills, deeds, tax returns and other materials.

Readers make purchasing decisions on what they choose to read; whether the “purchase” is for ownership or reading rights only, whether payment is made in cash, on credit, in trade, included in a membership fee or free of charge; and whether the transaction was made in writing, online or by word of mouth.

Most theories on consumer behavior are based on the economic notion that individuals act rationally to maximize their benefits in the purchase of goods or services (Shiffman & Kanuk, 2004, p. 19). This research views reader behavior as part of consumer behavior as described by the numerous theories related to it.

Consumer behavior encompasses all the actions that consumers exhibit in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products or services (Bovee, Houston, & Thill, 1992; Shiffman & Kanuk, 2004). Readers can be grouped

according to their backgrounds, including personnel interests and demographic factors, which influence their purchasing decisions (Kotler, 2000; Bovee, Houston, & Thill, 1992).

This study focuses on the influence of demographic factors as these factors are easily accessible and measurable.

Bovee, Houston, and Thill (1992) said that consumers live in a complex social environment. The kinds of products people buy can be influenced by demographic factors such as age and income, by their social status and by the groups they belong to.

Demographic factors are the characteristics of human populations and population segments, population statistics with regard to socioeconomic factors such as age, income, sex, occupation, education, family size, and the like. Advertisers often define their target markets in terms of demographics; thus, demographics are a very important aspect of media planning in matching the media with the market. Each chosen demographic category is analyzed by various companies according to its importance to the products or services they offer in the market (Bovee, Houston, & Thill, 1992). Marketers and other social scientists often group populations into categories

based on demographic variables. The most frequently used demographic variables are age, sex/gender, race/ethnicity, location of residence, socioeconomic status, religion, marital status, ownership, language, and mobility (Answer.com, 2000).

Dr. Niyada Chittcharat, a psychology lecturer at Srinakharinwirot University, confirmed that the choice of demographic factors to be studied with regard to any research question is dependent on the researcher's choice of the factors reasonably believed to have relevance (Chittcharat, 2007). Researchers in the domains of psychology, social science and business many consider different demographic variables as relevant.

According to Kotler (2000), the consumption of goods and services is shaped by age, gender, education, and economic circumstance. Computer literacy is another factor that influences demand of readers for online newspapers (Sappaiboon, 2001, p 336). In the book, *Three Decades of The Nation: From a Print to Digital Era*, Mr. Thanachai Theerapattanavong, Chairman of The Nation Multimedia Group, said that, computer literacy and the Internet play significant roles in the boosting of online newspaper sales. He added that although the number of Internet users in Thailand was between 500,000 and 800,000 people in 2001, which he believed to be a reasonably

average figure compared to other countries in the Asian region, the figure would rapidly burst into the millions (Sappaiboon, 2001, p. 336).

To survey the influence of reader behavior and demographic factors on print newspapers and online news services, this research concentrates on the reader demographics of age, education, income and computer literacy. This research does not focus on the gender of readers because previous research on reader behavior has shown that gender is not statistically significant (Wongthangsawat, 1999). The four selected demographic factors are of prime concern to print and online newspaper publishers and to advertisers that fund them. Extending the demographic list to include computer literacy, recognizes its importance in determining reader demand.

Age

Age affects people's needs, interests, tastes, purchasing abilities and preferences (Bovee, Houston, & Thill, 1992). Interests often vary with consumers' age (Shiffman & Kanuk, 2004, p. 55). The age of consumers or readers generally indicates what purchasing decisions they will make (Lamb, Hair, & McDaniel, 2004, p. 166).

Solomon (2004) explained that consumers in various age groups have different demands for products. For instance, teens have a larger demand for new technology

than older age groups, whereas seniors are likely to desire more traditional products than teens.

Education

Education levels also influence consumers' buying and consumption patterns.

The main differences that have been identified are those between college educated and less educated consumers. College-educated persons are much more likely to buy services or read books, magazines and newspapers than non-college educated persons (Bovee, Houston, & Thill, 1992).

Income

Income has long been an important variable for distinguishing consumer behavior. Marketers generally segment markets on the basis of income because they feel that it is a strong indicator of the ability, or inability, to pay for a product or service (Shiffman & Kanuk, 2004, p. 59). Income is the consumer's total financial gain over a defined period of time, including salary, wages, government assistance, pensions, dividends, interest, and other income sources (Bovee, Houston, & Thill, 1992).

Shiffman and Kanuk (2004) said that the amount of money consumers make

affects how they spend it. Demand for goods and services depend on the ability of consumers to purchase those goods and services.

Computer literacy

Computer literacy is essential for Internet access. The number of computer literate people predicts the number of people who will use online newspapers (Sappaiboon, 2001, p. 336). Computer literacy affects people's demand for online services, including online news service. Computer literacy is a major factor motivating people to go online (Karnjanatawe, 1999, p. 92).

The University of Maryland (2004) has defined computer literacy in three levels, the third of which can be considered as proficient computer literacy.

At the first level of computer literacy, computer users know how to use a word processor, how to browse the Internet and use email, and how to use a search engine.

At the second level, users know how to use other software applications and download online information, and can demonstrate the effective use of a Home Page or Web site.

At the last level, showing proficient computer literacy skill, users know how to use real-time communications (such as chat, audio, and video), know how to use

advanced search techniques, as well as know how to maintain their own blogs and/or websites.

In summary, reader behavior and demographic factors influence purchasing decisions. Readers choose to read print newspapers or online news services not only because of the characteristics of the media, but also because of demographic factors. This study focuses on the demographic factors of age, income, education, and computer literacy.

Impact of Online News Services on Print Newspaper Sales

Changes in reader behavior, demographics and demand are of major concern to traditional print newspapers. The 2006 article, "Who killed the newspaper?", stated that people aged between 15 and 24 said they spent almost 30% less time reading traditional newspapers once they start using the web (The Economist, 2006).

Tomel (2003) stated that the Internet has had a huge impact on reader behavior. The Internet provides consumers with a completely new way of accessing information and shopping.

By the early 2000s, consumers were online more than ever before, and the Internet usage rate had grown significantly as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2 US Online Users' Penetration Rate

	1996	1998	2000	2002	1996-2002 % Growth
Any online or Internet usage (past 30 days: minutes per day)	15.7	49.1	96.3	121.2	672%

Sources: AC Nielsen, Hong Kong 2003: adapted from Mediamark Research Inc.
Historical Data Point, spring 1996- spring 2002

In 2003, the Internet represented 11% of media consumption, a significant measure compared to newspapers (5%) and magazines (3%). Even when compared to television (50%) and radio (31%), the Internet should be considered a major force.

Internet media consumption was expected to increase to 30.2% by 2005, while TV and radio expected single-digit increases, and newspapers and consumer magazines were forecast to decrease in consumption (Tomel, 2003).

