

Reasons For Reading Political News By University Students

M.Kirubakaran¹ V.Natarajan²

1. Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Periyar University, Salem TN, India- 636 011. E mail: kirubaslm68@gmail.com,8072455655

2. Professor & Head, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Periyar University, Salem, TN, India- 636 011. E mail: vainatarajan@gmail.com

Abstract:

Political communication is considered as one of the foremost forms of communication and its origins can be traced back to the pre-colonial and historic era. Political communication was used by the upper-class people, elites and rulers to exercise control over common man and general public. As time progressed newer concepts were introduced by various scholars and theorists. Newspaper is one of the earliest forms of communication in India. The reach of newspapers is vast amongst the people of the country. The current research study is envisioned to explore the reasons for reading political news and the coverage given to political news by newspapers. The research study adopts quantitative research approaches in the form of questionnaires among University students.

Key Words: Political Communication; News reading; Print Media; Political news; University students;

I. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Newspapers:

One of the objectives of a newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and give manifestation to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; the third is to fearlessly expose popular defects. Newspapers attempt to provide the facts and analysis that allows informed citizens to make operative and responsible decision in a complex, information-saturated society. The role of newspapers has evolved in response to the changing needs of their readers and is currently going through a softening of news in reaction to other media's coverage of lifestyle, entertainment and so on. The press in developing countries, therefore, serves a diversity of purposes. It is a medium of news, the source of information about world, national and local events and means of inaugurating

mutual understanding. It is an implement of education, contributing to the development of human resources and capital in promoting economic growth. It is a multiplier in the communication process, dispersal widely and rapidly information which will aid national development (Summerland, 1981). Nash (1998) argues that competition for audience is driving trend toward trivial news, by chasing the passing whims of focus groups and surveys, most newspapers have desiccated coverage of major political, economic and social issues in favor of soft features, personality profiles, hoe to advice and focus on the process rather than the substance of governance.

II. REVIEW OF LITRATURE:

2.1 Role of Press

It is often said that the rise of the 24-hour news culture has changed the very nature of what people seek from newspapers. Brighton and Foy (2007) have already observed the wide spread assumption that many readers are looking less to find out what has happened than help them to make sense of it-or simply to find out more detail. It may also be that we consciously or reflexively seek aids to help us decide our options what news is, though the general consensus is that fewer people read editorials than news pages. Along with the dominant stream of journalism passionate with politics and concerned with urban issues and developments there have been some strains in Indian Journalism as well. The Hindustan Times can claim some credit for opening improvement reporting. In the 1950's extensive reporting about the functioning and the problems of various public sector projects in India was undertaken by the Hindustan Times (Yadava, 1998). For Gandhi, the key to a newspaper's role in arousing social awareness was reliability and credibility. Social commitment was basic. Transparency in all its processes was essential to maintain its reputation (Bhattacharjee, 2003). The role of press in society advanced by the pro-government campaign is summarising as follows; a) the advocacy of a cooperative role for the press in nation building and national development. b) The role of the press as a promoter for social and political change and c) The duty of the press to i) Educate instead of merely entertaining. ii) Maintaining social stability and racial harmony. iii) Aid in economic development and nation building. These roles are prioritized in Asia largely in line with Social structures b) political systems and c) cultural sensitivity and traditions d) economic conditions and historical perspectives in Asia. The newspapers have a two-step function. First, newspapers select certain events to entice the consideration of the policy-makers and set an agenda for public actions; second, newspapers also frame the issues, telling the readers

what is important to know (Murthy, 2006). Following the church, legislature and executive, the press is referred as the fourth estate or pillar of democracy due to its immense growth and outreach, which has created new uses and possibilities that harbours change in society. In contemporary times, journalism has evolved grown, expanded and departed from its spirit and mission of hard-core professionalism to crass commercialization. While yielding to pressures of the changing markets, the press, too, has shifted its priorities and goals.

III. METHODOLOGY:

Quantitative research method is employed for this study and adopts the Uses and Gratification Theory. The survey sample consists of University students. The sample size is 100. Four newspapers viz. The Hindu, The New Indian Express, Daily Thanthi and Dinamalar were taken up for the study during March, 2019.

