

## U.S. Daily Newspaper Readership during the War with Iraq

### For more information:

Limor Peer, [l-peer@northwestern.edu](mailto:l-peer@northwestern.edu), 847-467-6578  
Mary Nesbitt, [m-nesbitt@northwestern.edu](mailto:m-nesbitt@northwestern.edu), 847-467-4285

### Executive Summary

The war with Iraq provided an opportunity to look into important questions that are top of mind for newspaper people as they strategize how to maintain readership among current customers and, importantly, entice lighter readers – who tend to skew younger – to read more.

Does newspaper readership increase during exceptional times, when major, dramatic news events occur? If so, are people reading more frequently? Spending more time with the newspaper? Are they less interested in other news? What elements of the big story most interest them? What are newspapers' strengths compared to other media?

What lessons can be learned for coverage of other big stories?

What can newspapers do to sustain any gains in readership, when times return to "normal?"

The Readership Institute (RI) surveyed more than 1,200 consumers across 100 markets in late March and early April of 2003 to gain insights into these questions. Those results, combined with other RI research, lead us to conclude that while current approaches work for some groups – primarily older, loyal readers – they are widely missing the mark with younger, lighter readers.

First, relevant content may be in the newspaper but light readers are less satisfied with it and have a less positive experience with it. Moreover, they can't be expected to find it or even hunt for it diligently. It must be marketed to them.

Second, competitors – especially television – rated high by consumers. That's partly because of the nature of the event and their inherent advantages, but also because they took innovative approaches that resonated with their target audiences. Newspapers' challenge is to do likewise, during exceptional and non-exceptional times.

Finally, newspapers did a good job planning and executing coverage for their best and most loyal readers, who tend to be older and have a well-established newspaper-reading habit. These are the people whom newspapers know and understand best. But they planned less well for lighter, younger readers who tend to avoid masses of information through which there is no clear path, few guideposts, or a way of making sense of it all. If newspapers believe, as the Readership Institute does, that lighter, younger readers must be the target, they must commit to understanding and planning for their needs and tastes.

## Highlights of the war study findings:

- This kind of event is an opportunity for newspapers to increase readership among desired groups – Reader Behavior Scores increased 5% for light readers after the war in Iraq began (though readership did not increase for heavier readers).
- While riveting news events draw people to newspapers, the challenge is how to get them to “stick.” Light readers were less satisfied and felt less positively about the newspaper than did medium and heavy readers, in terms of both coverage of the war and other non-war topics.
- Interest in war news was very high. Most consumers (85%) said they followed the news fairly or very closely. Men reported following the news about the war more intensely than women and older consumers more intensely than younger.
- Usage was up across all media, particularly television. Nearly half of respondents (47.3%) said they read the newspaper more closely.
- All readers rated the war as the most important news during that period, but interest in other kinds of news remained robust. This indicates that at a time when resources and energy are focused on reporting and presenting a large and complicated news event, much attention still needs to be paid to other kinds of news and information.
- Consumers were generally satisfied with newspapers’ coverage of the war and they generally have positive feelings about the newspaper-reading experience – they tended to agree that, for example, newspapers give a local perspective on the war or a context to better understand current events.
- Newspapers performed fairly well overall, but other media were perceived to be better. There are serious challenges for newspapers in dealing with competitors that have both natural advantages – like speed, immediacy, sound and video – and aggressive and creative approaches to making content and marketing it.
- Television fared better than newspapers on most measures of consumers’ perceptions, including those that newspapers think of as core competencies, such as most accurate, most expert and most complete.
- The study provides details on the kinds of war-related coverage that interested readers in general, and different types of readers in particular. For instance, light readers would have been more satisfied with more content relating to personal safety (how to keep myself and my family safe at home, and how to keep safe while traveling); more explanatory visual information (maps, graphics and charts); and stories about longer-term implications (how post-war Iraq will be rebuilt and governed, how the war affects Iraqi citizens, the impact of the war on the stature of the U.S. in the world).