As people look to the Internet for news and young people turn away from print newspapers, paid for circulation-advertising is dropping annually. Print newspapers are losing their share of advertising spending. Most advertising companies agree that the

Internet is becoming a more important medium for advertising (Warshaw, 2006).

Classified advertising is quickly moving online. The Economist cited Jim Chisholm, of IMedia, a joint venture consultancy with the IFRA newspaper trade association, who predicted that a quarter of print classified advertising will be lost to digital media by 2016. Overall, IMedia said that print newspapers claimed a 36% share of total global media consumption in 1995 and 30% in 2005. IMedia predicted that newspapers will lose another five percentage points by 2015 (The Economist, 2006).

In summary, print newspapers face two major challenges: a drop in the number of readers, and lower advertising income. The newspaper industry has always been challenged by change and has always adapted and survived. In the early 21st century, print newspapers are facing the new challenges of technology and ever expanding online, multimedia news services. The future of print and online newspapers eventually will be determined by readers' purchasing decisions. The demographic factors identified for this research will define the profile of print and online newspaper readers in Thailand and will help print and online publishers meet the new challenges.

Related Research

Due mainly to the relatively recent arrival of online news services, research related to the impact of online news services on traditional print newspapers is rare in Thailand. Some studies related to online news are freely accessible via the Internet, while others require membership fees for access. Below, a selection of related studies available free of charge on the Internet or published in Thailand are presented. The study of the PEW Research Center for the People and the Press, conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International arranged a sample of 3,204 adults, 18 years of age or older in the United States from 27 April to 22 May 2006. The study focused on the impact of online media on other media (PEW, 2006). The research found that approximately half of the American respondents (53%) said they went online, either from work or from home. Of these, 23% said they had gone online to read newspapers. That represented a significant increase from a similar study in 1994.

This research also showed that different age groups of readers had dissimilar online news access rates. Twenty-four percent of working Americans aged from 30 to 49 accessed online news, as did young people aged from 18 to 29 in equal numbers. These two groups were followed by people aged from 50 to 64 (21% online news

access rate), and senior Americans aged above 65 years old (10% access rate). The study also found that half of all respondents used more than one medium for news: TV, radio, print newspapers, online news services, and others. The research did not compare access rates between print and online newspaper readers.

Research by Hope and Li (2004) entitled "Online newspapers: the impact of culture, sex, and age on the perceived importance of specified quality factors" investigated demographic factors affecting online newspapers readership. This research used a paper-based survey design. The sample groups for the study were composed of university personnel including students, academics, and administrative staff in New Zealand. Respondents had varied levels of computer skills and Internet experience, as well as different ages, genders and ethnicities. The study found that of 84 respondents, most respondents were at least occasional readers of online newspapers, with 36% reading online newspapers quite often or frequently, and 45% occasionally or sometimes. Forty-three were men and 41 were women. The median age was approximately 22 with 19 respondents (23%) older than 25. Just over half (51%) reported their computer literacy to be skilled or highly skilled, 39% reported satisfactory skills, and only 10% considered their skills to be somewhat weak. There

appeared to be no difference in the composition of the male and female groups with respect to age or reported levels of computer skills.

In a study based on 39 respondents entitled “Motivation, Behavior, and Satisfaction of Readers of Thai Online Newspapers”, by Karnjanatawe (1999), the researcher cited a MSNBC survey in 1998 that found a rising demand for online newspapers. The amount of time that readers of print and online newspapers spent reading newspapers was very similar. Readers of print newspapers spent an average of approximately 3.7 hours per week, while readers of online newspapers spent approximately 3.5 hours per week. Karnjanatawe found that people aged 26 to 35 years of age had the highest demand (40.7%) for online newspaper access. The second largest online newspaper access group was 18 to 25 years of age (31.9%), followed by people aged from 36 to 45 years old (15.2%), and seniors aged above 45 years of age (9.2%). People below 18 years of age represented the lowest demand for online newspapers (2.9%). The study also found that people with undergraduate degrees had the highest demand for online newspapers (58.6%), followed by respondents with Master’s degrees (24.4%), higher secondary school and vocational school diplomas (9.8%), higher graduate level respondents (3.8%) and lower secondary school

graduates (4.4%).

This brief selection of related research illustrates that reader demographic factors have a direct effect on news reading choices, regarding print and online newspapers. No research could be found that attempted to identify trends in reader preferences for print newspaper or online news services.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology of the study and is divided into the following parts: population, data collection, research tool and data analysis.

Population

The participants in this study were 50 Thai men and 50 Thai women readers of both print newspapers and online news services. This equal distribution eliminated gender bias. The 100 respondents were residents of the greater Bangkok metropolitan area.

Data Collection

To insure that a broad cross section of Thai print newspaper and online news service readers were included in the study, the 100 respondents were selected by the purposive method in an attempt to include approximately equal numbers of respondents in each of the four demographic categories which were selected as the focus of this study: age, education, income and level of computer literacy. Twenty-five respondents were selected in each of the following four locations in Bangkok: the Satorn/Silom Road

business area, the Maruay Library at the Stock Exchange of Thailand, the Siam Square shopping area, and in front of the Prae Pittaya Bookstore at the Central Ladproad department store. The survey in these areas of Bangkok ensured a variety of respondent backgrounds. The survey was conducted in December 2007 and January 2008.

Research Tool

A questionnaire was used as the research tool to guide oral interviews with respondents. An English questionnaire was prepared in partial fulfillment of the research project requirements. (See Appendix A.) This questionnaire was translated into Thai and was used in the data collection process to avoid language barriers. (See Appendix B.)

The questionnaire was divided into three parts.

Part 1: Personal Profile

This part contained questions on the profile of the respondents: gender, age, education levels, income, and level of computer literacy. Gender was included in the list only to insure that equal numbers of male and female respondents were included in the study, thus, eliminating the possibility of gender bias. The influence of gender on

reader purchasing decisions was not analyzed as previous research indicated that this factor was not statistically significant (Wongthangsawat, 1999). The section on computer literacy was based on the University of Maryland (2004)'s definition.

Part 2: News Access

In part 2, the respondents were questioned on their present news access behaviors, and their preferences for print newspapers or online news services. They also were asked for the reasons for their preference.

Data collected in the first two parts of the questionnaire contributed to the answer to the first research question.

Part 3: Preference for Print Newspaper and/or Online News Services

In this part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to fill in a table indicating the amount of time they spent 3 years ago, spend now and expect to spend 3 years in the future reading print newspapers and online news services. Data collected in this part of the questionnaire contributed to the answer to the second research question.

