

Promotion Related Preferences of News Channel Audiences in Indore and Dehradun – A Comparative Study

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INTRODUCTION

(Broadcast) Promotion refers to a channel's efforts to promote itself to advertisers (for revenue) and audience (for revenues and getting high TRPs). Promotion can be on-air or off-air.

1. *Audience promotion*-The primary purpose is to maintain existing viewers and to attract non-viewers to sample the station's programs. The target is achieved through program promotion and image (channel) promotion. An audience promotion campaign must take into account campaign purpose, target audience, audience benefits, promotion methods, content and budget.

Program promotion promotes a particular program to non-viewers to sample it and to existing viewers to keep watching the program. Image promotion may try to establish, change or improve the existing image or perception of the channel.

2. *Sales promotion*-The primary purpose is to convince ad agencies and advertisers to buy airtime.

The various issues and strategies for different types of promotion are discussed below-

1. ADVERTISING AND PROMOS

a) *Introduction*-Newspapers (especially Sunday & TV supplements), magazines, billboards, radio and internet are popular media for advertising channels/programs. At 23.3 per cent, FCT (Free Commercial Time) in news was the highest in 2006 compared to all other genres and is consistently increasing.

b) *Ad campaigns*-Headlines Today launched a campaign 'News crisply told' across all media and built upon the image of news with accuracy, integrity and speed minus lengthy analysis. The advertisement targeted the viewers who want 'no-frills' news. Six posters were created focusing on BBC's lack of bias. Each picture showed a news event and provided three different interpretations of its meaning, the crux of the message being that BBC covers every viewpoint.

c) *Ad avoidance*-According to BBC World Adwatch 2004, a survey on ad avoidance habits found that a very low number of viewers (30 per cent) are receptive to ads and the ad avoiders constituted mainly of higher SECs, younger age groups and males-the key targets for most of the brands.

d) *Advertising rates*-The average ad rate for a Hindi news channel is around Rs 1,450 per 10 seconds while for an English channel it is Rs 2,250. Aaj Tak and Star News get a premium and get between Rs 3,000 and Rs 3,500 per 10 seconds (only during time bands of 7 am to 10 am and 8 pm to 11 pm).

e) *Equity for advertising deals*-Bennett, Coleman & Co Ltd (Times Now) has signed more than 35 equities for advertisement deals with small and medium sized companies. These companies are consistently promoted in all BCCL media platforms, which include newspaper, radio, internet and Times Now.

f) *Program promos*-There are new forms like pop ups coming in on regular programs. Cross-channel promotions of programs is also growing. More than 50 per cent of commercial time is being used for promos by all channels.

g) *Creative and innovative advertising*-Raj Nayak, CEO, NDTV Media notes, "We probably have the smallest marketing budget among news channels but we end up making the maximum noise. We have used creative ways to stretch our advertising rupee and used our relationships with various media partners to build strategic media alliances."

2. PR, EVENTS AND PUBLICITY

a) *Events*-BBC used road shows to create awareness about the fact that the 'University Challenge' program is returning. BBC teams as well as Sidharth Basu travelled to various colleges in the Indian metros.

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b) *Awards*-Awards constituted by news channels include ICICI-Awaaz Consumer Preference vote awards, NDTV Profit Business Leadership awards, CNN-IBN Indian of the year awards, CNBC TV18-Airtel India Business Leader awards, CNBC TV18-CRISIL Mutual Fund of the year Award, Star News-Economic Times awards for corporate excellence and Star News-Business World Design Awards.

c) *Road show*-As part of its program *Eye on India*, CNN's vehicles travelled around Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore persuading youth to express their views on relevant issues. BBC World in association with Newsweek and Shell conducted *World Challenge-2006*, a global competition on community enterprise and innovation.

d) *Sampling*-In Mumbai and Delhi airports, only Star News is played so that viewers can sample the channel.

e) *Publicity*-News and feature stories in other media/network channels (about awards for example), press kits, program listings, celebrity appearances and special screenings (for journalists and media critics) are major tools of publicity.

f) *Other tools*-Public appearances of news anchors, participation in community organisations and sponsorships are other PR tools.

