

# How Newspapers Can Better Serve African Americans and Hispanics

## Results from the Readership Institute's Impact Study

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Newspapers have a strong and enduring connection with readers across the country, including African Americans and Hispanics. The Readership Institute found that local daily newspapers reach 80 percent of African Americans and 66 percent of Hispanics in any seven-day week. As Hispanic and African-American readership will become increasingly important for the future of newspapers, it's encouraging to see there is a strong foundation on which newspapers can build.

When the Readership Institute explored ways to increase readership, it found many opportunities. Advertising content has great potential to increase readership among Hispanics and African Americans. Not only do Hispanics and African Americans already spend significantly more time reading advertising than Whites, improving advertising content has the potential to bring even more people to the newspaper.

Improving service also has power to increase newspaper readership among African Americans and Hispanics. Both groups tend to be single copy buyers at a rate double that of Whites, so the areas for improvement differ from the overall market. For Hispanics, improving the cost of home delivery has higher-than-average potential. For African Americans, improving the completeness and condition of the newspaper as well as the quality of paper, ink and type size has above-average potential.

As we studied the opportunities offered by an overall brand perception, we saw both common ground and differences. Newspapers that are "intelligent, successful and experienced" appeal to readers from all groups. Creating a newspaper brand perception that "makes me think" also has great potential for African Americans and Hispanics. Hispanics also respond to newspapers that convey a sense of "belonging/fulfillment" and "cares about me."

### **Growth Means Opportunity for Newspapers**

African-American and Hispanic growth has far outpaced that of the White population. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the Hispanic population grew 57.9 percent nationally between 1990 and 2000, the African-American population grew 15.6 percent. Not only does this growth represent a large number of potential newspaper readers, many are young readers who represent much of newspaper's future readership.

Hispanic and African-American residents are also choosing to live in new areas of the country. Although most Hispanics, for example, continue to live in the Southwest,

Florida and in major cities, the fastest growth is in the Southeast and in the upper Midwest. Arkansas, Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama have experienced greater than 200 percent growth in the Hispanic population.

African Americans are also moving to areas that haven't traditionally had a large black population. Maine, Idaho, Minnesota and Nevada - along with 22 other states spread across the country — saw rapid growth in the number of African Americans. Even in areas with a historically large number of African Americans, growth has continued away from major city centers in rural and suburban areas.

For many papers, this means a growing number of Hispanic and African-American readers - or non-readers, if the newspaper doesn't adequately serve them.

The Readership Institute's Impact study focused on ways to build readership through service, content, brand and organizational culture. This report focuses on the Impact study's findings about ways to serve minority readers better.

### **Media Consumption**

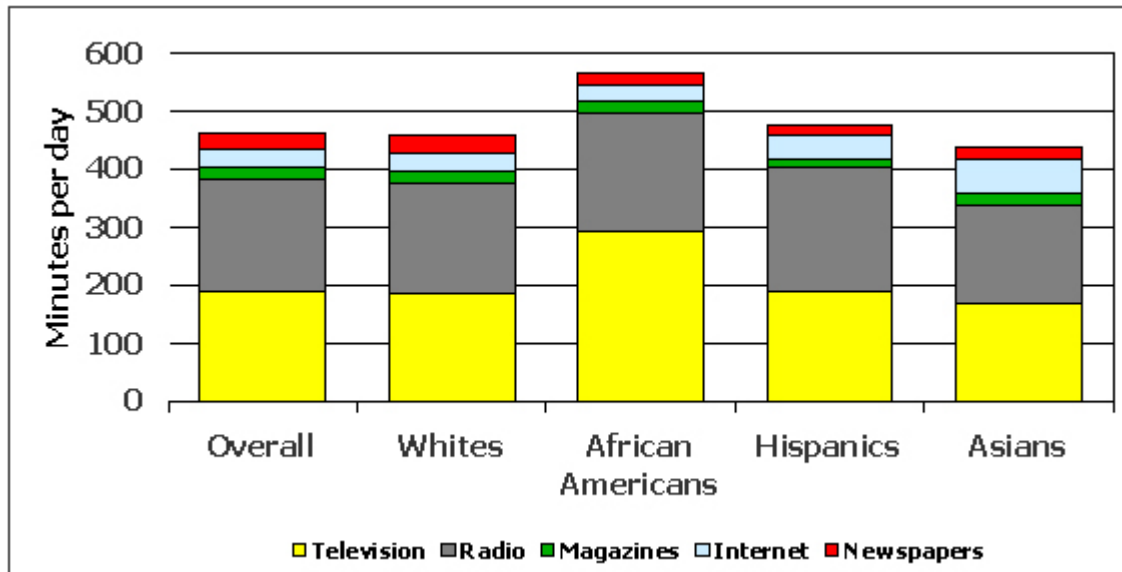
The Impact Study surveyed 37,000 readers and non-readers across the country. Of those, 1,687 are African American, 1,657 are Hispanic and 1,132 are Asian. The conclusions in this report are based on those responses.

