INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF AIOU ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research study is to investigate information seeking behaviour of AIOU administrators. Information is obtained by using a wide variety of both informal and formal sources; human sources, internet as well as print Media. Now-a-days the newspaper provide us a lot of information about current situation of country's political issues, economical satiability, as well as International political and all other kind of information which a human need because we don't update ourselves without newspapers. Findings of the present study show that the administrators are more interested in the news related to politics, economics, city news, job hunting, sports and entertainment and a few one were found totally not reading the newspaper. It is understood that information needs arise when an individual finds himself in a problem situation, when he or she no longer can manage with the knowledge that he or she possess. We, as individuals and groups, "repeatedly find ourselves in situations where information is needed, gathered, sought, organized, retrieved, processed, evaluated, and used". Reading of newspaper is part of daily routine for many consumers. In other words, media receivers want to use the information in some way or to obtain satisfactions that they anticipate.

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Introduction

Information is obtained by using a wide variety of both informal and formal sources; i.e. human sources, internet and Mass Media. Keeping in view its nature and requirement to explore and examine the difference in news-seeking behaviour of AIOU administrators. The news-seeking behaviour studied with respect to the selected aspects, namely; educational development, national and international affairs, politics, health, and job hunting as well as articles and editorials with relation to the selected variables of age, and qualification etc.

Talja (1992, p.72) During the past 30 years or so, a considerable body of literature has been produced dealing with the information needs and seeking behaviour or both individuals and groups in a variety of contexts. "It is understood that information needs arise when an individual finds himself in a problem situation, when he or she no longer can manage with the knowledge that he or she possess".

Kuthlthau (1993, p. 247) & Solomon (1996, p.292) said it is the information need that triggers information seeking which is caused by "uncertainty due to a lack of understanding, gap in meaning, or a limited construct". We, as individuals and groups, "repeatedly find ourselves in situations where information is needed, gathered, sought, organized, retrieved, processed, evaluated, and used".

Literature Review

It is understood that information needs arise when an individual finds himself in a problem situation, when he or she no longer can manage with the knowledge that he or she possess. There are a lot of studies on mass media or mass communication throughout the world done but a few research studies conducted on 'news-seeking behaviour throughout the world, and especially in Pakistan. The present study is significant not only for the newspapers' industries and readers, but it is also important for educational point of view, also will help to newspaper readers, media practitioners, academicians as well as administrators of different disciplines and planners of print media.

Earlier studies have found that information seekers use a variety of formal and informal sources with varying emphasis from one discipline to another. Administrators seem to be different from other professional and discipline-oriented groups. First, they are not a homogenous group and their approach to information is different from other. Second, while using the services of information professionals; administrators do not communicate their need in clear and precise terms.

Nicholas and Martin (1997), administrator do this because of the confidentiality of their interest, their own uncertainty as to what they want and a certain professional arrogance as to why information professionals should want to know more about their work. Full understanding of this approach is critical in order to design information systems and services that will enable to meet their needs.

According to Solomon (1996, p.292): We, as individuals and groups, "repeatedly find ourselves in situations where information is needed, gathered, sought, organized, retrieved, processed, evaluated, and used". Reading of newspaper is part of daily routine for many consumers. The paper version provides tactile pleasure of turning pages and the portability of tucking the newspaper in a briefcase or book-bag for later or recycling it by leaving it on the break or breakfast table for someone else to enjoy. Newspaper, publication usually issued on a daily or weekly basis, the main function of which is to report news. Many newspapers also furnish special information to readers, such as weather reports, television schedules, and listings of stock prices. They provide commentary on politics, economics, and arts and culture, and sometimes include entertainment features, such as comics and crossword puzzles. In nearly all cases and in varying degrees, newspapers depend on commercial advertising for their income.

Herron (1986) said administrators, important as they are as information consumers as well as producers at the same time, were not investigated to understand their information needs and seeking behaviour up to the mid 1980s. Over two dozen studies have been conducted during the past two decades to understand administrators' information seeking behaviour and its various aspects.