3. SALES PROMOTION

a) *Consumer Sales Promotion*

Contests-CNN launched an interactive contest 'Make the Connection' in association with Barista and contests2win.com. The promotion had twin objectives viz to make CNN a part of the consumers' daily routine besides quizzing the audience on their general knowledge. IBN 7 launched IBN 7 News Superstar contest in which the audience had to watch IBN 7 between 8:30 pm and 10:30 pm and answer 4 questions to get grand prizes. 'I know the *New Delhi*' contest organized by Times Now celebrated the emergence of *New Delhi*. The two lucky winners got the opportunity to spend a night in a 5 star hotel with a luxurious car at their doorstep and dine at a restaurant of their choice besides the gift vouchers.

Tie up with films-Aaj Tak tied up with *Apharan* and an Aaj Tak reporter was a character in the film. The film showcased some of the key strengths of Aaj Tak such as credibility, fastest time to market, fearless, incisive journalism and ability to build public opinion. Star News got Priyanka Chopra to act as a correspondent in *Krrish* besides other elements of the deal like in movie placement and global satellite distribution for *Krrish*. Barkha Dutt invited Shahrukh Khan and Karan Johar in the NDTV studio to debate about the status of the great Indian marriage after the release of *Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna*. Times Now correspondents were seen in the film *Corporate* reporting news as part of the film's storyline.

b) *Advertiser Sales Promotion*

Advertisers want their messages to reach people most likely to use their products and in the most economical way. Therefore, sales promotion lays emphasis on the channels' ability to reach desired demographics at competitive costs. A channel's strength can be quantity or quality of its audience. Quantity is related to number of viewers or TRPs. Quality is related to audience characteristics such as age, gender, occupation, income and so on. The channel can highlight its quantitative or qualitative strengths over its entire schedule, periods of the day or particular programs.

4. OTHER PROMOTION TOOLS

Identification announcements (e.g. this is Zee News), slogans, program clips etc are other examples of on air promotion. Off-air promotion includes free gifts/advertising specialities, direct mail, channel publications (e.g. newsletters), website, sponsored conferences & debates and so on. BBC has created a weekly email newsletter in Europe containing programme news and details of its schedule, which it sends to BBC World viewers on request.

5. TICKERS

Tickers can be classified under promotion (promotion tickers) and product (news and stocks tickers). Besides the news, today the TV screen is packed with various types of tickers like scroll advertisements, news ticker, slug (Breaking news/Flash/Just in), stock prices, channel logo, SMS feedback question, program promos & reminders, weather update, scoreboard and so on. The basic objective is to be able to disseminate maximum information and provide multiple platforms for a viewer to stay back even if the current program does not interest him. The ticker can be useful to the viewer in a variety of ways and can encourage viewer response. However, packing too much information can confuse or irritate the viewer. There are three important factors to be kept in

mind; the nature of the channel (eg stock prices go well in case of business channel), the target viewership and the limits to which one can go.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In the present era of globalization and constantly changing audience dynamics, it is important to understand audience preferences and promotion plays a critical role in a news channel's marketing mix. Developing such an understanding is likely to help news channels/journalists in improving audience feedback, ratings, and viewership. In view of the importance of the subject, it is important to undertake studies to examine viewer tastes and preferences.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to conduct comparative analysis of audience preferences of Indore and Dehradun viewers.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was confined only to Indore and Dehradun and Hindi/English news channels. These cities were selected as they are cosmopolitan and represent typical cities of northern India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary data for the study has been collected from the respondents who were selected using a mix of quota, judgment, and convenience sampling. Distribution of sample has been given in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Distribution of Audience (Indore and Dehradun)