Newspapers enjoy a strong connection with readers. On any given day, slightly more than half of the country reads or looks into a newspaper. Over the course of a week more than 80 percent will do so. Looking only at the frequency with which people read provides an impressive picture of the role of the local daily newspaper.

The Readership Institute studied readership more deeply than is typically done. In addition to asking how often people read newspapers, we also asked about the amount of time spent reading and how much of the newspaper is read. We found that of people who read their local daily newspaper, 69 percent say they read more than half of it on weekdays, and 81 percent say the same for Sundays. We also know that the average person spends 22 minutes per day reading the daily newspaper, more on Sundays. All three of these measures were combined into a Reader Behavior Score (RBS) which offers a way to understand newspaper readership holistically.

RBS is a helpful way of understanding the newspaper consumption habits of African Americans and Hispanics and how they compare to the overall population. Many mistakenly believe that African Americans and Hispanics don't read the newspaper, or at a level that's so low as to be almost negligible. When we look at their RBS, we find that African Americans are very much newspaper readers, reading local daily newspapers at a high rate. Hispanics are lighter readers compared to the overall readership, but 66 percent still read the local daily newspaper during any week.

As part of the total daily media consumption, newspapers cut across all groups. Hispanics read their local daily newspaper for 15 minutes each day; African Americans for 19, slightly less than the national average of 22 minutes per day.



We also have some information about the quality of time spent with newspapers. We asked respondents how often they engage in other activities while reading the newspaper, magazines, watching television and listening to the radio.

We found that overall, newspapers receive more undivided attention than any other media with 27% of all respondents saying that they rarely or never engaged in a simultaneous activity. Magazines receive slightly more undivided attention from Hispanics and African Americans. Both magazines and newspapers far exceed either radio or television in the amount of undivided attention that they receive. Only 12 percent of people rarely or never engage in other activities while watching television, 3 percent for radio. The proportions are similarly low for African Americans and Hispanics.

If we broaden the scope of our question to ask how newspapers fit into overall information consumption, we see that newspapers are the single most-used source of news among all groups. In a seven-day week, 81 percent of people turn to newspapers, 66 percent to their local television news, 50 percent to the national television news. These relative proportions hold true regardless of ethnic group.

The graph above shows the amount of time spent on media overall. The first point that jumps out is the sheer quantity of time spent with media every day. People of all racial or ethnic backgrounds demonstrate a tremendous appetite for news and entertainment each day. We also see a few differences among the groups.

Whites read newspapers at a higher rate than other groups. African Americans watch more television than any other group. Hispanics listen to the radio more than other groups and Asians use the Internet to a greater degree.

Although these differences are statistically significant and have been documented in previous studies, it's important to think carefully about them in the context of overall media use. We know that Hispanics listen to the radio an average of 25 minutes more than the average each day. We also know that most of this time is spent while doing other things and that listening may be spread among several radio stations. We can also see that their appetite for other media is not diminished by their use of radio. The same can be said of African Americans and television. Although they watch more television it does not seem to substantially diminish their interest in other media.

From a newspaper's perspective, the next important question is how to strengthen their connection with readers of all types.