Prior to being included in the study, all the participants were asked a pre-qualifying question, "Do you presently read both print newspapers and online news

services?” Those participants who responded affirmatively were then given an explanation of the survey procedure. The researcher marked the questionnaires on behalf of the respondents to save time. The researcher explained items in the questionnaire that may not have been clear to the respondents, but in no way influenced or guided their responses, nor did the researcher give any reaction to the answers offered by the respondents to ensure an impartial outcome to the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, i.e. percentages, ratios, and means. The findings are presented in tables followed by explanations in Chapter 4. Finally, conclusions, discussion, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further study are offered in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter. Details of the data obtained from the completed questionnaires are divided into the three parts of the questionnaire:

Part 1: Personal Profile

Part 2: News Access

Part 3: Preference for Print Newspaper and/or Online News Services

Summaries and interpretations are presented and discussed in accordance with the questions in the questionnaire. Tables are drawn to display the findings and a brief discussion is presented below each table.

Personal Profile

The personal profile of the 100 respondents is presented below in Tables 3 to 7.

TABLE 3 Gender of Respondents

	Number of Male	Number of Female	Total
Respondents	50	50	100

Fifty men and fifty women participated in the study. This eliminates the possibility of gender bias.

TABLE 4 Age of Respondents

Age	Total
15 and Below	8 (8.00%)
16-25	15 (15.00%)
26-35	49 (49.00%)
36-45	21 (21.00%)
46-55	4 (4.00%)
56 and Above	3 (3.00%)
Total	100 (100.00%)

Forty-nine of the 100 respondents (49.00%) were between the ages of 26 and 35. Twenty-one respondents (21.00%) were between the ages of 36 and 45, followed by the age group of 16 to 25 (15.00%). It was difficult to find younger and older respondents who read both print newspapers and online news services.

TABLE 5 Education of Respondents

Education	Total
Secondary School or Lower	6 (6.00%)
High School and Vocational	8 (8.00%)
Bachelor's Degree	63 (63.00%)
Master's Degree or Higher	23 (23.00%)
Total	100 (100.00%)

Table 5 shows that the largest number of respondents (63.00%) had Bachelor's degrees. Nearly a quarter (23.00%) possessed Master's degrees or higher; 8 (8.00%) had higher school or vocational school diplomas, and just 6 (6.00%) were educated at the secondary school level or lower.

TABLE 6 Income of Respondents

Income per Month (baht)	Total
10,000 and Below	12 (12.00%)
10,001-20,000	34 (34.00%)
20,001-30,000	24 (24.00%)
30,001-40,000	13 (13.00%)
40,001-50,000	8 (8.00%)
50,001 and Higher	9 (9.00%)
Total	100 (100.00%)

The income groups of 10,001 to 20,000 and 20,001 to 30,000 baht per month included the largest number of respondents (58.00%). Respondents in the income groups of 10,000 and below and 30,001 to 40,000 baht per month were approximately equal in number (12.00% and 13.00%, respectively). The number of respondents in the income ranges of 40,001 to 50,000 and 50,001 and higher baht per month were also very similar in size (8.00% and 9.00% respectively) and were the smallest groups when arranged by monthly income.

TABLE 7 Computer Literacy of Respondents

Computer Literacy	Total
First Level (Low Skill)	22 (22.00%)
Second Level (Intermediate Skill)	34 (34.00%)
Third Level (High Skill)	44 (44.00%)
Total	100 (100.00%)

Based on the Maryland University's definition (2004, Online), Table 7 illustrates that the largest number of respondents, 44 (44.00%) had a high level of computer literacy. Thirty-four (34.00%) had an intermediate skill level, and 22 (22.00%) had a low level of computer literacy. Of the low skill respondents, 2 (9.10%) noted that they could not use a computer or the Internet alone, they could only read online news services with the assistance of a friend or family member.

In summary, the survey respondents, composed of equal numbers of men and women, were largely between the ages of 26 and 45 (70.00%), possessing Bachelor and higher degrees (86.00%) with monthly incomes between 10,001 and 30,000 baht per month (58.00%) and with intermediate to advanced levels of computer literacy (78.00%).

News Access

Questions 1 and 2 of Part 2 of the questionnaire asked the 100 respondents about their news access behaviors; how often they read print newspapers and/or online news services. The results are revealed in Table 8 below.

TABLE 8 News Access Behavior

Frequency of News Reading	Print Newspaper	Online News Services
Everyday	54 (54.00%)	38 (38.00%)
Almost Everyday	25 (25.00%)	26 (26.00%)
3-5 Times a Week	14 (14.00%)	14 (14.00%)
2 Times a Week or Less	7 (7.00%)	22 (22.00%)
Total	100 (100.00%)	100 (100.00%)

First of all, Table 8 verifies that all survey participants responded affirmately to the pre-qualifying questions about reading both print newspapers and online news services; both the print newspaper reader and online news service reader columns tally to 100.00%. More respondents read newspapers everyday than read online news services, 54.00% and 38.00% respectively. Slightly more respondents read online news services almost everyday than read print newspapers, 26.00% and 25.00%. Equal numbers of respondents read print newspapers and online news service 3-5 times a week, 14.00% each. Of the respondents reading news only 2 times a week or less,

22.00% read online news services and less than a third of that number (7.00%) read print newspapers.

Table 8 also reveals that of the 100 respondents reading both print newspapers and online news services, there was a clear tendency to read news frequently; 46.00% reported reading news from the two news sources everyday, and 25.50% reported reading almost everyday. Only 14.00% reported reading news from the two sources 3-5 times a week and 14.50% reported reading 2 times a week or less.

Question 3 of part 2 of the questionnaire asked the preference of the respondents for print newspapers or online news services. The findings are presented in Table 9 below.

TABLE 9 Preference of Respondents for Print Newspaper or Online News Services

	Total
Print Newspapers	42 (42.00%)
Online News Services	58 (58.00%)
Total	100 (100.00%)

Most respondents preferred online news services (58.00%), while 42.00% preferred print newspapers.

The forth question in part 2 of the questionnaire asked the respondents to give three reasons explaining their preferences. The respondents answers were translated into English then grouped into related categories. Their reasons for preferring print newspapers are presented in Table 10, and for online news services in Table 11.

TABLE 10 Reasons for Print Newspaper Preference

Print Newspapers	Number	Percent
Read Whenever/ Convenient/Portable	32	23.18%
More In-depth/Editorials/Op-ed/Analysis	22	15.94%
Eye Safety/Relaxing	20	14.49%
More Trustworthy/Reliable/Factual/Consistent	16	11.59%
Available/Purchasable Anywhere	14	10.14%
Unable to Access the Internet in Working Hours	12	8.69%
Cheaper than Internet Access	8	5.79%
Specific News e.g. Business/Sports/Entertainment	7	5.07%
Reusable/Saves Energy	3	2.17%
Classified Ads/Advertisements/Coupons	2	1.44%
Lack of Computer Literacy	2	1.44%
Total	138	100.00%

Table 10 shows that respondents who preferred reading print newspapers listed their primary reasons as the print newspapers' convenience and portability, and that print newspapers could be read whenever and wherever desired (23.18% of all respondents). Print newspaper readers also ranked newspapers' in-depth reporting,

editorials, opinions and news analysis highly (15.94% of responses). Respondents also expressed concern for their eyes following long term use of computers and the relaxing effect on one's eyes when reading a print newspaper (14.49%). Print newspaper readers felt that the medium was more trustworthy, reliable, factual and consistent in news reporting (11.59%), and they appreciated that print newspapers were available everywhere they went (10.14%).