S.No	Category	Percentage of respondents
1	Executive / Manager	24
2	Self-employed	6
3	Businessman	6
4	Government employee	10
5	Retired	4
6	Student	24
7	Housewife	6
8	Supervisor	2
9	Clerical	2
10	Shopowner	8
11	Faculty / Education	8
	Total	100

Primary data was collected through a pre -tested questionnaire cum interview method from the selected respondents. The questionnaire was designed based on the literature survey and discussions held with many academicians and professionals in the field. The content validity of the questionnaire was tested by having many discussions on the relevance, comprehension and depth of study and the questionnaire was found appropriate. The feedback which was collected was incorporated before administering the questionnaire. Secondary data was collected from books, journals, internet, reports etc. Five hundred respondents from both cities participated in the study. After codifying and tabulating data, various statistical tools were applied like percentages, averages etc.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

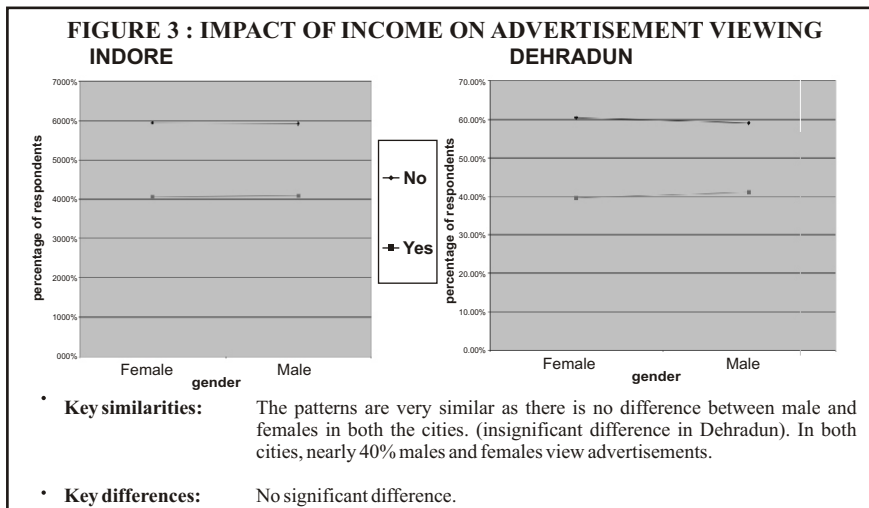
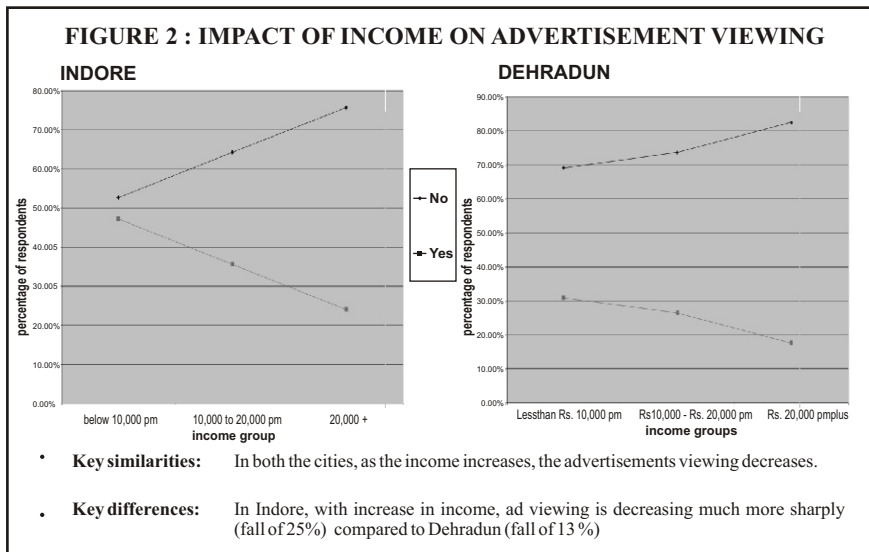
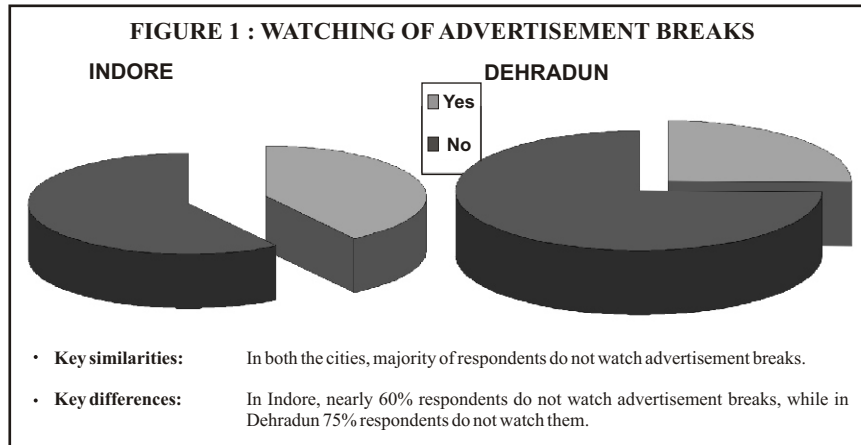
a) Watching of advertisement breaks in news bulletins

