

Viewership analysis of news channels with special reference to Asianet News

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ABSTRACT

The research conducted on the topic, "Viewership analysis of news channels with special reference to Asianet News" is basically a comparative analysis of four leading news channels in a region. The research comprises the response obtained from a sample of news channel viewers and a study on the various aspects of the news channels that are preferred by viewers with an investigation on the reasons for the same. Here, primary data were obtained by methods of direct interviews, by telephonic interviews, and also by mail using a well-designed and structured questionnaire. Dichotomous scale, semantic differential scale, and Likert scale are the commonly used scales of measurement for the topic under study. The study focuses on finding out the reasons behind the comparatively lower rating of Asianet News in Cochin City. Simultaneously, it also tends to investigate on various attributes such as the news viewership pattern in the region, the core competencies of each news channel, the approximate time a viewer spends watching news a day, the opinion on the content of news programs, the preference of the viewers toward the presentation styles, news readers, graphic content, and the like, and also the category of news most preferred by the viewers. Random and convenience sampling techniques were used for the data collection procedure. The result ultimately suggests that Asianet News is preferred by majority of the viewers, followed by Manorama News which leads in certain attributes such as credibility of news content, accuracy of reports, unbiased reporting of news, deep analysis and detailing, presentation styles, and latest news updates. Certain key factors such as the attitude and presentation style of the news reader, unbiased analysis of the news content, and strong preference toward political satires are also found to be influential in driving higher rating and viewership for the channels.

KEY WORDS: Asianet News, News channels, Viewership analysis

INTRODUCTION

The topic of the study is viewership analysis of news channels in Malayalam with special reference to Asianet News. This study is conducted in Cochin City, with a sample size of 350. The advent of numerous organizations in the television news industry has led to the emergence of new trends, and it has completely altered the traditional methods of news presentation, which is evidently visible in the style of presentation, the graphics used, updated news content, introduction of newsroom discussions, and the like. This research covers all aspects of a news channel from a viewers' perspective and studies their tastes and preference which is inevitable on any news channel to sustain in this competitive environment.

The study included interviews with regular viewers of news channels and taking valuable inputs from them with

questionnaire as the tool. This questionnaire includes both close-ended questions and open-ended ones and also uses various scales of measurement such as semantic differential and Likert scale, which are intended to obtain valuable inputs from the viewers about news channels and to know their preferences based on various attributes. The questionnaire also included a comparative study on the preference toward the news channels taking four leading news channels into consideration.

The study also included taking suggestions from the viewers about improvements that can be introduced in news channels that can make the presentation more appealing. Samples have been selected from various parts of Cochin city, and it included people belonging to different age groups, genders, educational qualification, and so on. The idea is to make necessary changes according to the opinion of the viewers to cater to the updated trends

in the industry and thereby improve the overall quality and style of presentation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study conducted on the viewership analysis of news channels was descriptive in nature. It is descriptive of the state of affairs of the television news industry as of today. The study was carried out among a sample of respondents in Cochin city, India. The respondents are primarily news channel viewers with a keen observational capability and also the power to come up with suggestions on the ways and methods to improve the quality of a news channel with regard to its news content, presentation style, innovative shows/programs, and also the key factors which influence the viewers and shape their attitude/perception.

The primary data collection procedure consisted of direct interviews, telephonic interviews, and mail interviews using a structured questionnaire. The sample size for the study was 350 respondents who are regular viewers of news channels, and the sampling techniques used were random sampling, convenience sampling, and stratified sampling. Secondary data for the study were collected using company documents, rating reports, magazines, and journals. The statistical method used for analyzing data comprised percentage analysis which was used to record and display the response of the participants. The collected data were listed using tables and bar diagrams, which graphically represent the response from the respondents.

The majority of respondents who participated in the study were of the age group of 16-40 years. The reason why the respondents belonging to this age category was chosen for the study is that innovative tips and ideas can be obtained from these respondents. Moreover, this Internet-savvy generation has got better exposure to the latest trends in the television industry which can be made use of towards improving the quality of the channel presentation and style. To accomplish this task, open-ended questions were also asked in the questionnaire in the right context, which enabled them to elucidate their thoughts and ideas to the best of their ability.

RESULTS

Regarding the favorite news channels, Asianet News is rated the best by the majority of the respondents which accounts for 40.8% of the total respondents. This is closely followed by Manorama and then Indiavision. Kairali people are at the bottom line with only 5 respondents rating it

as the best news channel. However, an important point is that the youth audience belonging to the category of 16-25 has rated Manorama as the best news channel. This shows that there is an increased viewership for Manorama among the youth audience in Cochin.