Table 11 shows reasons for respondents' preference for online news services.

TABLE 11 Reasons for Online News Services Preference

Online News Services	Number	Percent
Updated Faster/Breaking News	49	27.22%
Accessible/Convenient	43	23.88%
Free/Cheaper	28	15.55%
Easy to Read/Concise/To the Point	17	9.44%
Navigation/Linkable/Customization	10	5.55%
Retrievable/Past Articles Available	8	4.44%
Specific Subjects and Content	7	3.88%
Two-way Communication/Instant Responses	6	3.33%
Pictures and Video Feature	6	3.33%
More In-depth/Unlimited Space for Full Text	3	1.66%
Reduces Waste/Saves Trees	3	1.66%
Total	180	100.00%

Most importantly, respondents who preferred getting their news from online news services listed the rapidity of news reporting and updating (27.22% of responses), the accessibility and convenience of the medium (23.88%), and the low cost of the service (15.55%).

A comparison of the reasons respondents offered to explain their preferences for reading print newspapers or online news services is presented in Table 12, below. Table 12 compares the reasons for preferences reported on Tables 10 and 11. Reasons for print newspaper reader preferences are presented on the left. Reasons for online news service preferences are presented on the right.

TABLE 12 Comparison of Reader Preferences

Print Newspaper Preferences			Online News Service Preferences	
1			27.22%	Updated Faster/Breaking News
2	23.18%	Read Whenever/ Convenient/Portable	23.88%	Accessible/Convenient
3	25.94%	More In-depth/Editorials/ Op-ed/Analysis	1.66%	More In-depth/Unlimited Space for Full Text
4	5.79%	Cheaper than Internet Access	15.55%	Free/Cheaper
5	14.49%	Eye Safety/Relaxing	9.44%	Easy to Read/Concise/ To the Point
6	11.59%	More Trustworthy/ Reliable/Factual/Consistent		
7	10.14%	Available Anywhere/Purchasable	23.88%	Accessible/Convenient
8			9.44%	Easy to Read/Concise/ To the Point
9	8.69%	Unable to Access the Internet in Working Hours		
10			5.55%	Navigation/Linkable/Customization
11	5.07%	Specific News e.g. Business/Sports/Entertainment	3.88%	Specific Subjects and Content
12			4.44%	Retrievable/Past Articles Available
13			3.33%	Two-way Communication/ Instant Responses
14			3.33%	Pictures and Video Feature
15	2.17%	Reusable/Saves Energy	1.66%	Reduces Waste/Saves Trees
16	1.44%	Classified Ads/ Advertisements/Coupons		
17	1.44%	Lack of Computer Literacy		

Both groups cited lines 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, and 15 as reasons for their preferences. The characteristics on each of these lines are largely similar; accessibility,

convenience, portability (line 2); in depth reporting (line 3); cheaper (line 4)..., however, each group of respondents cited each characteristic as a reason for their preference.

Both readers preferring print newspapers and online news services saw their preferred medium as accessible, convenient and portable.... Since both groups of respondents reported using both media, they saw their preferred medium as more accessible, convenient and portable...than the other medium.

In summary, print newspapers stood out in reader's minds for convenience and portability, in-depth reporting and news analysis as well as trustworthiness. Readers who preferred print newspapers also noted eye safety from prolonged computer use as an important reason for their preference. Readers who preferred online news services cited the most important reasons as rapidity of reporting, accessibility, and convenience and low cost.

Preference for Print Newspaper and/or Online News Services

Part 3 of the questionnaire asked the respondents to estimate the time they spent 3 years ago, spend now and will spend 3 years in the future reading print newspaper and/or online news services. Trends in reader preferences for print newspapers and/or online news services are revealed.

Table 13 shows the reported reading behaviors of the 100 respondents in each of the three timeframes offered: three years ago (2004/2005), now (2007/2008) and three years from now (2010/2011). The number on the left in each box is the number of respondents reporting their corresponding news reading time; for example, 37 respondents reported spending 100% of their time reading print newspapers and 0% of their time reading online news services three years ago (upper left and bottom right boxes in the “3 years ago” column). Total print newspaper and online news service reading time must equal 100%. The number in parenthesis on the right in each box is the weighted score. This is established by multiplying the number of respondents by the percentage number, as in the above example, 37 respondents x 100 (percentage number) = 3,700 and 37 respondents x 0 (percentage number) = 0. At the bottom of Table 13, the total weighted score divided by the total number of respondents gives the total average percentage of time spent by the respondents reading print newspapers and/or online news services in each timeframe.

TABLE 13 Time Spent Reading Print Newspapers and/or Online News Services

	3 Years Ago (2004/2005)		Now (2007/2008)		3 Years from Now (2010/2011)	
	Print Newspapers	Online News Services	Print Newspapers	Online News Services	Print Newspapers	Online News Services
At 100% (Number of respondents X % weight)	37 (3,700)	0 (0)	12 (1,200)	5 (500)	3 (300)	18 (1,800)
At 90% (Number of respondents X % weight)	19 (1,710)	0 (0)	7 (630)	5 (450)	4 (360)	14 (1,260)
At 80% (Number of respondents X % weight)	21 (1,680)	0 (0)	10 (800)	7 (560)	6 (480)	17 (1,360)
At 70% (Number of respondents X % weight)	10 (700)	0 (0)	13 (910)	4 (280)	8 (560)	3 (210)
At 60% (Number of respondents X % weight)	7 (420)	0 (0)	4 (240)	5 (300)	4 (240)	5 (300)
At 50% (Number of respondents X % weight)	6 (300)	6 (300)	28 (1,400)	28 (1,400)	18 (900)	18 (900)
At 40% (Number of respondents X % weight)	0 (0)	7 (280)	5 (200)	4 (160)	5 (200)	4 (160)
At 30% (Number of respondents X % weight)	0 (0)	10 (300)	4 (120)	13 (390)	3 (90)	8 (240)
At 20% (Number of respondents X % weight)	0 (0)	21 (420)	7 (140)	10 (200)	17 (340)	6 (120)
At 10% (Number of respondents X % weight)	0 (0)	19 (190)	5 (50)	7 (70)	14 (140)	4 (40)
At 0% (Number of respondents X % weight)	0 (0)	37 (0)	5 (0)	12 (0)	18 (0)	3 (0)
Total Number of Respondents	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total Weighted Scores	8,510	1,490	5,690	4,310	3,610	6,390
Percentages	85.10%	14.90%	56.90%	43.10%	36.10%	63.90%

Table 13 shows that readers reported reading print newspapers more than online news services three years ago and now (85.10% to 14.90% and 56.90% to 43.10% respectively), but believed they would read online news services more than print newspapers by 2010/2011 (63.90% to 36.10%).