The watching of advertisement breaks has been correlated with income, and gender. (Refer Figures 1, 2 & 3).

Table 2

Watching of advertisement breaks	Indore (percentage of respondents)	Dehradun (percentage of respondents)
Yes	40.8	25.2
No	59.2	74.8

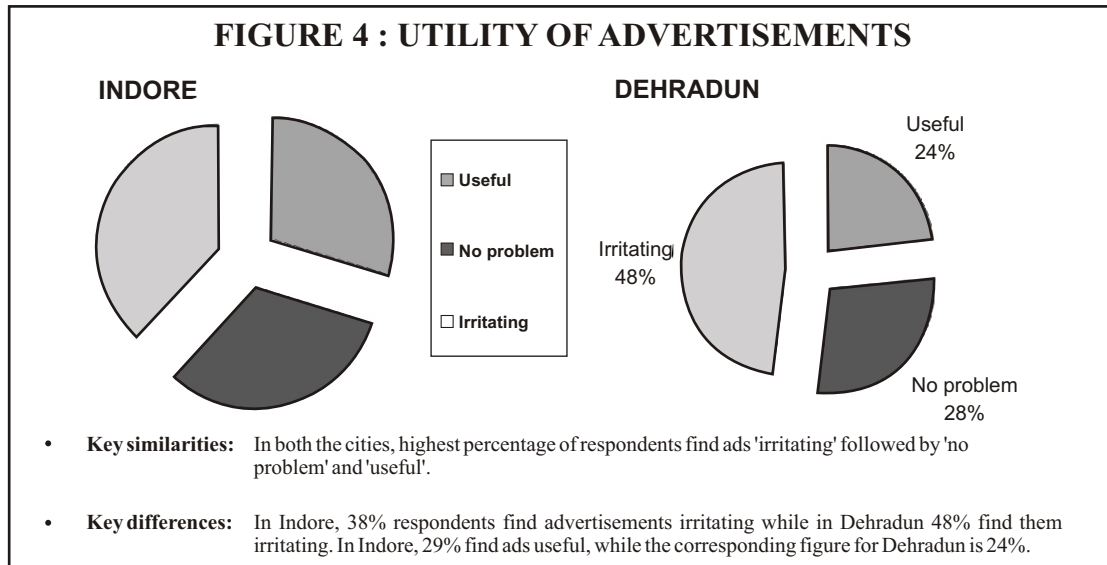
According to BBC World Adwatch 2004, a survey on ad avoidance habits, it was found that a very low number of viewers (30 per cent) are receptive to ads and the ad avoiders constituted mainly of higher SECs-the key targets for most of the brands.



b) Response to advertisements (Refer Figure 4)