Suriya, Sangeetha (2004 p. 119 125) carried out a research work on "Information seeking behaviour of Faculty Members from Government Arts Colleges in Cuddalore District." The purpose of their study was to investigate, how faculty members seek information from the library. It mentions that most of the respondents 61 (38.12 percent) visited the library several times a week to meet their information needs. Regarding the type of search made by the respondents the majority of the respondents 91 (56.87 percent) made their search by subject. She said the majority of the respondents are not satisfied about information quality from provider, they also face very difficulties during information seeking. So due to this fact they behave very aggressively and she comments in data analysis, the administrators are never changing their behaviour. They behave roughly with their subordinates because they feel we are the commander or lord of the subordinate and without our instruction or guidance they couldn't able to do any sort of work not only in the office but also in the homes.

Nicholas and martin (1997 p.51) studying British journalists using semi-structured interview, concluded that administrators needed information for five broad functions: fact checking; current awareness; job hunting; politics and stimulus. In addition to function, the chief characteristics of administrators' information needs were identified as: "the sheer size of their information appetites; their requirement for authoritative and current information and the speed with which they need information". The obstacles faced included: time, access to information sources and systems, information overload and training. They concluded that IT was causing a major change in the administrators' need and seeking behaviour.

Garrison (1999-2000, p. 165) reported the extent of use of online information sources for newsgathering by American newspapers was 57.2% in 1994, 89.8% in 1997, and 92.0% in 1999. The major problems identified for website use were: no verification (54.1%), unreliable information (44.9%), badly sourced information (44.3%), and lack of site credibility (43.8%). Poteet (2000) studied that all of her respondents used the Internet, with 93.0% of them feeling comfortable using it. A large majority (96.5%) considered online sources important for information

gathering. The purposes for using online sources were: finding background information (91.4%), finding facts (90.3%), reading news sources (84.6%), finding weakness of other officers (51.4%), and identifying sources (50.9%).

Ross & Middleburg (1999, p.112-200), who surveyed that 80.0% of their respondents, used the Internet daily and another 13.0% used it two to three times weekly. The Internet was used for article research (89.0%), e-mail (83.0%), reading publications online (65.0%), finding news sources and experts' views (57.0%), finding jobs (36.0%). Nicholas et al (2000) investigated the impact of the Internet by surveying both administrators and media libraries. They reported that 68.0% of their respondents used the Internet. However, in terms of the total population, they estimated that "it is unlikely that more than one in five respondents used the Internet" due to "lack of access, the richness of existing information provision, suspicion of the news resources and a shortage of time".

Attfield and Dowell, 2003 (p. 199-200) studied information seeking conducting interviews. They show that was uncertain as a function of an uncertain context and their continually evolving plans. They presented their findings "in the form of a model of the newspaper report research and writing process" that consisted of "initiation, preparation and production in the context of a set of dynamic product and resources constraints".

The present fast changing information environment necessitates that users posses some information searching and database use skills. Campbell (1992 p.62), the delegated to a European Teacher/Administrators Training Association meeting "agreed that teaching electronic research techniques to teachers or administrators trainees was a priority". Several years later a study of Scottish scholars found that there was no clear cut policy on the teaching of information skills to administrators and concluded "it was apparent that administrators were unaware of the basics of information retrieval, searching electronic databases, applications of search logic and search terminology and syntax".

Role of Print Media

To keep abreast of what's happening in the world around us we need information. Without information we won't know a threat exists until it is too late. But just being offered information is not enough. We also need to be willing to take that information on board while there is still time to avoid the threat. Public information will be just one of many issues officials will have to address, and the media are often perceived as being a nuisance or hindrance to response activities. However, it is essential that communicating with the media is made a priority in any response planning because the media will be among the first responders at the scene and will be a vital information mechanism for government bodies. The media will therefore share a significant amount of responsibility for relaying vital information to the public. Although newspapers makes knowledge more accessible to all, and has had dramatic effects on our culture and society, it does not necessarily follow that a literate society is greatly more knowledgeable than a non-literate one.