The findings in Table 13 can be used to project trends in news reader preferences. This is presented in Figure 1 below.

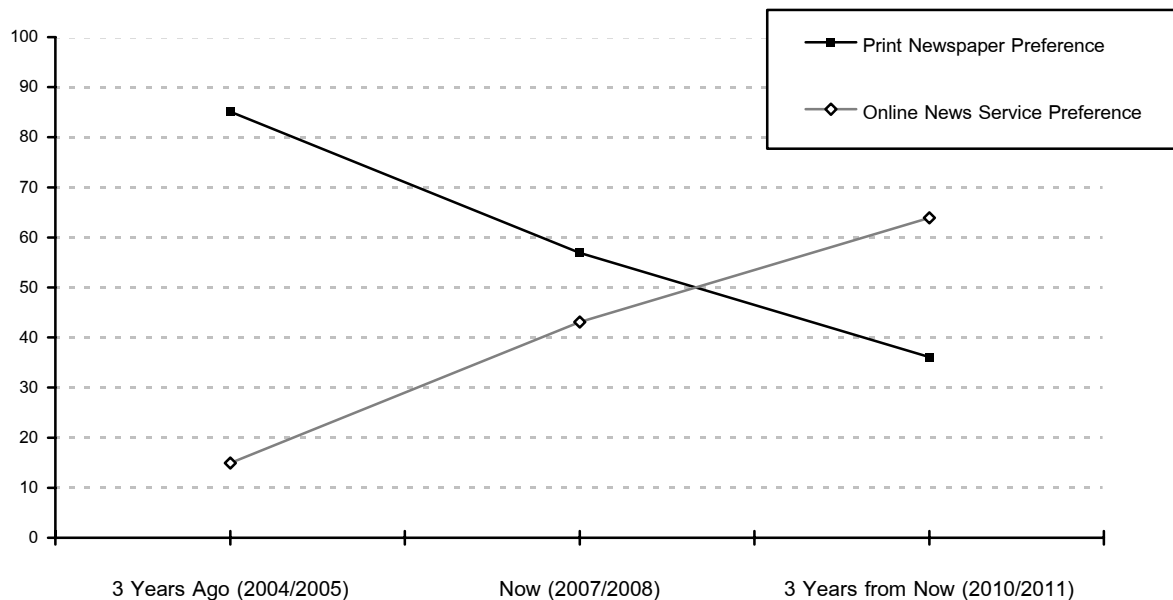


FIGURE 1: Trends in Reader Preferences for Print Newspapers and/or Online News Services

Figure 1 clearly shows the decline in the reader preference for print newspapers and the rise in the reader preference for online news services. Based on the reporting of the 100 respondents in this study, online news services should become the preferred

source of news in the near future (2008/2009). Should these trends continue, print newspapers in Bangkok may be pushed out of business in the coming 10 to 15 years.

In summary, the research results show that demand for print newspapers has decreased over the past three years and will continue to do so. At the same time, the reader preference for online news services has increased and the trends project that online news services will become the preferred source of news for Bangkok news readers in the near future.

Demographic Factors Associated with Reader Preference

This research focused on four demographic factors that might influence reader purchasing decisions regarding print newspaper and online news services, i.e. age, education, income, and computer literacy. The findings in Tables 14 to 17 show the influence of each demographic factor on reader preferences for print newspapers and online news services.

TABLE 14 Influence of the Age Factor on Reader Preference

Age Factor	No. of Respondents		Totals
	Print Newspapers	Online News Services	
15 years old and below	0	8	8
16-25 years old	0	15	15
26-35 years old	20	29	49
36-45 years old	14	7	21
46-55 years old	2	2	4
56 years old and above	3	0	3
Totals	39	61	100

In terms of age, all respondents below the age of 26 preferred online news services (23 of the 100 respondents). All of the respondents 56 years old and above preferred print newspapers (3 of 100). In the 26 to 35 year old age group, 20 respondents preferred print newspapers, while 29 respondents preferred online news services. Fourteen respondents between the ages of 36 and 45 preferred print newspapers and 7 preferred online news services. Overall, the age factor influenced reader preferences. Younger readers, under 36 years of age, preferred online news services; 52 respondents preferring online news services to 20 respondents preferring print newspapers. This defines a ratio of 2.6:1 (2.6 respondents preferred online news services for every 1.0 respondent who preferred print newspapers). Older readers, over

35 years of age, preferred print newspapers; 19 respondents preferring online news

services for every 9 respondents preferring online news services. This defines a ratio

of 2.11:1.

TABLE 15 Influence of the Education Factor on Reader Preference

Education Factor	No. of Respondents		Totals
	Print Newspapers	Online News Services	
Secondary School and Lower	0	6	6
High School and Vocational	2	6	8
Bachelor's Degree	29	34	63
Master's Degree or Higher	7	16	23
Totals	38	62	100

In terms of education, the majority of respondents in all education levels preferred online news services, only the degree of preference changed among the groups. All of the respondents with secondary school and lower diplomas preferred online news services. High school and vocational school graduates preferred online news services over print newspapers at the ratio of 6 respondents to 2 (3:1), Master's level or higher degree holders preferred online news services 16 respondents to 7 (2.28:1) and Bachelor's degree holders held the same preference 34 respondents to 29 (1.17:1). Overall, the education factor did not appear to influence reader preferences

for print newspapers and/or online news services. All groups preferred online news service reading to one degree or another.

TABLE 16 Influence of the Income Factor on Reader Preference

Income Factor	No. of Respondents		Totals
	Print Newspapers	Online News Services	
10,000 and Below	4	8	12
10,001 - 20,000	22	12	34
20,001 – 30,000	11	13	24
30,001 – 40,000	7	6	13
40,001 – 50,000	5	3	8
50,001 and Higher	7	2	9
Totals	56	44	100

In terms of the income factor, the majority of respondents preferred reading print newspapers (56 of 100 respondents), but the respondents in each income group showed various levels of preference for print newspapers or online news services. Below the income level of 30,001 baht per month, reading preferences were mixed. Respondents in the income range of 10,000 baht and below preferred online news services at 8 respondents to 4 (2.00:1). Respondents in the income bracket 10,001-20,000 baht preferred reading print newspapers, 22 respondents to 12 (1.83:1), and respondents earning between 20,001 and 30,000 baht per month preferred news from

online news services, 13 respondents to 11 (1.18:1). Above 30,000 baht per month, respondents preferences for print newspaper reading increased steadily: 30,001-40,000 baht per month, 7 respondents to 6 (1.16:1); 40,001-50,000 baht per month, 5 respondents to 3 (1.66:1), 50,001 baht but higher, 7 respondents to 2 (3.50:1). This suggests an increasing preference for reading print newspapers as monthly income rises above 30,000 baht per month, and especially above 50,000 baht per month. High monthly income appears to influence Bangkok news readers to purchase print newspapers.