Regarding the preference toward exclusive Malayalam news channels, the highest percentage of respondents who prefer exclusive Malayalam news channels comes under the age category of 16-25 (41.4%) and the highest number of respondents who are against exclusive news channels also fall in this category (14.4%). However, when compared to the total number of respondents, this is a small figure. This shows that the majority of the respondents prefer exclusive Malayalam news channels. There are no respondents against exclusive Malayalam news channels in the category of 40-60 years and below 15 years. This shows that there is a high level of preference toward exclusive Malayalam news channels in Cochin.

Out of the 350 respondents, a total of 253 (72.28%) respondents rated the news reader as an important factor in watching a news channel. This shows that the news reader plays a crucial role in attracting the viewers. Hence, the style of presentation is one of the main factors which position the channel in the minds of the viewers.

When the time spent by the viewers in watching news a day was analyzed, it was found that the majority of the respondents in the youth category spend below 1 h a day for watching news. However, regarding the 25-40 and 40-60 age category, 1-2 h is spent daily in watching news. This shows that there is a huge variation in the news viewership pattern of the various age categories.

When the time of news watch was analyzed, it was found that majority of the respondents preferred evening time for watching TV. The second priority goes for late night. However, there is a great variation in the figures when both are compared. Hence, evening time can be rated as the best time in watching TV.

Ranking of Various Attributes of News

A majority of 127 respondents (36%) consider that the preference of news related talk shows as the least important attribute.

There is a great demand for a regular English news bulletin as 43% of the respondents agree to this attribute. There is only a small group of 5.5% of the respondents who disagree to this.

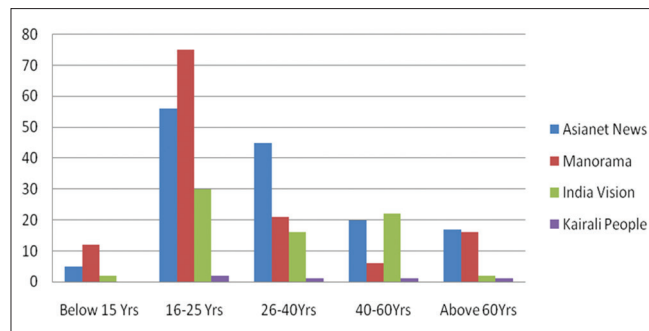


Figure 1: Favorite channel analysis

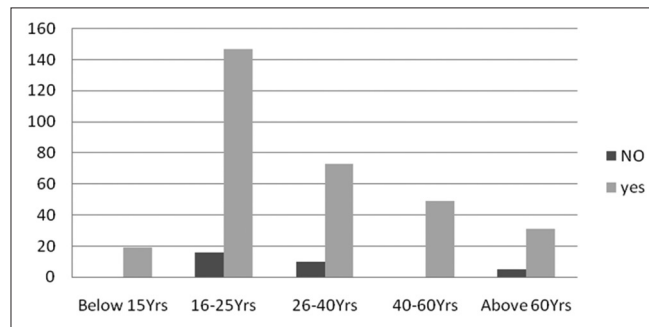


Figure 2: Preference of exclusive news channel analysis

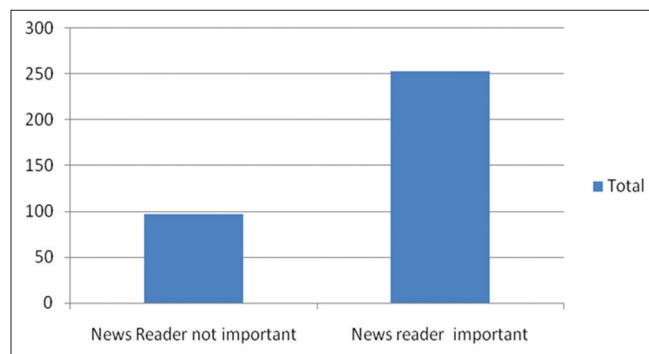


Figure 3: Preference of news reader analysis

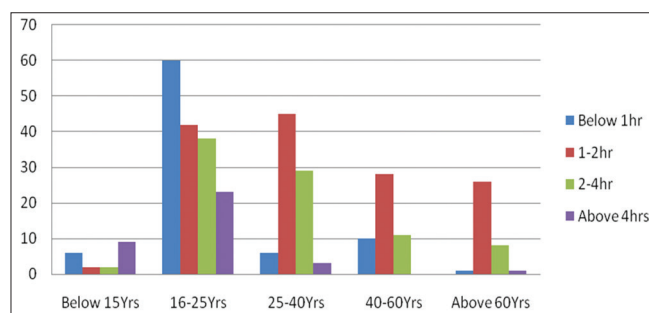


Figure 4: Hours of TV watch

The graph shows the attitude of the customers toward the various attributes of a news channel. The analysis was based on a ranking system which includes ranking of each of these attributes according to the preference of the viewers. The