The following sections explain the survey methodology and the findings in more detail.

## Background

### About the study

1. Establishing a pre-war readership benchmark.

One goal was to measure any changes in Reader Behavior Score (RBS) at two points in time: before the war in Iraq and once it began. RBS is a combined measure of three aspects of newspaper use frequency, time spent with it, and how much was read (see more at <http://readership.org/consumers/rbs/main.htm>).

On March 3, 2003 a brief mail questionnaire was sent out to 15,000 random respondents in the 100 Impact markets, asking the basic RBS questions about readership of the local daily newspaper. We received 1,552 completed surveys (10% response rate, which is typical for mail surveys). Data was weighted to census figures.

2. Establishing in-war readership levels, media use, and reactions to newspapers' war coverage and media.

On March 24 and 25, 2003 a 4-page mail questionnaire was sent out to the 1,552 respondents from the pre-war study and to a random sample of 3,448 who did not respond from the original 15,000 contacted, for a total of 5,000. We received 1,244 completed surveys (25% response rate). Data were weighted to census figures

This survey asked the same panel of RBS questions, plus questions about general media use and about consumers' interest in and satisfaction with their local daily newspaper's coverage of the war. Another goal of the study was to get more information about consumers' general media use during the war in Iraq, beyond their newspaper reading behavior. For example, consumers rated the content of the newspaper and rated newspapers in comparison with television, radio and the Internet (see both pre-war and war coverage questionnaires at <http://readership.org/consumers/WarSurvey.htm>).

### Analysis

A total of 746 respondents returned both the pre-war and in-war surveys. We were able to compute and compare RBS for both points in time.

All other information in addition to RBS – i.e., interest in the war, media usage, content preferences, reading experiences – is extracted from the in-war study with all 1,244 consumers. One-way analysis of variance was used to compare means, accepting values of  $p \leq .001$  at a 95% level of confidence.

## Findings

### What happened to readership?

Looking at the same group of people (746 respondents) before and during the war, overall readership did not change. But it did change by sub-group – light readers read more, medium readers read about the same, and heavy readers read less.<sup>1</sup>

<b>RBS</b>				
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Light</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Heavy</b>
<b>Pre-war</b>	4.25	2.05	4.81	5.87
<b>In-war</b>	4.25	2.32	4.76	5.66
<b>Change</b>	0.00	0.27**	-0.05	-0.21**

Base: 746; 1-7 scale

\*\* Significant at 95% level of confidence (p < .001)

To the extent that readers changed behavior after the beginning of the war in Iraq, they did so selectively. Overall, they tended to spend more time with the newspaper, especially on Sunday, but not necessarily read it more often or more thoroughly. Light readers, however, increased frequency and completeness as well as time spent with newspapers after the beginning of the war in Iraq. Medium readers' RBS stayed about the same – they spent more time with the paper, but read less frequently and less completely. Heavy readers read less – time spent stayed about the same (or increased on Sundays), but they read less often and less completely.

### **Change in RBS components**

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Light</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Heavy</b>
<b>Weekday frequency</b>	0.05	0.38**	-0.10*	-0.11*
<b>Sunday frequency</b>	0.01	0.45**	-0.14*	-0.27**
<b>Weekday time</b>	0.06	0.15*	0.11*	-0.02
<b>Sunday time</b>	0.15*	0.14*	0.21**	0.11*
<b>Weekday completeness</b>	-0.11*	0.36**	-0.13*	-0.45**
<b>Sunday completeness</b>	-0.12*	0.28**	-0.26**	-0.40**
<b>Reader Behavior Score</b>	0.00	0.27**	-0.05	-0.21**

Base: 746; 1-7 scale

\* Significant at 95% level of confidence (p < .005)

\*\* Significant at 95% level of confidence (p < .001)

It's important to note that light readers were not only picking up the paper more often, they were also looking into more parts of it. War coverage brought them to the newspaper and, while there, they looked into different parts of it. Was it enough to make them stay? We discuss this question below.