TABLE 17 Influence of the Computer Literacy Factor on Reader Preference

Computer Literacy Factor	No. of Respondents		Totals
	Print Newspapers	Online News Services	
First Level (Low Skill)	14	8	22
Second Level (Intermediate Skill)	8	26	34
Third Level (High Skill)	15	29	44
Totals	37	63	100

In terms of the computer literacy factor, low skill level respondents preferred print newspapers 14 respondents to 8 (1.75:1). More computer literate news readers preferred online news services: second level 26 respondents to 8 (3.25:1) and third

level 29 respondents to 15 (1.93:1). Computer literate respondents preferred online news services, but the most highly skilled computer users preferred online news services less than the second level skill respondents.

In summary, demographic factors did influence the purchasing decisions of the 100 respondents in this study. Of the four demographic factors examined, the three factors of age, income, and computer literacy influenced reader preferences, while education did not appear to influence reader preferences for print newspapers or online news services.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the answers to the two research questions. This is followed by discussion of the findings, comments on the limitations of the study and recommendations for the further.

Conclusions

The answers to the research questions are presented below in conclusion to this study.

Research Question 1

“Which demographic factors influence Thai news readers in Bangkok to read print newspapers or online news services?”

The demographic factors of age, income, and computer literacy influenced Thai news readers in Bangkok to choose print newspapers or online news services. The education factor did not. Each factor is recapped briefly below.

1. Age of Respondents

The study found that news readers in Bangkok below the age of 36 preferred online news service over print newspapers 2.6:1. One hundred per cent of respondents under the age of 26 preferred online news services. News readers 36 years of age and above preferred print newspapers over online news services 2.11:1. One hundred per cent of respondents above the age of 55 preferred print newspapers.

These findings strongly suggest an age gap in news reading behavior; younger respondents, growing up in Bangkok as computers became more available and online services grew in number, developed online reading habits and preferences; older respondents, growing up after the emergence of the “information super highway”, had already developed print newspaper reading habits and preferences. Habits, reinforced by years of practice, are difficult to change.

2. Education of Respondents

The majority of respondents in all education levels preferred online news services, only the degree of preference changed among the groups of respondents. No reading preference trend (lower to higher or higher to lower education level) appeared. The education factor did not appear to influence reader preferences for print

newspapers or online news services, it merely reflected the fact that the majority of respondents (58.00%) preferred reading online news services. This may be because educated individuals or individuals with limited educations may be found in all age, income and computer literacy level groups. Bill Gates never completed university, but is highly computer literate and became wealthy at an early age. University professors achieve high levels of education at various stages of their lives, have low to high levels of computer literacy, but seldom attain income levels above the middle class.

3. Income of Respondents

The findings showed no clear preference for reading print newspapers or online news services among respondents with monthly incomes of 30,000 baht or less. However, as monthly incomes increased, respondent preferences for print newspapers increased; 30,001-40,000 baht, 1.61:1; 40,001-50,000 baht, 1.66:1 and 50,001 baht and higher, 3.50:1. This strongly indicates that higher income news readers preferred reading print newspapers. As generally speaking, income tends to increase as individuals age and advance in their careers, at least to the age of retirement, it is reasonable that the respondents with the highest incomes would also be in the higher

age groups. Consequently, these individuals also would have developed print newspaper reading habits and preferences before online news became available.

4. Computer Literacy Level of Respondents

As might be expected, the findings confirmed that news readers with a low computer skill level (first level) preferred reading print newspapers, 1.75:1. They would not have the skills necessary to navigate to news sources online. Respondents with intermediate and high level computer skills (second and third levels) preferred getting their news from online news services; however, highly skilled computer users (third level) preferred online news services to a lesser degree than news readers with intermediate (second level) computer skills (1.93:1 and 3.25:1 respectively). This suggests that a certain level of computer skill is required to give news readers access to online news services, but once the minimum computer skill level threshold is passed, computer skill level does not relate directly to a particular degree of preference for reading online news services.

In conclusion, older respondents with higher incomes preferred reading print newspapers. As older people at the ends of their careers tend to have higher incomes than younger people at the beginnings of their careers, the demographic factors of age

and income seem linked to some extent. This may be further supported by reading behavior habits. Older news readers, above 35 years of age, began reading news before computers and online news services were available and established print newspaper reading habits and preferences reinforced by years of practice. Younger news readers, 35 years of age and below, found computers and online news services as alternatives to print newspapers relatively early in their news reading experience. The youngest of the young news readers may have read news free of charge from online news services on computers at their schools or homes before they had any money or inclination to buy a print newspaper. Younger news readers formed habits and preferences in line with their experiences.

As the demographic factors of age and income appear to influence Thai newspaper readers in Bangkok to read print newspapers or online news services, the demographic of computer literacy appears to be only an access key; news readers with low levels of computer literacy preferred print newspapers and news readers with at least an intermediate level of computer literacy preferred reading online news services. News readers with inadequate levels of computer literacy found it difficult to access online news services, but preferences for online news services did not increase as

computer literacy levels increased above the access level required. Education levels do not appear to influence news reader preferences for print newspapers or online news services.

Research Question 2

“What are the trends in Thai news reader preferences for print newspapers or online news services?”

The research found a declining trend of preference for reading print newspapers from three year ago (2004/2005), to three years in the future (2010/2011), 85.10% down to 36.10%. In counterbalance, a rising trend of reader preference for online news services was observed; 14.90% of respondents preferred online news reading three years ago (2004/2005), rising to 63.90% three years from now (2010/2011).

Discussion

The study revealed that age, income, and computer literacy influenced reader preferences for print newspapers or online news services.

Age emerged as the most influential demographic factor with the mid-thirties as the dividing line; younger Thai news readers in Bangkok preferred online news services and older readers preferred print newspapers. News reading habits, based on age and

experience, may be the cause. Income was found to influence news reader preferences only at higher levels; respondents with monthly incomes above 30,000 baht progressively preferred reading print newspapers. As monthly income tends to rise with age and professional experience, the income demographic appears to be subordinate to the age demographic rather than independent of it. An adequate level of computer literacy opens the door to reading online news services. Once the computer literacy threshold is crossed, Thai news readers in Bangkok have the option of reading print newspapers or online news services. News readers with high computer skills preferred reading online news services in numbers only slightly higher than to the number of news readers with low computer skills who preferred reading print newspapers. However, news readers with intermediate level computer skills strongly preferred online news services.