3.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study reasons for reading political news by University students.
- To explore the coverage given to political news by newspapers.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS PRESENTATION:

4.1 Gender

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Female	60	60
Male	40	40

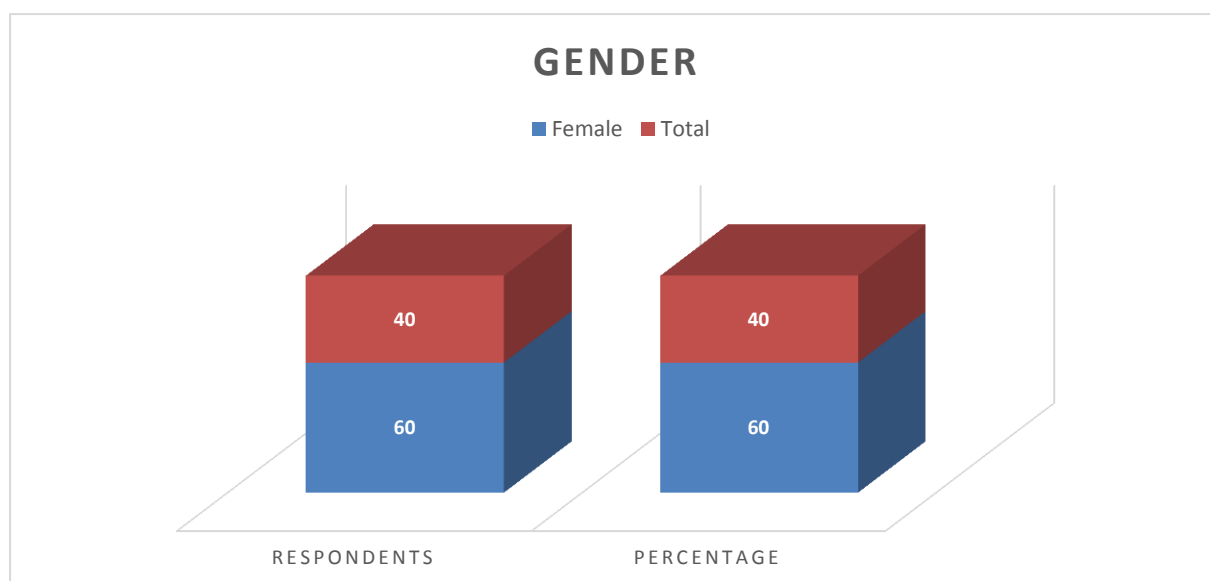


Figure 4.1

Majority respondents were females with 60%. Males were the least with 40%.

4.2 Age Group

Age Group	Respondents	Percentage
17-21	50	50
22-25	20	20
26-30	20	20
Above 30	10	10
Total	100	100