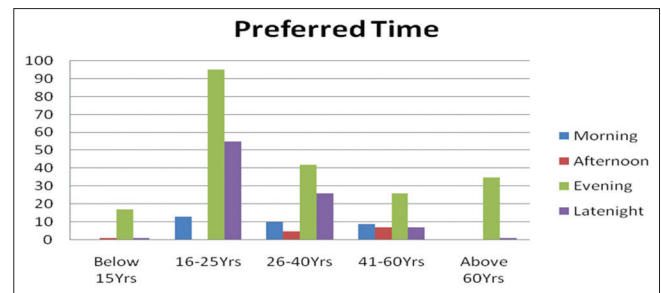


Figure 5: Time of news watch analysis

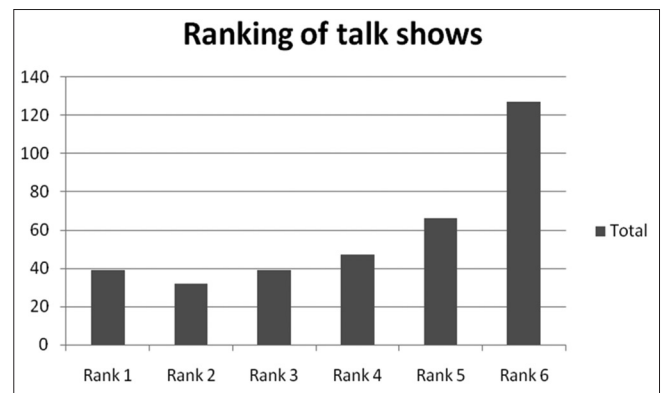


Figure 6: Talk shows

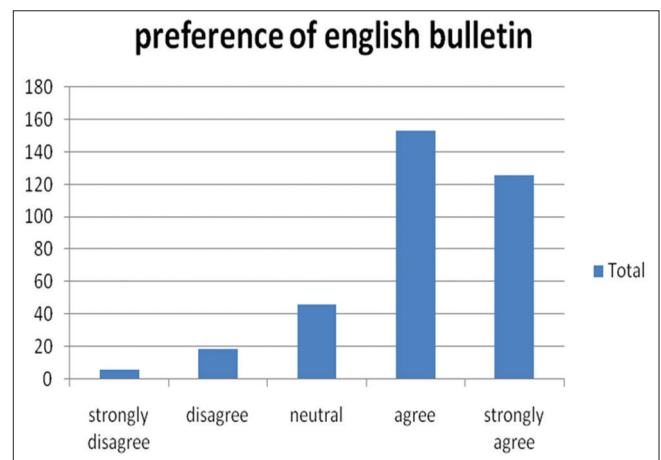


Figure 7: Attribute analysis

study reveals that the average ranking given by the viewers to Asianet is 7.2. The channel lacks in the credibility of news content as rated by the viewers, which is <6.8.

Figure 9 shows the ranking given to Manorama by the viewers in Cochin. It was found that the average rank for Manorama is 7.6. The channel ranks top in the coverage of political news, visual details of news, weather forecasts, and also tickers and flash news.

Figure 10 represents the ranking of India vision by the respondents. The average rank of India vision is 7.18,

Table 1: Favorite channel analysis of different age groups

Age	Favorite channel				Grand total
	Asianet News	Manorama	Indiavision	Kairali people	
Below 15 years	5	12	2		19
16-25 years	56	75	30	2	163
26-40 years	45	21	16	1	83
40-60 years	20	6	22	1	49
Above 60 years	17	16	2	1	36
Grand total	143	130	72	5	350

Table 2: Preference of exclusive news channel analysis

Age	Preference of exclusive news channel		
	No	Yes	Grand total
Below 15 years	-	19	19
16-25 years	16	147	163
26-40 years	10	73	83
40-60 years	-	49	49
Above 60 years	5	31	36
Grand total	31	319	350

Table 3: Preference of news reader

Important news reader	Total
News reader not important	97
News reader important	253
Grand total	350

Table 4: Total time spent on watching news programs

Age	Hours TV watch				Grand total
	Below 1 h	1-2 h	2-4 h	Above 4 h	
Below 15 years	6	2	2	9	19
16-25 years	60	42	38	23	163
25-40 years	6	45	29	3	83
40-60 years	10	28	11	-	49
Above 60 years	1	26	8	1	36
Grand total	83	143	88	36	350

which is slightly lower than Asianet News. The channel ranks the top in the coverage of political news and also pretty or handsome news presenters, which accounts for more than 7.4.