<sup>1</sup> RBS scores range from 1-7. In this study, consumers identified as light readers scored from 1.00-3.57, medium readers scored 3.60-5.19, and heavy readers scored 5.22-7.00.

## Attention to news about the war in Iraq

Interest in the war was very high: 85% said they followed the news fairly or very closely since the war began.

Not all readers reported the same level of interest, however. Heavier readers' interest was higher than light readers', men's higher than women's and older readers' higher than younger readers'.

### Follow the news about the war...

	%	Overall	RBS			Age			Gender	
			Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Male	Female
<b>Very closely</b>		36.90	29.40	35.26	45.78	33.74	33.44	47.10	41.52	32.55
<b>Fairly closely</b>		48.00	49.73	48.61	45.78	46.34	50.41	44.03	44.95	50.93
<b>Not too closely</b>		11.70	16.76	10.83	7.67	13.41	13.70	6.14	11.19	12.14
<b>Not at all</b>		3.40	4.12	5.29	0.77	6.50	2.45	2.73	2.35	4.38

Base: 1244

Consumers also reported that they were used all media more closely, or more attentively. Nearly half (47.3%) said they read the newspaper more closely. Almost 80% said they watched television more closely.

### Read/watch/listen/visit more closely...

	%	Overall	RBS			Age			Gender	
			Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women
<b>Newspapers...</b>		47.3	26.1	52.3	63.2	36.5	45.0	60.8	47.7	46.9
<b>Television...</b>		79.7	73.6	79.1	86.4	21.5	52.5	26.0	76.7	82.5
<b>Radio...</b>		44.1	40.9	47.0	44.4	19.2	61.1	19.7	50.3	38.5
<b>Web sites...</b>		23.5	27.8	24.3	18.3	28.0	59.1	12.9	27.9	19.4
<b>Magazines...</b>		15.7	10.1	18.2	19.3	13.5	14.3	21.3	16.9	14.7

Base: 1244

While many light readers used all media more closely, a larger number of medium and heavy readers reported using television, newspaper, radio and news magazines more closely. Relatively more light readers, however, reported an increase in Internet use.

Other interesting differences among groups relate to age. Increased use of newspapers and news magazines can be predicted by age – older consumers are more likely to report reading them more closely. We see a different pattern with television, radio and the Internet – a much larger number of 35-59 year olds reported using these media than consumers in younger or older age groups.

More women reported watching television more closely than did men, whereas more men reported listening to the radio more closely and visiting more web sites.

## Types of War Coverage

Consumers rated 21 war-related content areas in terms of how important that type of coverage was to them and how satisfied they were with their local daily newspaper's coverage. Using factor analysis we collapsed these into seven broad categories. In addition, consumers rated eight types of specific war-related information that offers people practical steps and actions to take, and that we shorthand as "go-and-do" information. All factors registered a high coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ), which means inter-item consistency was high.

This kind of analysis gives insight into how consumers think about news, as opposed to how news-producers think about it. The categories are the general kinds of coverage that interest readers. They are a conceptual checklist when planning and executing coverage of future, large news events that matter to readers.

### **Core news and analysis** ( $\alpha=.8582$ )

Basic event and "what it means" coverage:

- Accounts of military action in Iraq
- Analysis and commentary about the war in Iraq

### **Me and my community** ( $\alpha=.8633$ )

The impact on me, my community and average Americans:

- How the war affects my life and my community
- How the war affects the average person in the U.S.