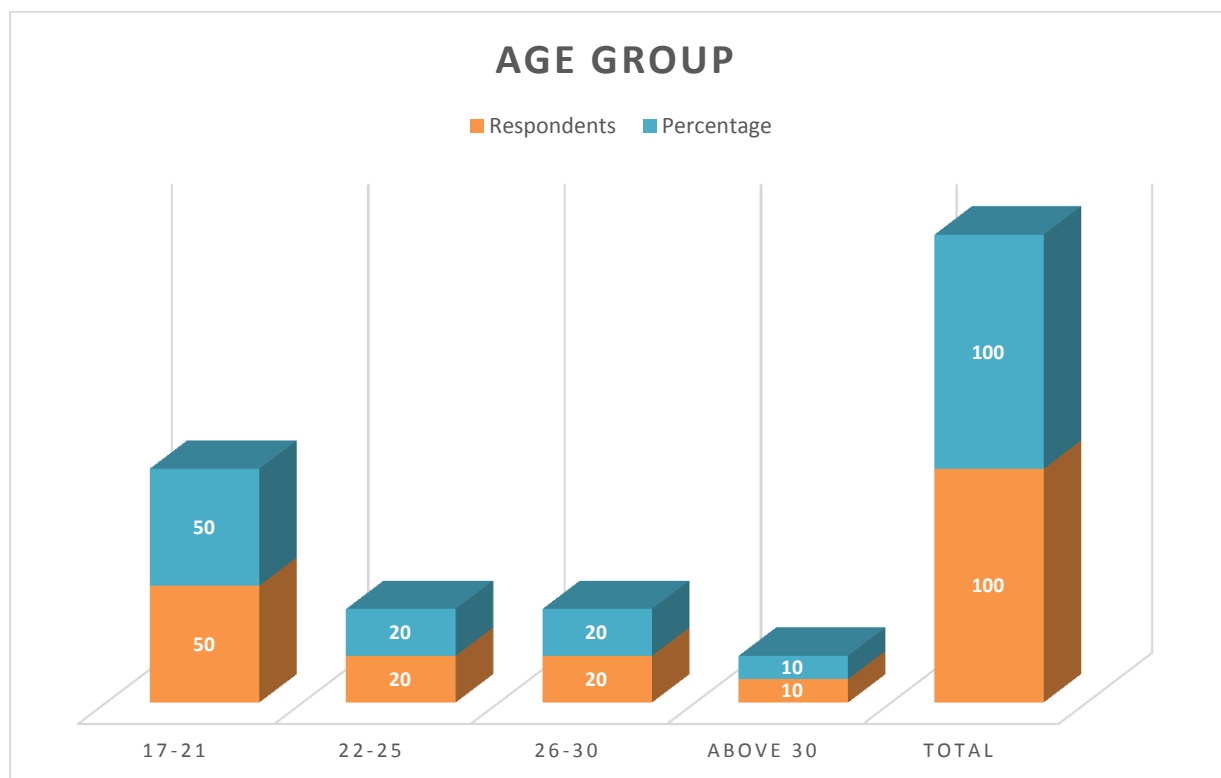


Figure 4.2

Half of the respondents were in the age group of 17-21 years of age. Respondents in the age group of 22-25 and 26-30 were the next with 20% each. Respondents who were aged above 30 were the least with 10%.

4.3 Area of Living

Area of Living	Respondents	Percentage
Urban	40	40
Rural	60	60
Total	100	100

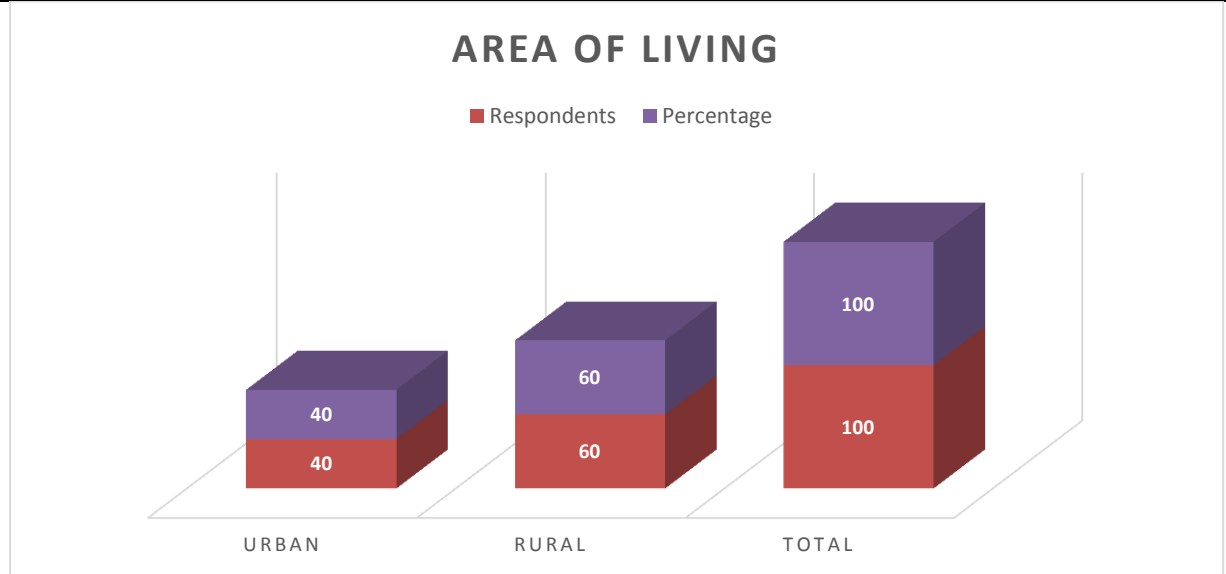


Figure 4.3

Majority respondents were from rural areas with 60%. Respondents from urban areas were the least with 40%.