Figure 11 is a representation of the ranking of Kairali people and the average is 6.3, which is the lowest. Kairali people have got comparatively low averages in the various attributes. Among the attributes, the channel has got high averages in business news and coverage of political news.

The study on the various attributes suggests that Manorama ranks top among the four major news channels with an average rank of 7.6, followed by Asianet with an average of 7.2. The next comes Indiavision with a marginal difference in the average which is 7.18. The last in this category is Kairali people with an average of 6.3.

Table 5: Time preferred for watching news

Age	Time of watch				
	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Late night	Grand total
Below 15 years	-	1	17	1	19
16-25 years	13	-	95	55	163
26-40 years	10	5	42	26	83
41-60 years	9	7	26	7	49
Above 60 years	-	-	35	1	36
Grand total	32	13	215	90	350

Table 6: Ranking of talk shows

Preference toward news related programs and talk shows	Total
Rank 1	39
Rank 2	32
Rank 3	39
Rank 4	47
Rank 5	66
Rank 6	127
Grand total	350

Table 7: Preference of regular English News bulletin

Strongly disagree	6
Disagree	19
Neutral	46
Agree	153
Strongly agree	126
Grand total	350

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The study was conducted in Cochin City and it includes conducting a survey on the attitude of the viewers toward news channels in Malayalam and their preference toward the various aspects of a news channel.

1. An important finding is that in the survey conducted for the favorite news channel, Asianet News was rated the best by the majority of the viewers which accounts for 40% of the total respondents. This is closely followed by Manorama news which includes 37% of the total respondents. Then comes Indiavision with 20% and Kairali people in the last position with only 2% respondents rating it as the favorite channel. However, when the various attributes such as credibility of news content, accuracy of report, unbiased reporting of news, deep analysis and detailing, presentation style, and latest news updates were taken into consideration, the respondents ranked Manorama as the best news channel. In this case, Asianet News is ranked second which is followed by Indiavision and finally Kairali people.
2. Studying the preference of the viewers toward the time of news watch, it was found that a great majority of the viewers prefer to watch news in the evening. This suggests that evening time is the prime time for news.