Newspapers Readership in Pakistan

Newspaper publishers estimate that nearly six out of ten adults a newspaper every day, and seven out of ten read a paper each weekend. By the time they see a newspaper; most people have already learned about breaking news stories on television or radio. Readers rely on newspapers to provide detailed background information and analysis, which television and radio newscasts rarely offer. Newspapers not only inform readers that an event happened but also help readers understand what led up to the event and how it will affect the world around them.

A media scholar Philip J. Hanes (1996, p.140) wrote his article entitled "The Advantages and Limitations of a Focus on Audience in Media Studies":

> "Audiences are not blank sheets of paper on which media messages can be written; members of an audience will have prior attitudes and beliefs which will determine how effective media messages are".

Veblen, (1994) wrote in his article entitled "Newspaper Readership and Informational/Cultural Processing": Newspaper readership is an instance of cultural

participation in regard to which the information-processing. Reading a newspaper is a more straightforward form of information processing than various other cultural activities and at the same time choice of newspaper could scarcely count as a very effective kind of status-oriented `conspicuous consumption' on account both of the relatively low price of even expensive newspapers and of the fact that reading is as likely to take place in the privacy of the home as in public. Consequently, evidence of a connection between newspaper readership and status, independent of information-processing capacity, would, for our present purposes, be of particular significance.

According to Pakistan Readership Report (2002-03) issued by Gallup survey of Pakistan, newspaper readership ratio among adults (18 years+) is only 33% and among youth (10-17years) is 21%. Province wise this ratio is: for Punjab 31%, For Sindh 49%, for N.W.F.P. 25%, and for Baluchistan 28%. Among youth (10-17years), this ration is: for Punjab 16%, for Sindh 34%, For N.W.F.P 16% and for Baluchistan 19%. Apparently the situation is, to some extent satisfactory for Sindh province but this is due to high rate of readership in Karachi, which is among adults 69% and among youth 44% .By excluding Karachi, the ratio remains very poor for interior Sindh. The table and graph elaborate the province wise newspaper readership ratio in Pakistan.

Ratio of Newspaper Readership

Province	Among Adults (+18 Years)	Among Youth (10 – 17 Years)
Punjab	31%	16%
Sindh	49% (Karachi 69% & Interior Sindh 29%)	34% (Karachi 44% & Interior Sindh 24)
N.W.F.P.	25%	16%
Baluchistan	28%	19%
Average	33	21

Newspaper Readership among Youth

Region	Percentage
Punjab	16
Sindh	34
NWFP	16
Baluchistan	19
Average	21
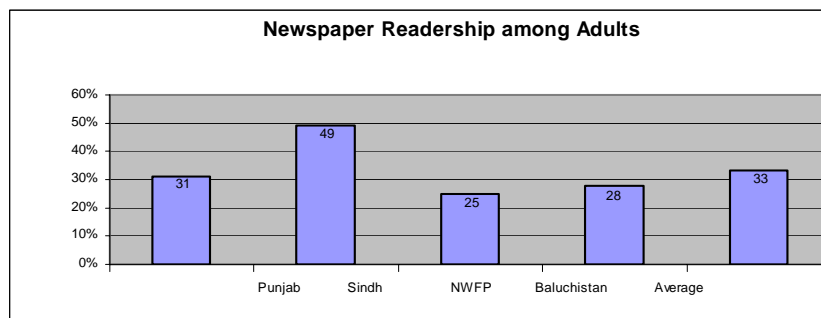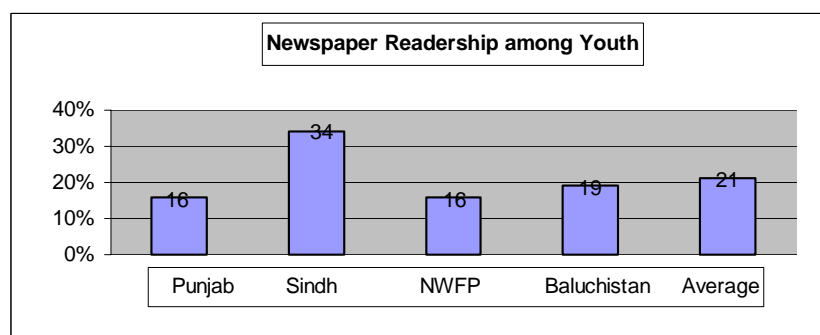
Newspaper readership and buyer-ship are two different concepts. Every reader is not the buyer of the newspapers. At homes, offices, shops and libraries, one newspaper is read by a lot of persons. According to Pakistan Readership Report 2002-03 of the Gallup Survey, in Punjab 10.17 readers read one copy, while in Sindh this ratio is 5.57, in N.W.F.P this ratio is 8.47 and in Baluchistan this ratio is 13.98. Considering the economic peculiarities and rural character of the region, it is understandable that the number of readers per copy in Baluchistan is substantially higher than the national average of 7.7 It is necessary to mention that after including the ratio of readership per copy in FATA/FANA and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the national average of readers per copy is 7.7.