4.4 Preferred Newspaper

Newspapers	Respondents	Percentage
The Hindu	15	15
The New Indian Express	15	15
Daily Thanthi	35	35
Dinamalar	35	35
Total	100	100

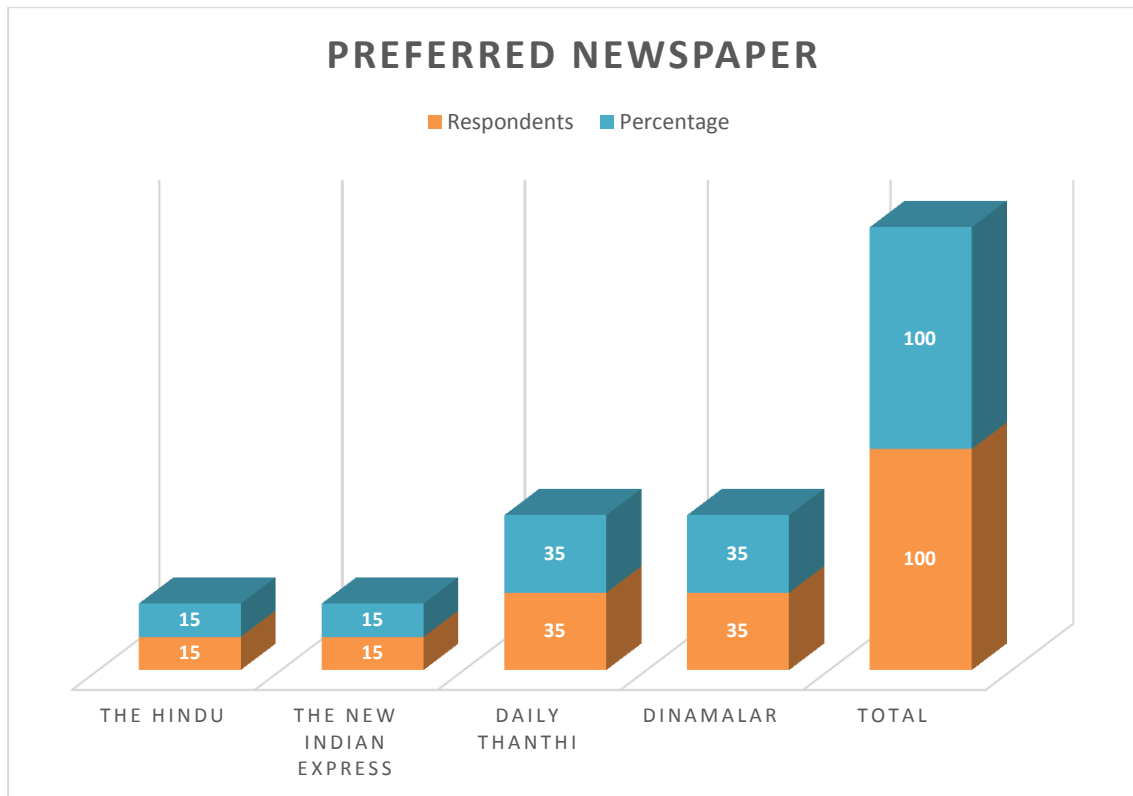


Figure 4.5

Daily Thanthi and Dinamalar were the most preferred newspaper with 35% each. The Hindu and The New Indian Express were the least preferred newspaper with 15% each.

4.6 Type of News Story

Newspapers					
Variables		The Hindu	The New Indian Express	Daily Thanthi	Dinamalar
		1	2	3	4
News digest	1	20	10	20	20
Hard News	2	20	10	20	20
Feature	3	20	10	20	20
Letters to the Editor	4	20	10	20	20
Editorial	5	20	10	20	20