### **Official activity** ( $\alpha=.8753$ )

How officials here and abroad are reacting to events:

- What government officials in other countries are doing or saying about the war in Iraq
- What U.S. government officials are doing or saying about the war in Iraq

### **Readers' opinions** ( $\alpha=1.000$ )

- Information and perspectives from other readers (e.g., letters)

### **Tell a compelling story** ( $\alpha=.8853$ )

Using photos, info-graphics and the stories of ordinary service-people to help readers connect with events:

- Personal stories about U.S. military men and women and their role in the war
- Photos showing what is happening and who is involved
- Visual information that helps explain what is happening (maps, graphics, charts)

**Long-term implications** ( $\alpha=.9368$ )

Looking past immediate events to the long-term prospects for U.S. security and stature and other global issues:

- Information about the impact of the war on U.S. and global economy
- Information about threats to U.S. civilians
- How the war could affect the next U.S. presidential elections in 2004
- Information about the impact of the war on the stature of the U.S. in the world and its relations with other countries and the U.N.
- Information about relief and humanitarian efforts
- Information about the impact of the war on natural resources and the environment

**Context and background** ( $\alpha=.9270$ )

Background facts about the conflict that help in getting a deeper understanding:

- How post-war Iraq will be rebuilt and governed
- How the war affects Iraqi civilians
- General information about Iraq and the region
- How ordinary people in other countries are reacting to U.S. actions
- How the media cover the war

**Go-and-do information** ( $\alpha=.9483$ )

How individuals can take a variety of actions:

- How I can contribute to a pro- or anti-war effort
- How I can help with relief and humanitarian efforts for victims of war
- How I can support U.S. service people and their families
- How to keep myself and my family safe at home
- How to keep safe while traveling
- What to do in case of emergency
- Where I can go to find more information
- Who I can contact to make my opinion heard

## Overall reader satisfaction with newspaper war coverage

All war-related content was fairly important to consumers, with an average rating of 2.18 (on a 1-3 scale). Consumers were also generally satisfied with how the newspaper covered war-related content, with an average rating of 3.16 (on a 1-5 scale).

We compared levels of importance and satisfaction for each content area, and then categorized each as high or low on both importance and satisfaction, based on the median score (i.e., above the median score is high and below is low). Each content area could then be placed in a quadrant and characterized for future action in one of four ways:

**Keep it up:** the subject is of high importance to readers and their satisfaction with the newspaper's performance is high as well. The newspaper should continue to pay a lot of attention to this kind of coverage.

**Doing enough:** the subject is of low importance to readers and they are satisfied with the newspaper's performance. Doing more, or better, will probably not bring enough benefits to make it worth the effort.

**Needs attention:** the subject is of high importance but satisfaction among readers is low. The newspaper must work to significantly improve its performance.

**Low priority:** the subject is of low importance and satisfaction is low as well. In terms of priorities, this can drop to the bottom.

		Satisfaction	
		High	Low
Importance	High	Keep it up	Needs attention
	Low	Doing enough	Low priority

Looking at the results for readers generally, newspapers did fairly well in their coverage of aspects of the war consumers felt were important.

- About one-third of content areas (11 of 29) fall into the “keep it up” category, which means that consumers placed high importance on these content areas and were satisfied with coverage.
- Five are in the “needs attention” category, which means that consumers place high importance on these areas, but are not satisfied with their coverage.
- Four are in the “doing enough” category, which means consumers are satisfied with these, but do not think they are terribly important.
- Nine are in the “low priority” category, which means that consumers are not very satisfied, but they also don’t see these as very important.

### Needs attention

*Go-and-do*

- How to keep safe while traveling

*Context and background*

- How post-war Iraq will be rebuilt and governed

*Long-term implications*

- Information about relief and humanitarian efforts

- Information about the impact of the war on U.S. and global economy

*Me & my community*

- How the war affects the average person in the U.S.