Table 3

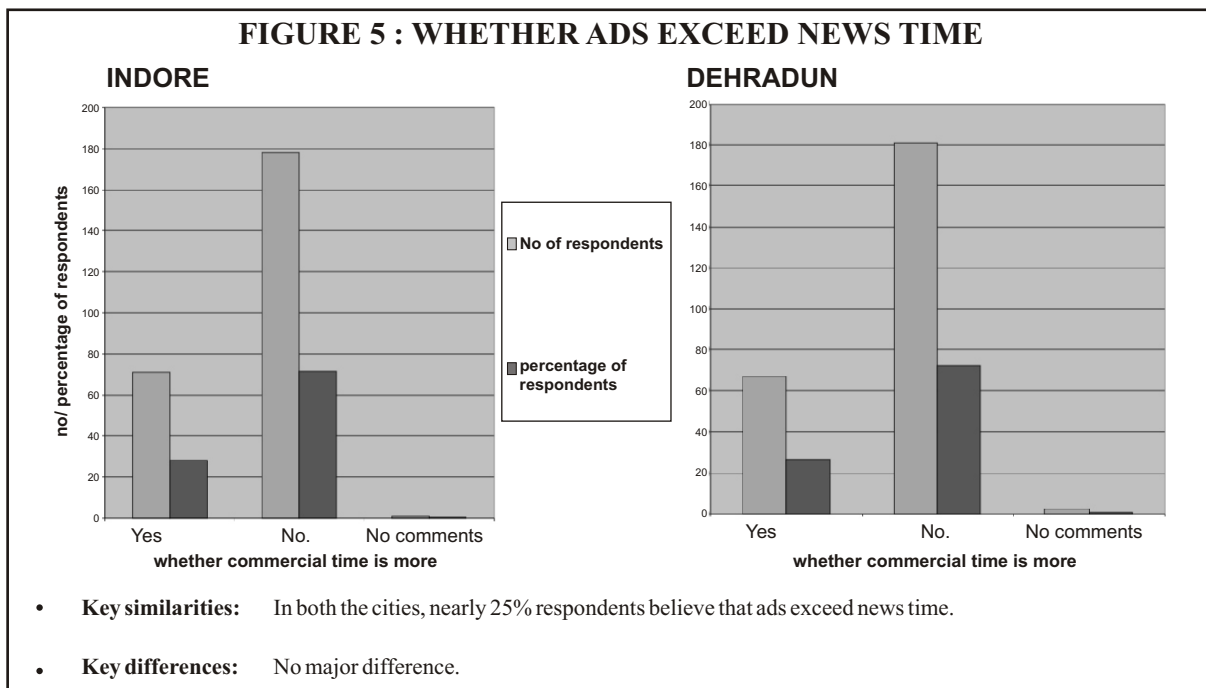
Response to advertisements	Indore (percentage of respondents)	Dehradun (percentage of respondents)
Useful	29.2	23.6
No problem	31.2	28
Irritating	37.6	48.8



c) Whether the commercial time is more than news time (Refer Figure 5)