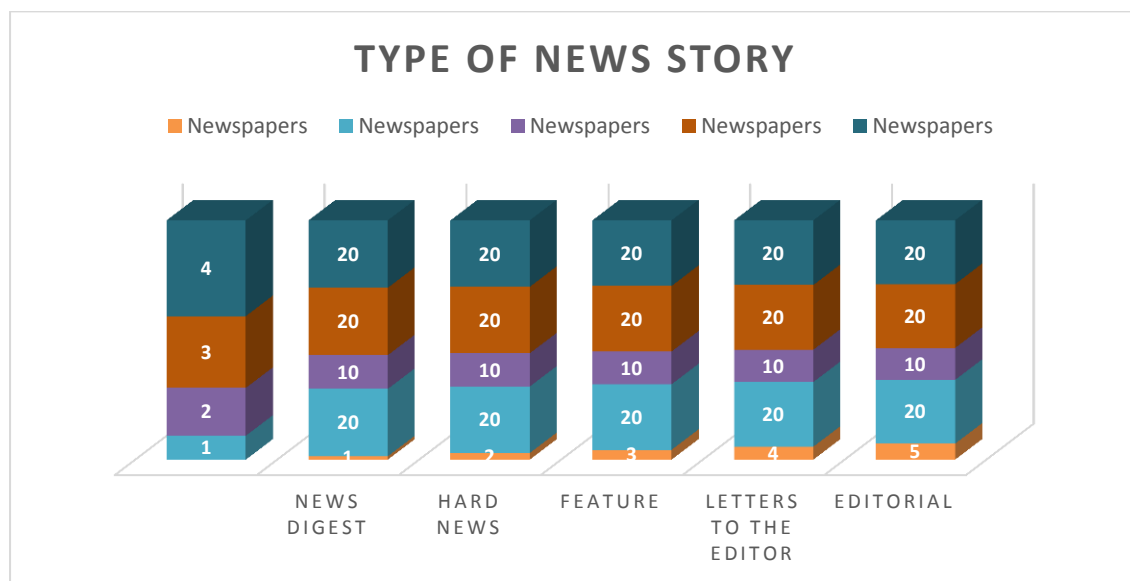


Figure 4.6

The Hindu, Daily Thanthi and Dinamalar had equal coverage among news digest, hard news, features, letters to the editor and editorials. The New Indian Express had the least coverage among news digest, hard news, features, letters to the editor and editorials.

4.7 Size of News Story

Newspapers Variables		The Hindu	The New Indian Express	Daily Thanthi	Dinamalar
		1	2	3	4
>800	1	20	10	20	20
400-799	2	20	10	20	20
150-399	3	20	10	20	20
100-149	4	20	10	20	20
<100	5	20	10	20	20