### Keep it up

*Me & my community*

- How the war affects my life and my community

*Official activity*

- What U.S. government officials are doing or saying about the war in Iraq

*Tell a compelling story*

- Personal stories about U.S. military men and women and their role in the war
- Photos showing what is happening and who is involved
- Visual information that helps explain what is happening (maps, graphics, charts) *Substance*

*Core news and analysis*

- Accounts of military action in Iraq

*Long-term implications*

- Information about threats to U.S. civilians
- Information about the impact of the war on the stature of the U.S. in the world and its relations with other countries and the U.N.

*Go-and-do*

- How I can support U.S. service people and their families
- What to do in case of emergency
- How to keep myself and my family safe at home

### Doing enough

*Go-and-do*

- Who I can contact to make my opinion heard

*Core news and analysis*

- Analysis and commentary about the war in Iraq

*Context and background*

- How the media cover the war

*Readers’ opinions*

- Information and perspectives from other readers (e.g., letters)

## Low priority

### *Go-and-do*

- Where I can go to find more information
- How I can contribute to a pro- or anti-war effort
- How I can help with relief and humanitarian efforts for victims of war

### *Official activity*

- What government officials in other countries are doing or saying about the war in Iraq

### *Context and background*

- How ordinary people in other countries are reacting to U.S. actions
- General information about Iraq and the region
- How the war affects Iraqi civilians

### *Long-term implications*

- How the war could affect the next U.S. presidential elections in 2004
- Information about the impact of the war on natural resources and the environment

## **Satisfaction with war coverage among different groups**

It is important to note the differences among reader groups.

There is agreement on eleven of the 29 content areas, and the remaining 18 are rated differently by groups of readers (see Appendix A).

Light readers populate all four quadrants about equally – they are not more or less inclined to feel there are very important topics that are not being covered to their satisfaction than there are unimportant topics with which they are satisfied.

But, light readers are more likely than heavier readers to fall into the “needs attention” category.

Specifically, more attention to these areas of coverage would have benefited light readers:

- How to keep myself and my family safe at home
- How to keep safe while traveling
- Visual information (e.g. maps, graphics, charts)
- How post-war Iraq will be rebuilt and governed
- How war affects Iraqi civilians
- The impact of the war on the status of the U.S, in the world
- Information about threats to U.S. civilians

Medium and heavy readers tend to fall into two categories, “keep it up” and “low priority,” suggesting that heavier readers tended to be satisfied with coverage of topics they feel are important and less satisfied with topics they feel are less important.

This implies that lighter readers have a unique set of priorities and standards.

For example, light readers are not satisfied with visual information in the newspaper, but medium and heavy readers are. All three groups, however, rate it as important. Another example is how the war affects Iraqi civilians. For light readers this is an important topic, but for medium and heavy readers it is not. Light readers are not satisfied with the

coverage, and neither are medium readers. Heavy readers, on the other hand, are satisfied. In terms of action around this topic, by doing a better job covering how the war affects Iraqi civilians, newspapers could have increased satisfaction among light readers without alienating heavier readers.

### Awareness of War Coverage

A substantial proportion of readers reported they did not see certain war-related content areas in the newspaper at all (Note: the above satisfaction ratings include only those who said they saw the coverage).

<b>War-related content</b>	<b>Percent who said they “did not see” content*</b>
Accounts of military action in Iraq	6.7
Analysis and commentary about the war in Iraq	9.2
General information about Iraq and the region	10.1
How ordinary people in other countries are reacting to U.S. actions	11.3
How post-war Iraq will be rebuilt and governed	17.6
How the media cover the war	12.2
How the war affects Iraqi civilians	11.4
How the war affects my life and my community	9.6
How the war affects the average person in the United States	11.7
How the war could affect the next U.S presidential election in 2004	22.9
Information about relief and humanitarian efforts	9.6
The impact of war on natural resources & the environment	16.7
The impact of war on the stature of the U.S. in the world	11.0
The impact of the war on U.S. and global economy	11.2
Information about threats to U.S. civilians	12.3
Information and perspectives from other readers	13.7
Personal stories about U.S. military men and women	10.0
Photos showing what is happening and who is involved	6.6
Visual information (e.g., maps, graphics, charts)	8.6
Government officials in other countries on the war in Iraq	9.1
U.S. government officials on the war in Iraq	6.8
How I can contribute to a pro- or anti-war effort	38.5
How I can help with relief and humanitarian efforts for victims of war	30.0
How I can support U.S. service people and their families	17.6
How to keep myself and my family safe at home	17.9
How to keep safe while traveling	20.5
What to do in case of emergency	20.1
Where I can go to find more information	30.0
Who I can contact to make my opinion heard	28.8