A closer look at the comparison of news reader preferences for print newspapers or online news services (presented in Table 12) is instructive. News readers preferring print newspapers and news readers preferring online news services both cited similar characteristics (accessibility, convenience, portability, in-depth reporting, low price, ease of reading, specific news reporting, energy saving,

environmental friendly) as the reasons for their preferences. Both groups of news readers seem to have perceived similar characteristics differently.

This difference in user perception of the importance of similar print newspaper/online news service characteristics can best be explained by age, experience, and news reading habits. News readers beginning their news reading lives before the advent of the Internet and online news services would have become comfortable with the characteristics of print newspapers and overtime would have found it progressively more difficult to change their preferred news medium. Younger news readers, beginning their news reading lives with progressively more available online services, might easily have formed preferences for that medium. Income would not have influenced the first group. The Internet did not exist when they began forming news reading habits and preferences. Computer literacy would only have become a factor influencing preferences in later life as online services became readily available. For younger news readers, income would have become an increasingly minor preferential factor as computers and online news services became more easily available free of charge in schools, universities and libraries and technology prices dropped. For the youngest news readers in Bangkok, computer literacy is a virtual given.

Table 12 also reveals different characteristics of print newspapers and online news services which news readers in one group reported as factors influencing their reading preferences, but were not reported as being influential by the other group of news readers.

Respondents preferring online news services reported rapid reporting (line1), concise reporting (line 8), links to relate information (line 10), easily retrievable prior reports (line 12), rapid two-way communication (line 13) and the inclusion of video in print reporting (line 14). These characteristics, important to online news readers, seem unimportant, or unknown, to readers preferring print newspapers.

Respondents preferring print newspapers reported as important factors influencing their preference their inability to access online news at certain times and places (line 9) and their lack of computer literacy (line 17). This underscores these respondents' lack of technology or technology savvy.

A small number of respondents preferring print newspapers also reported the importance of classified ads in print newspapers. International and regional classified ads for employment, housing, cars, entertainment, social partners and other goods and services are numerous and easily found on the Internet. Many Thai sites are available

and the number is growing. Respondents preferring print newspapers may not be aware of these sites, or how to find them and online versions of Bangkok newspapers may not provide sufficient links to them. Print newspapers in Bangkok rarely publish references to online sites.

Thai news readers in Bangkok preferring print newspapers may not be aware of the range of news alternatives and forms offered online because of their age, experience and news reading habits.

Finally, news readers preferring print newspapers also noted the lack of trustworthiness of online news reporting (line 6). This is a valid concern as the number of online blogs without editorial control proliferates. Virtually anyone can post virtually anything on the Internet and present it as “news”. Online news readers need to develop critical skills to discern what is “news” and “not news” on the Internet.

The implications of this analysis are clear. If nothing occurs in the macro-environment to alter current trends, the number of news readers in Bangkok preferring print newspapers will continue to decline as older, less computer literate readers leave the market, and the number of news readers preferring online news services will continue to rise, as new generations of computer literate news readers replace them.

The affluence of the younger readers will increase as they age and advance in their careers.

Bangkok newspaper publishers should continue their transition to online news services in pace with the aging of their readers.

News readers in Bangkok in their late thirties and above prefer print newspapers and will continue to purchase them for the coming 30 years or so. Their monthly incomes will continue to increase at least until they retire. However, their numbers will steadily decrease as they age. Publishers should continue to provide them with the news they have come to expect, in the form they expect and delivered in the ways they expect. Publishers should also help this group develop their computer literacy and technology savvy. This can be accomplished with print articles on how to access online services and sites and references to websites related to news articles published in print newspapers. Some news readers in the late thirties plus group may shift their preferences to online news services or may spend a larger percentage of their news reading time online.

Bangkok newspaper publishers should increasingly shift their focus to online publishing as their readers' preferences shift. Online news readers are the future of

news publishing. At the same time, publishers must insure that editorial policy is enforced online as well as in print. This is critical to differentiate the image of a reputable, trustworthy news provider from one that is not. Clear, responsible, online editorial policy may also attract discerning print newspaper readers.

Journalists must adapt to the differing language styles of print and online news reporting, but at all times must respect the ethical principles that set their profession apart from others and give it a special and esteemed position in society.

Advertisers must follow the shifts in news reader preferences carefully and adapt the products they offer and the budgets they allocate accordingly.

News readers will naturally read what they want to read from the sources that satisfy them most.

Researchers from all disciplines will find the transition from print newspapers to online news services rich in issues and worthy of analysis.

Limitations of the Study

This study had the following limitations:

1. The number of participants included in this study was limited to 100 surveyed in only four locations in Bangkok: the Satorn/Silom Road business area, the Maruay Library at the Stock Exchange of Thailand, the Siam Square shopping area, and in front of the Prae Pittaya Bookstore at the Central Ladproad department store, so the results may not be representative of the views of all readers of print newspapers and/or online news services in Bangkok.
2. The study was limited to only four demographic factors: age, education, income, and computer literacy. Other demographic factors such as vocation, culture, and geographic location may also influence reading choices of print newspapers and online news services.
3. The study was limited to news readers in Bangkok, and therefore did not give a comprehensive view of the preferences for print newspapers or online news services nationwide. Many publishers and other news distributors serve both the Bangkok and national markets.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the results of this study, some suggestions for further study are proposed below:

1. Further studies of reader preferences for print newspaper and/or online news services with larger sample groups and a wider range of sample locations should be made in order to have more broadly reliable results.
2. Further studies should be conducted in urban and rural areas outside Bangkok in order to have a more complete view of reader preferences throughout Thailand. This should be seriously considered in future studies as online news services have increased in popularity among all readers in Thailand.
3. Further research on reader preferences for print newspapers and/or online news services should be conducted considering other demographics such as vocation, culture, ethnicity, language, and geographic location. This would provide a more complete view of news reader profiles.
4. The frequency of news reading should be studied, as this might affect newspaper sales and/or website hits.

5. A study of the influence of demographic factors on news reader preferences

for other media such as email and sms via cell phones should be conducted. The findings would be useful for publishers and marketers seeking to develop new growth strategies, and consumers who may be looking for a wider range of news services.

In brief, further research in the areas mentioned above, will broaden and deepen understanding of the influence of demographic factors on readers' choices of news sources and trends in news reading. This more complete understanding will be useful to publishers, journalists and advertisers as they face the challenges of a rapidly changing news industry. News readers may also be interested to better understand how the changing news industry might affect their news reading behaviors.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: English Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed for use as part a master's degree research project at Srinakharinwirot University. The information you provide will be useful and will be used in full confidentially.

