Just Two in Five Americans Read a Newspaper Almost Every Day

Contributed by Harris Interactive
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Less than one-quarter of 18-34 year olds read a paper each day

Newspapers around the country are struggling. 2009 saw a few newspapers change their business model to an online focus or shut down completely.

2010 will most likely see the same struggle and, perhaps, new business models emerge for these media entities.

One thing is clear, the era of Americans reading a daily newspaper each and every day is coming to an end.

Just two in five U.S. adults (43%) say they read a daily newspaper, either online or in print almost every day.

Just over seven in ten Americans (72%) say they read one at least once a week while 81% read a daily newspaper at least once a month. One in ten adults (10%) say they never read a daily newspaper.

These are some of the findings of a new Adweek Media/ Harris Poll, survey of 2,136 U.S. adults surveyed online between December 14 and 16, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

The Graying Newspaper Reader
One reason for the dying of the daily newspaper is the graying of the daily readership. Almost two-thirds of those aged 55 and older (64%) say they still read a daily newspaper almost every day.

The younger one is, however, the less often they read newspapers. Just over two in five of those aged 45-54 (44%) read a paper almost every day as do 36% of those aged 35-44.

But less than one quarter of those aged 18-34 (23%) say they read a newspaper almost every day while 17% in this age group say they never read a daily newspaper.

Paying for online content
One potential business model that newspapers are exploring is charging a monthly fee to read a daily newspaper's content online. This model, however, seems unlikely to work as three-quarters of online adults (77%) say they would not be willing to pay anything to read a newspaper's content online.

While some are willing to pay, one in five online adults (19%) would only pay between $1 and $10 a month for this online content and only 5% would pay more than $10 a month.

There is a slight regional difference in who would pay for online content. Over four in five online adults in the Northeast (81%) say they would not be willing to pay anything to read a daily newspaper's content online.

Those across the country, however, are more willing. While seven in ten Westerners (71%) still say they would not pay, almost one-quarter (24%) of Westerners would pay between $1 and $10 a month to read a paper's content online.

So what?
The struggles of the daily newspaper will continue as Americans have more and more ways to find the news content they need and want.

The challenge for newspapers will be discovering a way to get their content to people and make money doing so.

One area they were intently exploring was charging for online content, though it appears they need to find another way.

Methodology
This Adweek Media/Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States December 14 and 16, 2009 among 2,136 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

Where appropriate, this data were also weighted to reflect the composition of the adult online population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates.

These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population.

Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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