Another media researchers Mehta and Paralikar (1999) investigated through conducting a study that news-seeking pattern of the selected media were studied in relation to the time spent news language, news area, kind of news and news aspects. The overall findings of their study revealed that majority of respondents described to two English newspapers, because those newspapers give complete news and have good coverage of events. Overall and sex wise newspaper used as medium for seeking news most frequently. The kinds of news sought through newspaper were political, social, health educational, etc. Highly significant differences existed in the news-seeking patterns of female respondents with respect to the time spent for seeking news, kinds of news and news aspects.

Methodology

Earlier studies on the information seeking behaviour of AIOU administrators have mostly utilized survey method using questionnaires, interviews and observation as data collection techniques. The earlier studies reveal that questionnaire has not only been the most popular tool but has also been used very effectively. It was therefore, decided to use a questionnaire for data collection in this study. Questionnaire for the study was prepared in the light of the previous researches and discussion with the experts. The questionnaire was personally distributed at each of the administrative office by personal efforts of the researcher. It specifically focused on the following questions:

1.   What types of information seeked by administrators?
2.   For which purpose and priority they read the newspaper?
3.   What problems they encounter while seeking information?

Educational Profile of AIOU Administrators

Gender-wise Qualification of AIOU Administrators				Qualification				Total
				Master	M Phil	PhD	Others	
Administrators	Gender	Male	Count	36	3	2	17	58
			% within Gender	62.1%	5.2%	3.4%	29.3%	100.0%
		Female	Count	9	2	0	1	12
			% within Gender	75.0%	16.7%	.0%	8.3%	100.0%
		Total	Count	45	5	2	18	70
			% within Gender	64.3%	7.1%	2.9%	25.7%	100.0%

Table cross-tabulation of gender-wise qualification of administrators of AIOU shows that there are only 2 respondents having PhD, five falling in the category of M. Phil and 25 are having master degree but the total figures of the administrators in the AIOU is more then 100. The qualification is also mater to seeking behaviour because the well educated read the newspaper accordingly means s/he read news with priority and purposeful for criticism as well as analytical purposes. As well as the below graph separately showing the qualification of AIOU

administrators, administrators in the gender of male are higher number of master qualification as compare to female but almost none of having M Phil and PhD due to their professional needs.