Table 4

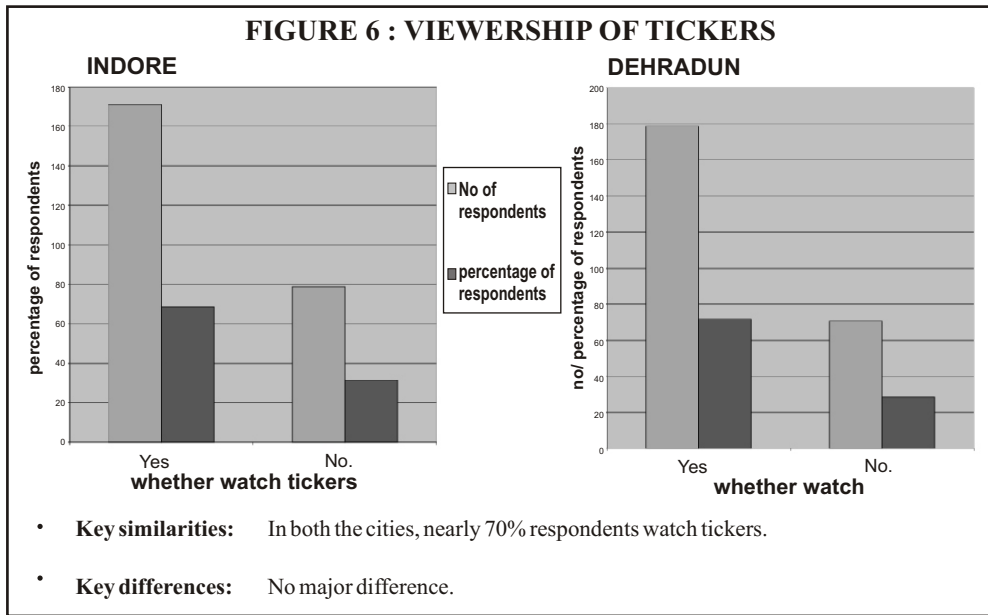
Whether commercial time is perceived as more than news time	Indore (percentage of respondents)	Dehradun (percentage of respondents)
No comments	0.4	0.8
No	71.2	72.4
Yes	28.4	26.8



d) Watching of tickers on the TV screen (Refer Figure 6)

Table 5

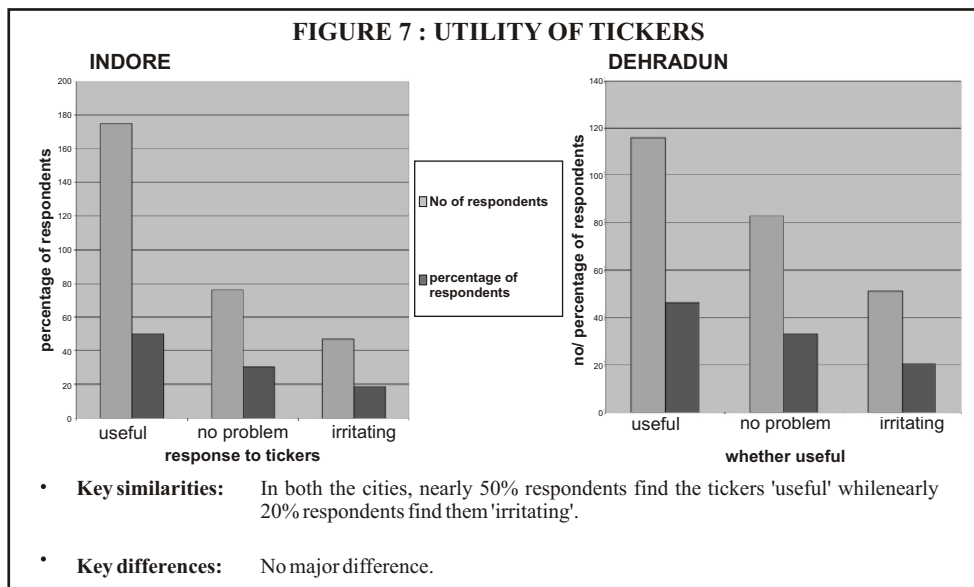
Watching of tickers on the TV screen	Indore (percentage of respondents)	Dehradun (percentage of respondents)
No	68.4	71.6
Yes	31.6	28.4



e) Response to tickers (Refer Figure 7)

Table 6

Response to tickers	Indore (percentage of respondents)	Dehradun (percentage of respondents)
Useful	50	46.4
No problem	30.4	33.2
Irritating	18.8	20.4