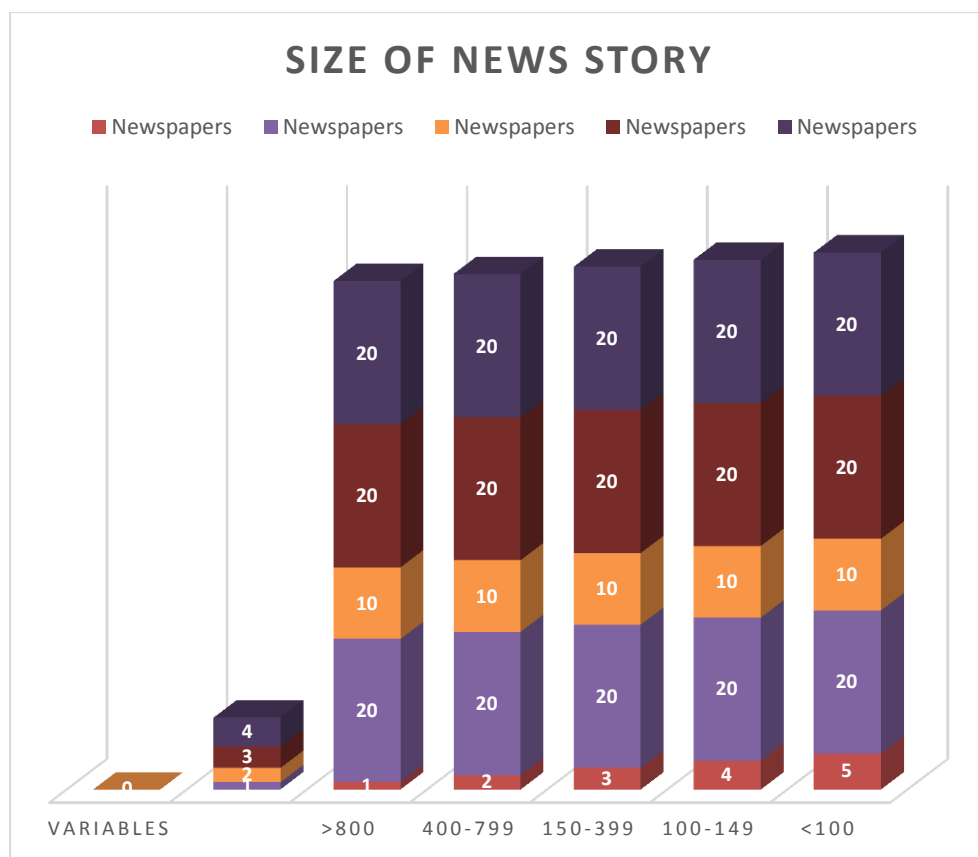


Figure 4.7

The Hindu, Daily Thanthi and Dinamalar had equal coverage among >800, 400-799, 150-399, 100-149 and <100. The New Indian Express had the least coverage among >800, 400-799, 150-399, 100-149 and <100.

4.8 Span of the News Story

Newspapers Variables		The Hindu	The New Indian Express	Daily Thanthi	Dinamalar
		1	2	3	4
One Column	1	20	10	20	20
Two Columns	2	20	10	20	20
Three Columns	3	20	10	20	20
Four Columns	4	20	10	20	20
Multiple Columns	5	20	10	20	20

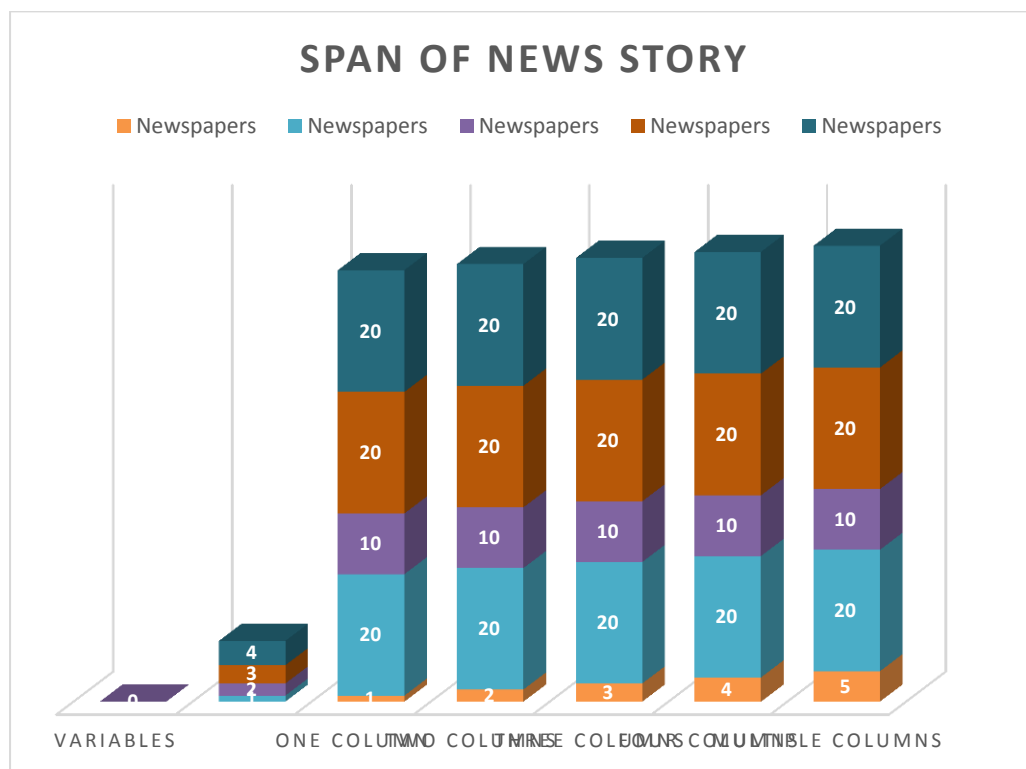


Figure 4.8

The Hindu, Daily Thanthi and Dinamalar had equal coverage among One Column, Two columns, three columns, four columns and multiple columns. The New Indian Express had the least coverage among One Column, Two columns, three columns, four columns and multiple columns.