Respondents' Qualification
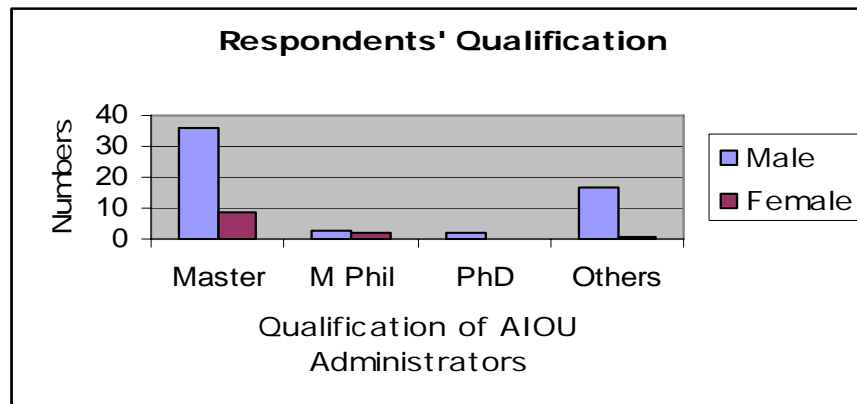
Findings

1.   Type of information and its importance in their work

The respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance of four types of information in their daily work. Their opinions, with no response from a few, are presented in terms of mean. These respondents consider all four types of information as important at various levels. 'Fact checking and verification' is very close to being 'critically important' (mean = 4.61) whereas 'general information' are considered as more than very important. .

2.   Types of information sources used and their importance

The respondents were asked to specify the types of sources they used and indicate the importance of each. Opinions were to be expressed on each item given in the two sets of 'informal' and formal' sources, informal sources are those where information is received form a 'person' direct rather than from a structured source that is publically available for use.

A small group of respondents gave the 'other informal sources' in terms of their importance. However, conversations as a single source, is considered as the most important one. They use a variety of formal sources to gather information for their daily use. The Internet receivers are top to consider very important.

3.   Levels of satisfaction with the sources of information used

Administrators use many sources of information. The information obtained and the satisfaction gained varies from source to source. The respondents were asked to express their opinions on their level of satisfaction with the information received from various sources, their responses for informal source. 'Other informal sources' that received the highest ranking in terms of their importance, also receive the highest ranking in terms of satisfaction. The rankings for all sources in terms of satisfaction with information received are exactly the same as those given to their importance.

The below graph is showing the interest of reading newspaper by language, i.e. (English and Urdu) mostly male respondents are reading Urdu newspaper but a few number of female showing their interest in Urdu as well as English newspaper. Their interest showing they are not getting desired information, they read but they don't gather proper information which is need for them for improvement of working environment.
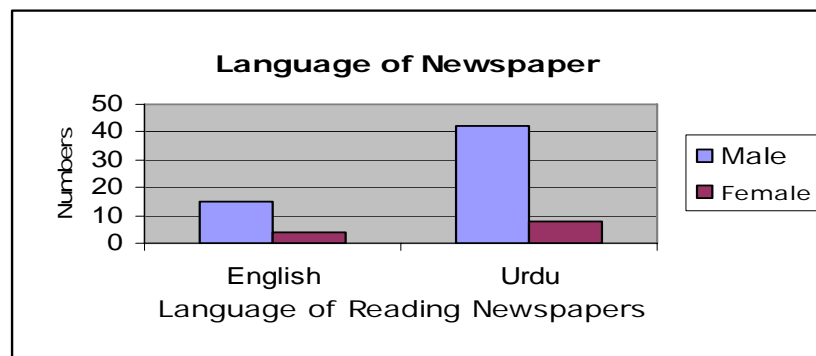
Most people read only one (daily) newspaper, at least on a regular basis. This means that we can here avoid complications that arise with forms of cultural participation, such as, say, listening to music, where there is a wide variety of genres and an individual may have a range of preferences. As we noted above, such instances have of late given rise to debates over whether the distinction of greatest relevance in regard to status is that between those participating in `high'

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as opposed to `low' (or popular) culture or that between cultural `omnivores' and `univores'.

4.   Purpose for which gathered information is used

Responses for what purpose do these respondents acquire information are: half of the respondents use the information for getting information about job related to their specified fields.

5.   Uses of Internet and Libraries

The Internet has become an important source for seeking information for all humans because it provides easy access to information and resources that are increasing day by day. Therefore, it seems logical that news organizations will provide access to and human will use, the Internet regularly to find information. The organizations provide the internet connection and search facilities to their employees, and many people to have the internet connection at their home places. All of these use the Internet as a source of information.