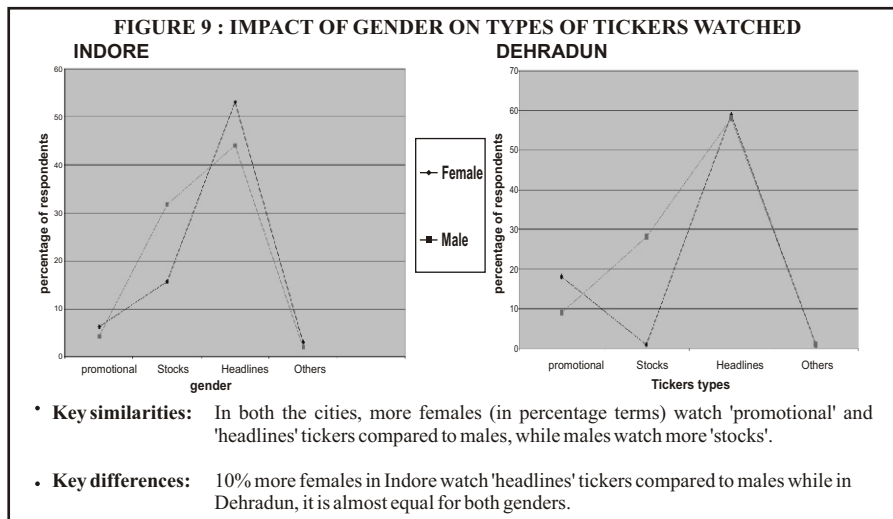
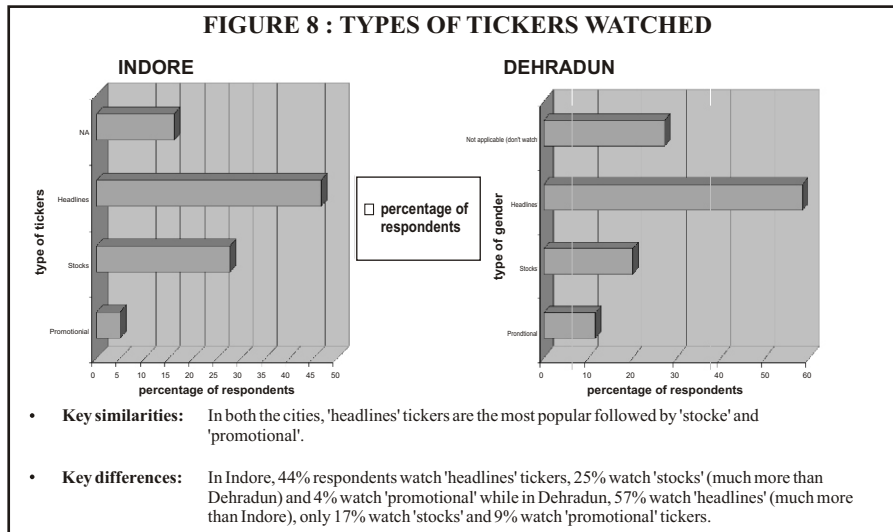


f) Type of tickers watched (Refer Figures 8 & 9)

It has also been correlated with gender

Table 7

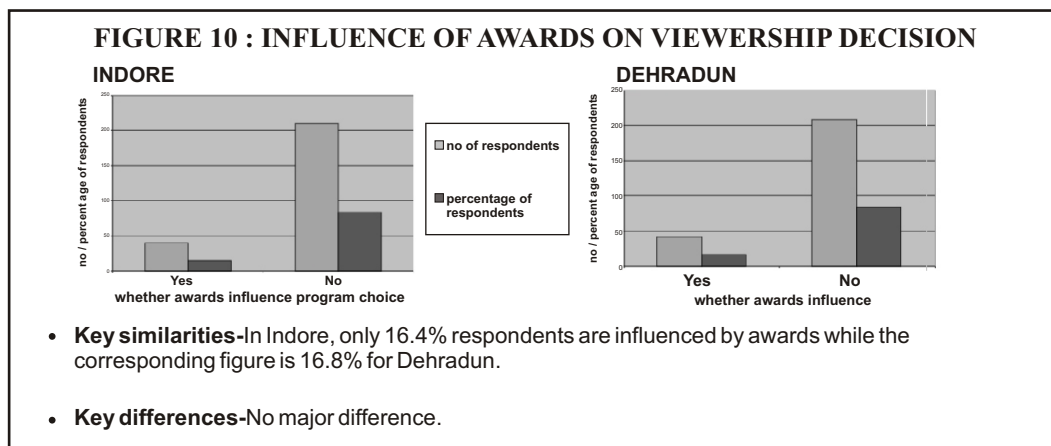
Type of tickers watched	Indore (percentage of respondents)	Dehradun (percentage of respondents)
Promotional	4.8	11.6
Stocks	27.6	20
Headlines	46.4	58.4
NA	16	27.2