### **Imperatives to Grow Readership**

The Impact study's main purpose was to understand readership and what drives it. Impact identified many ways that newspapers can grow newspaper readership overall. When we focused on how to serve Hispanic and African Americans, we found differences in three key areas: service, content and brand. In the following sections we'll explore what those differences are and what they mean for newspapers.

#### **Service**

The first of Impact's original eight imperatives to grow readership is service excellence. Overall, the Readership Institute found that improving customer service is an important way to build readership. In the Impact study, service satisfaction categories include whether the newspaper was delivered complete and in good condition, delivered when and where the reader wanted, the accuracy of the bill and cost of home delivery. It also asked about the quality of the paper, ink and type size, and the ease of purchase at a vending machine or store. Comparing service preferences among Whites, African Americans and Hispanics gives us an important insight into these markets.

As we see in the table below, service rates very highly for Whites overall. Six of the 10 highest-potential areas are service related. At the top of the list are newspaper quality measures including the completeness of the newspaper and the quality of the paper, ink and typesize. Delivery service also rates very highly. Lowest of all the service factors is the cost of home delivery.

Hispanics also place high emphasis on service although it doesn't have quite the prominence that Whites place on it. The most striking difference between Hispanics and other groups is the importance of the cost of home delivery. We see in our research that Hispanics tend to have slightly lower household incomes, so cost may be more of a barrier to regular newspaper readership.

Service has lower potential to increase readership among African Americans, most particularly improvements in home delivery. Improving the newspaper's condition and completeness, as well as the quality of the newspaper paper, ink and typesize has high potential to increase readership. Improving home delivery's timeliness, cost or billing accuracy doesn't even appear among the highest-potential areas.

<b>African Americans</b>	<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>Whites</b>
<b>1. Service: Condition &amp; completeness of paper</b>	<b>1. Service: Quality of paper, ink &amp; typesize</b>	<b>1. Service: Condition &amp; completeness of paper</b>
2. Content: Easy to Read	<b>2. Service: When &amp; how the paper is delivered</b>	<b>2. Service: Quality of paper, ink &amp; typesize</b>
<b>3. Service: Quality of paper, ink &amp; typesize</b>	<b>3. Service: Cost of home delivery</b>	<b>3. Service: When &amp; how the paper is delivered</b>
4. Content: Health, home, food, fashion & travel	4. Content: Easy to Read	<b>4. Service: Accuracy of the bill</b>
5. Content: Community announcements, obituaries, ordinary people	<b>5. Service: Accuracy of the bill</b>	<b>5. Service: Customer service</b>
6. Ad Content: Ads for clothing, health and non-food stores	6. Content: Community announcements, obituaries, ordinary people	6. Content
7. Content: Science, technology, environment	7. Content: Health, home, food, fashion & travel	<b>7. Service: Cost of home delivery</b>
8. Content: Business, economics, personal finance	8. Service: Condition & completeness of paper	8. Content: Community announcements, obituaries, ordinary people
9. Brand: Makes me think	9. Brand: Makes me think	9. Content: Health, home, food, fashion & travel
10. Content: Movies, TV, weather	10. Ad Content: Ads for clothing, health and non-food stores	10. Brand: Intelligent, successful, experienced

Part of this decreased emphasis on service can be explained by the relatively low proportion of African-American and Hispanic readers who choose to have the newspaper delivered. Weekdays, 35 percent of Black readers are single-copy buyers, increasing to 42 percent on Sundays. The same is true of 29 percent of Hispanic readers on weekdays, 38 percent on weekends. This is more than double the single-copy purchase rate for Whites on weekdays or Sundays. It seems logical then that many of the home-delivery oriented service areas would have low potential to increase readership.

Even so, the potential for improving service on "easy to buy at a store or vending machine" ranks relatively low for Hispanics and African Americans. Out of 42 improvement areas, improving single-copy purchase ease ranked 26th for African Americans and 27th for Hispanics. Although that's higher than the rank of 39 among Whites, it falls far behind improvements in other areas.