IT developments have made it possible for information seekers to produce stories / reports in electronic format enabling their organizations to create an in-house electronic library of these materials for future use of their staff. The main purposes for the use of the in-house electronic library are: avoiding duplication, comparing coverage, hunting job, and back-ground research. Does the use of their electronic library have any impact on the daily work of these respondents? Some respondents did not provide answers to all of the items listed in this question. The most positive impact was mentioned by the respondents who indicated that the 'amount of total back-ground information in paper' increased.

The main purposes for using the library are 'to search a database', 'to read materials there' and 'to seek information'. The respondent accepts that who used either the public libraries or the university libraries. Turning to the AIOU Library is understandable due to its very good collection on journalism as well as administration. AIOU alumni among these administrators find it natural to use its information resources.

6.   Major problems faced while searching information

The respondents were asked to express their opinions regarding problems listed in the questionnaire with regard to their importance to them. Some of the respondents did not give their opinion for some problems. Administrators are always busy and short of time. It is not, therefore, surprising that these respondents consider the 'lack of available time' for searching information as their requirements. The lack of training in information use skills is also considered as an important problem. Lack of support from library staff is considered as the least important problem.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to identify the information seeking behaviour of the AIOU administrators. What general patterns can be found from the date presented in this study? These administrators place more emphasis on fact-checking, general and background information as compared to getting ideas for future issues. It is find out that the administrative position holders behave roughly with their subordinates because they have in their minds we are the commander or lord of all the subordinate and without our instruction or guidance they couldn't able to do any sort of work not only in the office but also in the homes. It was apparent that administrators were unaware of the basics of information retrieval, searching electronic databases, applications of search logic and search terminology and syntax.

It was finding in the reply of the one question asked by the researcher what are you read in the newspaper. The answer is very interesting i.e. we are not planning about what and why we read. We just picked the newspaper and start skimming without giving any priority to any kind of news. The information gathered by these respondents appears to be mainly used for preparing a political issues, personal knowledge, and less so for preparing personality profiles. This was expected because a limited amount of items mentioned in the later group are actually needed and are written by a limited number of individuals.

A majority of the respondents of this study have access to the Internet and claim to use it as a source of information. However, the AIOU administrators place the Internet at the top rank in terms of its importance as source of information as well as in terms of satisfaction that they gain with the information obtained. This perception exists in spite of the fact that the Internet access to AIOU resources is still limited and that most of the respondents are not well versed in information searching.

Less than fifty percent of the respondents have had some sort of training in information searching skills. A majority of these respondents would like to go through such training if it were provided. Other problems are lack of time, lack of electronic libraries, accessing international information sources, information explosion. These are the areas where the information professionals can play a positive role and come in to help.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Considering the latest global developments in news provision and the recent increased focus on this region, AIOU has momentous responsibility and a latent opportunity to improve its administrator's behaviours. In order to meet these challenges, major steps are needed to upgrade the skill of its administrator's community and improve services provided to them so that the problems that they or public face are resolved.

The findings of this study point to a number of deficient areas that need to be improved. The core recommendations for immediate attention to which these partners must address their efforts are the following:

1. Promote the use of Information Technology in the AIOU administrative and services communities, especially focus on the internet;
2. Improve the current organizational library services focusing on information and human resources, creating awareness of these resources among users, and initiating cooperation with other libraries;

3. Initiate need-oriented programs of in-service training to improve information searching and use skill of administrative community;

4. Examine the University administrators' curriculum with the aim of making a provision for curriculum-integrated instruction of information literacy to make student competent.

This study also points to several areas where more research needs to be conducted. The nature of the use of electronic resources by AIOU administrators using in-depth interviews needs to be investigated. Both the nature and impact of the in-house electronic library generated by the administrators themselves also need to be studied in-depth through personal examination of this resources and interviews of actual users. No attention has been given to the role of the information professional vis-à-vis the client. This role needs to be articulated by conducting a study using interviews with administrators and information professionals.

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