Thank you very much for your kind assistance.

() Male

() Female

Part 1: Personal Profile

1. Age

() 15 years old and below

() 36-45 years old

() 16-25 years old

() 46-55 years old

() 26-35 years old

() 56 years old and above

2. Education

() Secondary school or lower

() High school and vocational

() Bachelor's degree

() Master's degree or higher

4. Income per month (Baht)

() 10,000 and below

() 30,001-40,000

() 10,001-20,000

() 40,001-50,000

() 20,001-30,000

() 50,001 and above

4. Computer literacy level

Please tick (✓) the boxes that best describe your computer literacy level. You may select more than one box.

	Know how to use a word processor
	Know how to browse the Internet and use email
	Know how to prepare an electronic presentation or able to access websites or other homepages
	Know how to use other software applications and download online information
	Can demonstrate the effective use of a website or homepage
	Know how to use real-time communications (such as chat, audio, and video)
	Know how to use advanced search techniques
	Know how to maintain a blog and/or website

Part 2: News Access

1. On average, how often do you read print newspapers?

- ☐ everyday
 ☐ 3-5 times a week
☐ almost everyday
 ☐ 2 times a week or less

2. On average, how often do you read online news services?

- ☐ everyday
 ☐ 3-5 times a week
☐ almost everyday
 ☐ 2 times a week or less

3. Which media do you prefer?

- ☐ print newspaper
 ☐ online news services

4. Give three reasons to explain your preference for print newspaper or online news services.

Part 3: Preference for print newspaper and/or online news services

Please tick (✓) the boxes that best describe the percentage of time you spent 3 years ago, spend now and expect to spend 3 years in the future reading print newspaper and/or online news services. The total time spent for each timeframe must equal 100%.

	3 Years Ago		Now		3 Years from Now	
	Print	Online	Print	Online	Print	Online
100%						
90%						
80%						
70%						
60%						
50%						
40%						
30%						
20%						
10%						
Total	100%		100%		100%	

APPENDIX B: Thai Questionnaire

แบบสอบถาม

แบบสอบถามฉบับนี้จัดทำขึ้นเพื่อใช้เป็นส่วนประกอบของการทำสารนิพนธ์ในการศึกษา

ปริญญาโทมหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ ดังนั้น ผู้วิจัยใคร่ขอความร่วมมือจากท่านในการตอบ

แบบสอบถามนี้ตามประสบการณ์ของท่าน ซึ่งข้อมูลที่ได้จะนำไปใช้เพื่อเป็นประโยชน์ในการศึกษา

เท่านั้น ขอขอบคุณในการตอบแบบสอบถามของท่าน ณ ที่นี้ด้วย

() ชาย

() หญิง

ส่วนที่ 1: ข้อมูลทั่วไปเกี่ยวกับผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

1. อายุ

() 15 ปีหรือต่ำกว่า

() 36-45 ปี

() 16-25 ปี

() 46-55 ปี

() 26-35 ปี

() 56 ปีหรือมากกว่า

2. การศึกษา

() มัธยมศึกษาหรือต่ำกว่า

() ปริญญาตรี

() มัธยมศึกษาปลายหรือปวช

() ปริญญาโทหรือสูงกว่า

3. รายได้ต่อเดือน (บาท)

() ต่ำกว่า 10,000

() 30,001-40,000

() 10,001-20,000

() 40,001-50,000

() 20,001-30,000

() มากกว่า 50,001

4. ทักษะในการใช้คอมพิวเตอร์

โปรดทำเครื่องหมาย (✓) ในช่องที่ท่านเห็นว่าตรงกับทักษะในการใช้คอมพิวเตอร์ของท่าน
ท่านอาจเลือกได้มากกว่าหนึ่งช่อง

	สามารถใช้โปรแกรมเวิร์ดได้
	สามารถเข้าอินเทอร์เน็ตและใช้อีเมลได้
	สามารถใช้เชิรจเอนจินหรือหาข้อมูลทางออนไลน์ได้
	สามารถใช้อุปกรณ์ฮาร์ดแวร์และดาวน์โหลดข้อมูลทางออนไลน์ได้
	สามารถเข้าถึงข้อมูลทางเว็บไซต์หรือโฮมเพจของคนอื่นได้
	สามารถโต้ตอบทางออนไลน์ได้ทันที เช่น แชต เสียง และ วิดีโอ
	สามารถใช้เครื่องมือนำเสนอในการเชิรจข้อมูลออนไลน์ได้
	สามารถสร้างบล็อกและ/หรือเว็บไซต์ของตนได้

ส่วนที่ 2: การเข้าถึงข่าว

1. โดยเฉลี่ยท่านอ่านหนังสือพิมพ์บ่อยแค่ไหน

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| () ทุกวัน | () 3-5 ครั้งต่อสัปดาห์ |
| () เกือบทุกวัน | () น้อยกว่า 2 ครั้งต่อสัปดาห์ |

2. โดยเฉลี่ยท่านอ่านสื่อข่าวออนไลน์บ่อยแค่ไหน

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| () ทุกวัน | () 3-5 ครั้งต่อสัปดาห์ |
| () เกือบทุกวัน | () น้อยกว่า 2 ครั้งต่อสัปดาห์ |

3. ระหว่างหนังสือพิมพ์และสื่อข่าวออนไลน์ ท่านจะเลือกใช้สื่อใด

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| () หนังสือพิมพ์ | () สื่อข่าวออนไลน์ |
|------------------|---------------------|

4. โปรดอธิบายเหตุผลสามข้อในการเลือกระหว่างหนังสือพิมพ์และสื่อข่าวออนไลน์

ส่วนที่ 3: ระดับการเลือกอ่านระหว่างหนังสือพิมพ์และ/หรือสื่อข่าวออนไลน์

โปรดทำเครื่องหมาย (✓) ในช่องที่ท่านเห็นว่าตรงกับประสบการณ์ของท่านในการเลือกอ่านข่าวระหว่างหนังสือพิมพ์และ/หรือสื่อข่าวออนไลน์ใน 3 ช่วงเวลา คือ เมื่อ 3 ปีก่อน ปัจจุบัน และคาดการณ์ในอนาคตอีก 3 ปีข้างหน้าว่าท่านจะเลือกอ่านสื่อใด โดยคิดเป็นเปอร์เซ็นต์ จาก 10-100%

	เมื่อ 3 ปีก่อน		ปัจจุบัน		อีก 3 ปีในอนาคต	
	นสพ	ออนไลน์	นสพ	ออนไลน์	นสพ	ออนไลน์
100%						
90%						
80%						
70%						
60%						
50%						
40%						
30%						
20%						
10%						
รวม	100%		100%		100%	

VITAE

VITAE

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