## Content

In the previous section we learned some new information about how service improvements can increase readership among Hispanic and African Americans. A second look at the same list shows how important newspaper content is in driving readership. Among the top 10 areas, three are content-based for Whites, four for Hispanics and six for African Americans. As we narrow our focus to look at which content areas have the most potential, some interesting things jump out.

First, we see that all three groups share significant common ground. In fact, the three highest-potential areas are the same among all the groups. In all three cases, making the newspaper easier to read is the most powerful way to increase readership. In the Impact study we found that newspapers that were rated "easy to read" tend to have more "go and do" information, more stories written in a feature-style, more in-paper promotion and more stories about health, home, food, fashion and travel.

African Americans	Hispanics	Whites
1. Easy to read content	1. Easy to read content	1. Easy to read content
2. Health, home, food, fashion & travel	2. Community announcements, obituaries, ordinary people	2. Community announcements, obituaries, ordinary people
3. Community announcements, obituaries, ordinary people	3. Health, home, food, fashion & travel	3. Health, home, food, fashion & travel
<b>4. Ads for clothing, health and non-food stores</b>	<b>4. Ads for clothing, health and non-food stores</b>	4. Government, war & politics
5. Science, technology, environment	<b>5. Ads for food &amp; groceries</b>	5. Movies, TV & weather
6. Business, economics & personal finance	6. Government, war & politics	6. Disasters & accidents
7. Movies, TV & weather	7. Police, crime & legal	7. Science, technology & environment
8. Disasters & accidents	8. Business, economics & personal finance	8. Business, economics & personal finance
9. Ads for food & groceries	9. Movies, TV & weather	9. Police, crime & legal
10. Education	<b>10. Ads for entertainment &amp; sporting events</b>	10. Sports

As we've seen in the overall findings of the Impact study, covering ordinary people, community announcements and obituaries is a powerful way to grow readership and that's true among African Americans and Hispanics as well.

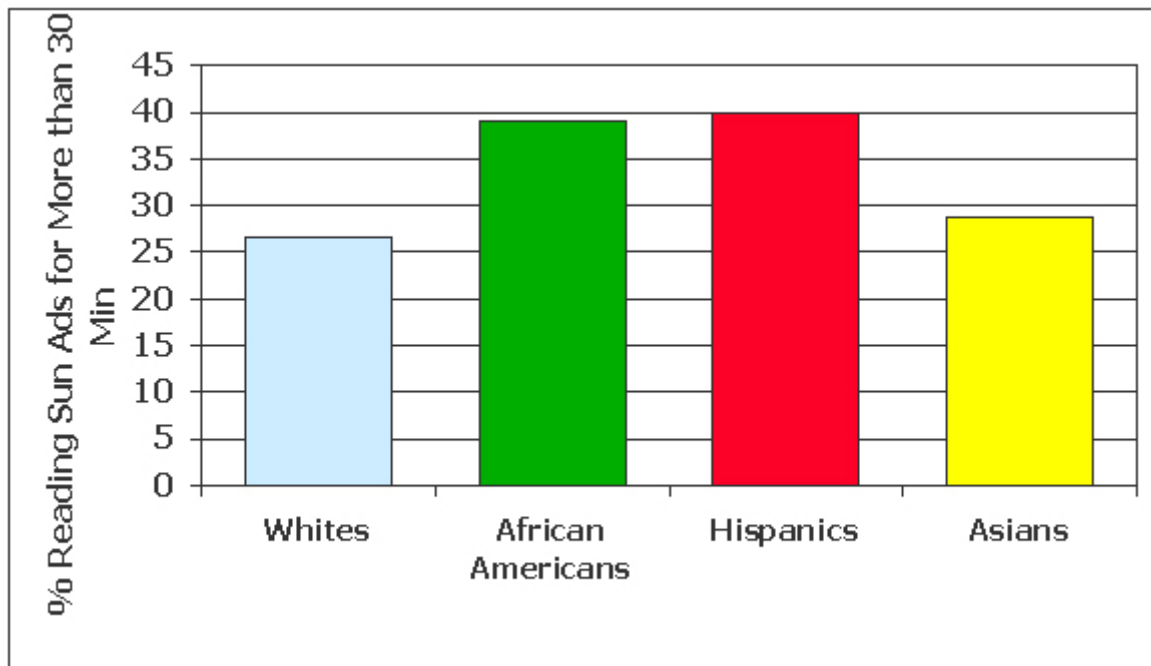
Unfortunately, most newspapers do a poor job of reflecting the daily lives of people of color. In the Impact study's content analysis of more than 700 newspaper front pages, we see that only 18 percent of front page stories include a face of color.