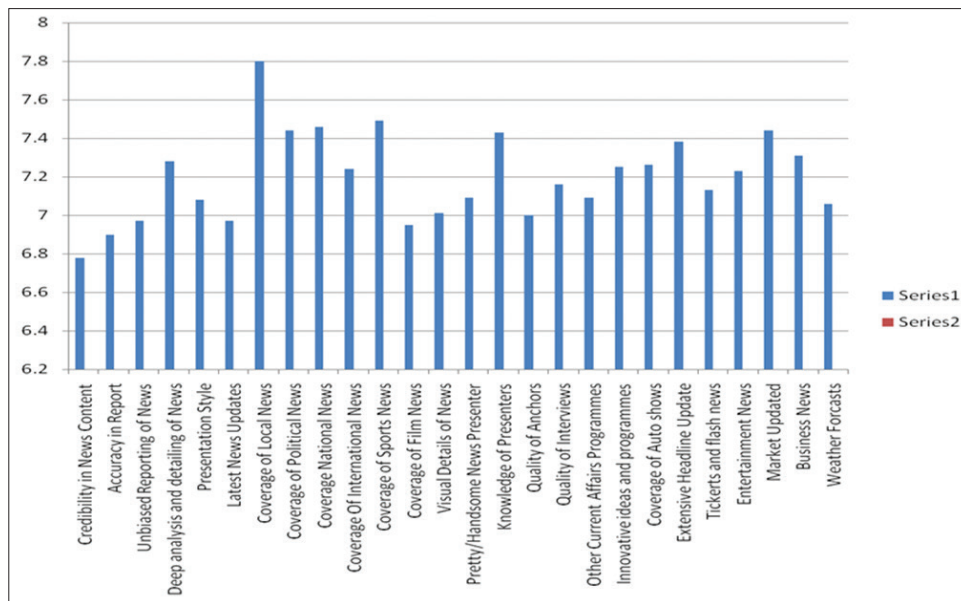


Figure 8: Ranking of Asianet News

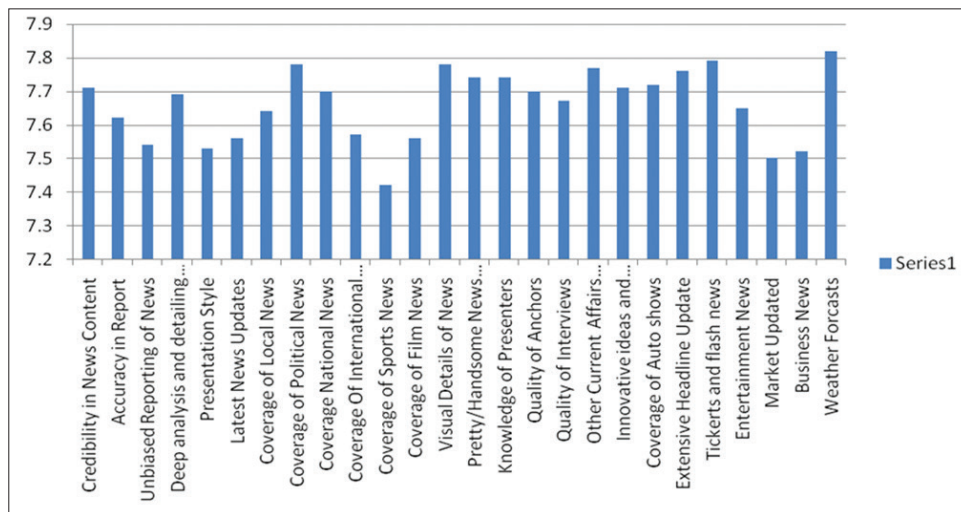


Figure 9: Ranking of Manorama News

- It is also found that news reader is an important factor in viewing a news channel as suggested by 72% of the respondents.
- A great majority of the respondents are regular news watchers and there is a strong demand for a regular English news bulletin. That is more than 64% of the respondents strongly suggested for the same.
- On a direct interview with the respondents, it was found that the channels which give a timely detailed report of urgent happenings which analyze the event from various dimensions have greater preference among the viewers. In this case, neutrality is not an issue in viewing a channel.
- When asked to the respondents about preferred news programs in news channels, the mention of news programs in other entertainment channels such as top 10 on AmrithaTV shows that they do not depend exclusively on news channels for news programs.
- Many respondents suggested that they prefer watching political satires in news channels such as "Cover story," "Politricks," "Thiruva ethirva," which integrate entertainment and information.
- There is a positive attitude toward dividing a 1 h news bulletin into 30 min discussion and then the main news bulletin, such as "counterpoint" executed by Manorama news channel.
- The presence of popular news readers and presenters attract more viewers to the news channels as inferred from the interview conducted among the respondents.