g) Influence of awards on viewership decision (Refer Figure 10)

Table 8

Influence of awards on program choice	Indore (percentage of respondents)	Dehradun (percentage of respondents)
Yes	16.4	16.8
No	83.6	83.2



CONCLUSIONS

Key similarities between Indore and Dehradun audiences

From the data obtained, it can be inferred that in both cities:-

- 1) More than 75 per cent of the respondents do not read program schedules in newspapers.
- 2) The majority of the respondents do not watch advertisement breaks.
- 3) The highest percentages of respondents find ads irritating, followed by 'no problem' and 'useful'.
- 4) In both cities, nearly 25 per cent respondents believe that advertisements exceed news time. Also, nearly 70 per cent of the respondents watch tickers and nearly 50 per cent of the respondents find tickers useful while nearly 20 per cent find them irritating.
- 5) Headlines tickers are the most popular followed by stocks and promotions. Nearly 16 per cent of the respondents are influenced by awards.

Channels in which advertisement time exceeds news time

Table 9

Channel name	No. of respondents who feel ad time is more than news time (Indore)	No. of respondents who feel ad time is more than news time (Dehradun)
Aaj Tak	21	50
Star News	10	38
India TV	9	37
Zee News	37	36
NDTV India	8	35
Sahara Samay	7	32
BBC	7	32
Awaaz	10	31
Profit	8	31
DD News	7	31
CNBC News	8	31
Zee Business	8	31
IBN 7	7	31

Key differences Between Indore (Plains) and Dehradun (Hills)

In Indore, nearly 60 per cent of the respondents do not watch advertisement breaks, while in Dehradun 75 per cent respondents do not watch them. In Indore, 44 per cent of the respondents watch headlines tickers, 25 per cent stocks (much more than Dehradun) and 4 per cent promotional while in Dehradun, 57 per cent watch headlines (much more than Indore), only 17 per cent watch stocks, and 9 per cent watch promotional.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Very few people read program schedules of news channels in newspapers. Hence, the right advertising and promotion of a program is very crucial. More than 60 per cent respondents do not watch advertisements and many respondents suggest that advertisements must be reduced at least on pay channels. Nearly 40 per cent respondents find advertisements irritating. It is important to note that 25 per cent respondents even believe that advertisement time exceeds news time on some channels. As far as tickers are concerned, viewers mainly watch headlines and stocks tickers. Other tickers like promos are viewed only by 5-10 per cent respondents.

In case of a major mishap or event, the advertisements can be rescheduled or put on hold. But even in the coverage of Delhi blasts, not even once the advertisements were put on hold. It looks very irritating and awkward to watch such news stories interspersed with ad breaks.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As often experienced in personal interview based questionnaires, interviewer's bias may influence the respondent's replies and the personal interests and attitudes of interviewers can also cause them to interpret responses differently. It was difficult to induce the respondents to provide the complete information. The completion rate varies from 65 to 95 percent. More than 40 questionnaires were rejected for the same reason. Technical knowledge of mass media was required which was obtained to a feasible extent.

(Cont. on page 44)

Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 19-28.

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To conclude, the study has researched out audience preferences and brought out many interesting insights in this area. The findings and conclusions thereof would be helpful in providing an understanding of audience likes and dislikes and thus would provide a framework for initiating actions for further research and for policy decisions.

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