If we look more closely at the types of front-page stories most likely to picture a face of color, we see that 26 percent are about police or crime compared to 15 percent of photographs with white faces. Nine percent of photographs showing faces of color on the front page are sports photographs, compared to 4 percent of photographs showing white faces.

The message from this study seems to be that in order to appeal to Hispanics and African Americans newspapers should show the lives of ordinary people and cover the community events rather than covering them only in the context of crime, disasters and sports.

A second important observation is the high potential that some advertising categories have to increase newspaper readership among Hispanics and African Americans. As the table above shows, no ad category ranks in the top 10 areas for Whites. In contrast, advertising has three of the top 10 spots for Hispanics, two for African Americans.

The implications are enormous. Newspapers have traditionally believed that the first step is building an audience and then selling that audience to advertisers. This finding clearly says that improving advertising is a key way to build an audience. In order to build Hispanic and African-American readership, the key questions may be what categories of advertising are most important to them and whether the newspapers can include more advertisers in the locations where they like to shop.



Further analysis of the amount of time Hispanic and African Americans spend reading ads shows that there's a strong foundation upon which to build readership. If we look at readers who spend at least a half an hour reading the ads on Sunday we see that they include 39 percent of African Americans, 40 percent of Hispanics and a comparatively

low 27 percent of Whites. This shows that although African Americans and Hispanics may spend less time reading the paper overall, they spend significantly more of that time with the advertisements.

If we return to an analysis of the opportunity areas and look for other differences between the groups, we see that coverage of government and politics has relatively low potential for African Americans, and coverage of science, business, education and parenting has greater opportunity to grow readership. Hispanics show a relatively low interest in science coverage and a higher interest in police and crime coverage.

## **Brand**

The Readership Institute also explored how readers' brand perception impacts readership of the newspaper. Overall, brand is a powerful way to bring people into the newspaper. The challenge is creating a strong, clear brand that is relevant to readers.

Below the table shows the top five brand perceptions out of 15 measured by the Impact study. The highest-rated brand potential for increasing readership overall is "intelligent, experienced & successful." It's the top potential brand for Whites and in the top five for Hispanics and African Americans.

When we focus on differences between the groups, the most striking difference is that for Hispanics and African Americans, the quality "makes me think" has top brand potential. That same quality is 6th for Whites. Interestingly, the idea of the newspaper challenging readers is popular among light readers in general. As the Readership Institute explored how newspaper brands can appeal to lighter readers, ideas that explicitly challenged readers to debate questions were rated as being very appealing. Newspapers are well positioned to foster this kind of debate and by doing so they may appeal more to Hispanics and African Americans.

In general, African Americans share more top brand perceptions with the overall results, three out of the top five. Hispanics share only one of the top five brand perceptions with the overall rankings. Feelings of closeness and belonging as expressed in the brand perceptions "belonging, fulfillment" and "reflects my beliefs and cares about me" rate much higher for Hispanics than for other groups. Newspapers should tap into the values of community and belonging to appeal to Hispanic readers.

<b>African Americans</b>	<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>Whites</b>
1. Makes me think	1. Makes me think	1. Intelligent, successful & experienced
2. Intelligent, successful & experienced	2. Belonging, fulfillment	2. Honest, trustworthy & helpful
3. Community leader, strong personality	3. Intelligent, successful, experienced	3. Informed, in the know
4. Middle class, neighborly	4. Reflects my beliefs, cares about me	4. Middle class, neighborly
5. Fun, creative, energetic	5. Can be used anywhere, anytime	5. Community leader, strong personality