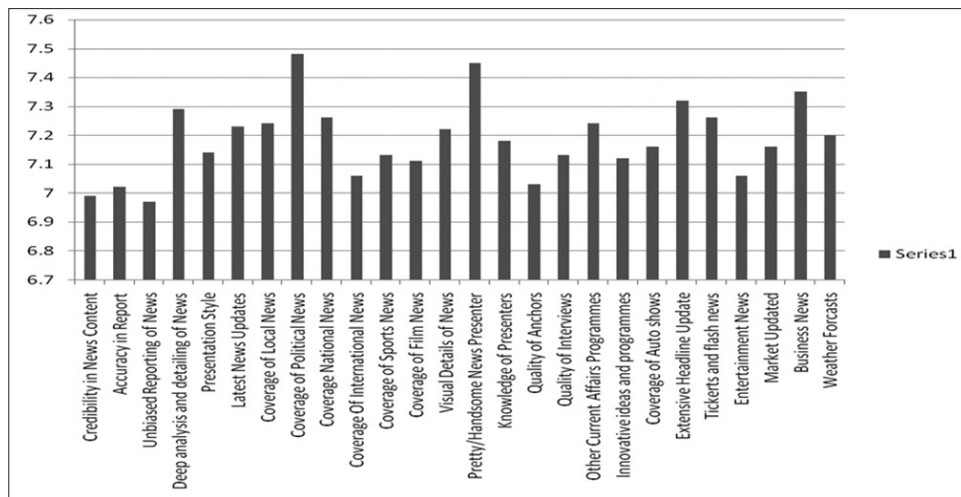


Figure 10: Ranking of Indivision

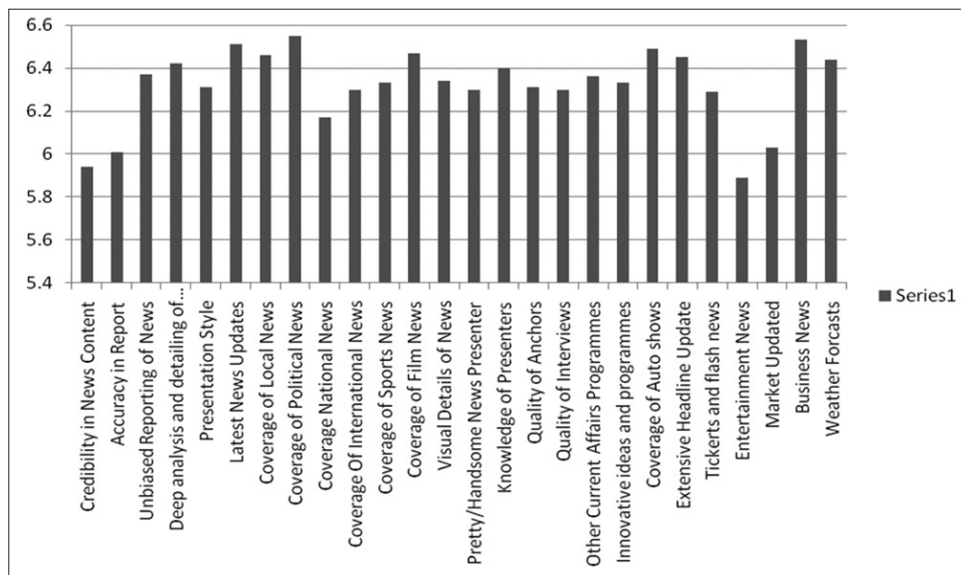


Figure 11: Ranking of Kairali people

SUGGESTIONS

1. The major suggestion that has been put forward by one of the respondents is that Malayalam news channels should concentrate on making the screen look more appealing. This means that the screen should not get congested with news scrolls, tickers, and related popups.
2. The main thing that has been suggested by the viewers is that precision of the news content is very important factor. They want news that is totally unbiased and the channel should not be in favor of any particular party. Many respondents rate the reporting of Kairali people and Jaihind as a biased one favoring a particular party. That is why the channel is rated low.
3. Another important suggestion by the respondents is that the channel should not give unnecessary importance to certain news items on social or political issues, urgent happenings, etc. This is because giving over focus to such events and continuously discussing these events make the viewers feel bored as the same event is being telecasted continuously on TV. This also exaggerates the event beyond the desired level.
4. News channels should focus on investigative news stories because viewers have a tendency to view these reports irrespective of the channel in which it is telecast.
5. News channels should introduce live screening of news through their websites as suggested by the youth category of the respondents. This would help attract more viewers from the youth category of the viewers.
6. News channels must take initiatives to launch interactive debates using its profiles in popular social networking sites as a platform. These debates should

necessarily highlight the stories which are brought out through the mainstream news channels.

7. The news channels should provide capsule sized video contents of their original footage in video uploading platforms such as youtube. This will help them in making a chord with the ever burgeoning net savvy segment of the general population.
8. News channels should emphasize more on prioritizing the news feed which they get. Today, the increasing incidents of pop-ups such as breaking news have literally made no news a breaking news anymore.
9. News channels should also come up with relevant gadget programs, like gadget guru.
10. There should also be ad review programs such as "All about ads" in NDTV which are still not popular in Malayalam news channels. Many of the respondents demanded such programs as it integrates entertainment along with information.

CONCLUSION

Communication is one of the most hyped words in contemporary culture. In the modern world, media plays a crucial role in communicating events instantaneously to people. Strong competition among news channels has led to evolving of new innovative trends in the reporting and presentation of news content. Hence, it has become a prerequisite for channels to cater to the required standards to find a place in the mind of the viewers. The study of viewership pattern of Malayalam news channels would help Asianet News channels in analyzing the expectation of the viewers and shape their presentation style and various other attributes in that direction. It would help the company to ensure better quality in the presentation and delivery of news. The findings and suggestions would help the company a great deal in the future.

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