4.9 Reasons for Reading Political News

Reasons	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
To be aware of the viewpoint of a political leader	50	30	10	5	5
Affinity towards a party	30	50	5	5	10
Affinity towards a political leader	50	5	5	10	30
Likeness towards an election manifesto	5	5	50	10	30
To be aware of the political coalition	30	50	10	5	5

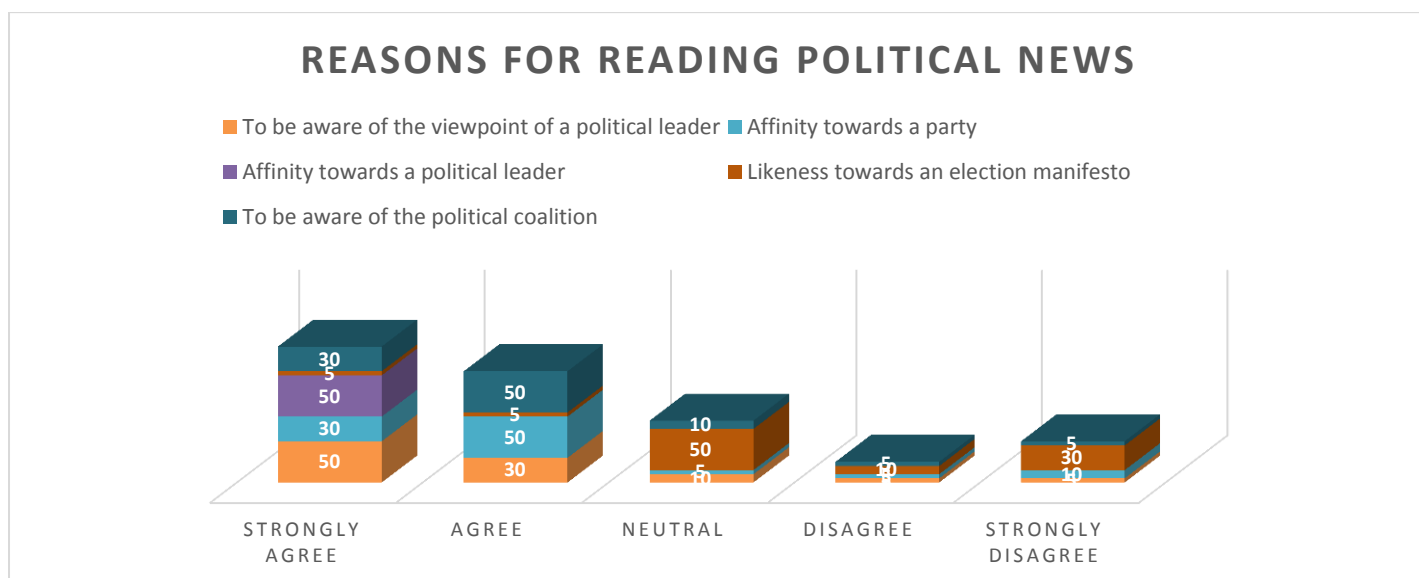


Figure 4.9

Half of the respondents strongly agreed that they read political news to be strongly aware of the viewpoint put forth by a political leader. Half of the respondents agreed that the affinity towards a party was the main reason for reading newspapers. Half of the respondents strongly agreed that affinity towards a political leader was the main reason for reading newspapers. Half of the respondents were neutral with regards to likeness of an election manifesto to be the reason for reading newspapers. Half of the respondents agreed that being aware of the political coalition was the main reason for reading newspapers.

V. CONCLUSION:

Political communication is considered as one of the earliest forms of communication medium. It is attributed as one of the oldest mediums as it was being used by the elites and ruling class and later by the common man. As years went by, many new concepts were later introduced and put forth to the masses by various scholars. The current research study was envisioned to explore the reasons for reading political news by University students and the coverage given to political news by newspapers. The study revealed that majority respondents strongly agreed that they read political news to be aware of viewpoints put forth by a political leader. The study also revealed that affinity towards a party and a political leader were considered as important reasons for reading newspapers.

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