\*Percent of readers only (n=974; non-readers were excluded from the sample)

This finding helps shed light on the previous analysis of importance and satisfaction. The fact that, for example, almost 18% of readers did not see any content about “how post-war Iraq will be rebuilt and governed,” brings urgency to the finding that most consumers rate it as important but its coverage is not satisfactory. On the other hand, “How I can contribute to a pro- or anti-war effort” was not seen by almost 40% of consumers, but it is rated low on both importance and satisfaction.

In terms of actionable steps, this has implications for content presentation and promotion. The fact that some did not see much of the content suggests that newspapers not only need to include coverage of content consumers see as important (and do a better job with it if they are not satisfied), but also pay attention to how they present and promote it.

### **The newspaper-reading experience during the war**

Consumers were asked to rate 21 statements about their feelings about the newspaper or their experience reading it during the war in Iraq. The statements ranged from why they read the paper to what they get out of the paper to what it is like for them to read the paper.

Generally, consumers report having a mildly positive experience with the paper. The average score is 3.24 on a 1-5 scale.

The mid-point of the scale is neutral (“I neither agree nor disagree”) and anything above 3 is considered to be in agreement with the experience; the higher the number the stronger the agreement. The same is true in the other direction – the lower the number the stronger the disagreement. For example, consumers fairly strongly agree that newspapers let them control how much information they take in and when. They also agree, though less strongly, that newspapers give them context to better understand current events. Finally, they pretty much disagree that newspapers use more expert sources than television does.

There are significant differences in some newspaper reading experiences across groups. Lighter and younger readers consistently rated the experiences lower. For example, the rating of the statement “newspapers report on what I care about” increases with RBS levels (i.e., light readers gave it a lower rating than heavier readers) as well as with age (i.e., older readers rated it higher). In addition, women rated it slightly higher than men.

On many statements the gap between groups is quite large. Readership levels, for example, played a large role in how light, medium, and heavy readers rated some statements. The higher the readership, the more they tended to agree with some statements, including:

- “It is easy to find information I am looking for,”
- “I read the paper, no matter where else I get the news,”
- “Reading the paper makes me feel proud of my country,”
- “The newspaper gives me context to better understand current events,”
- “The newspaper gives me a better understanding of what is on the radio or television.”

Age differences are not quite as acute, but the three age groups do experience some of the statements differently. Again, the higher the age, the more they tended to agree with some statements, including:

- “I read the paper, no matter where else I get the news,”
- “The newspaper is easy to read and understand,”
- “I expect my newspaper to have a thoughtful editorial and opinion section,”
- “It is easy to find information I am looking for,”
- “The newspaper gives me a better understanding of what is on the radio or television,”
- “Newspapers give me more in-depth information than I get elsewhere,”
- “Newspapers cover all sides of a story.”

### War-time reading experience

	Overall	RBS			Age			Gender	
		Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women
<i>...photos NOT too graphic and disturbing</i>	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.5	4.0	3.7
<i>Lets me control how much information...</i>	3.7	3.3	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.8
<i>...DO NOT have too much detail</i>	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.8	3.6
<i>I read the paper, no matter...</i>	3.7	2.6	3.8	4.3	3.2	3.5	4.2	3.6	3.7
<i>...easy to read and understand</i>	3.7	3.3	3.6	4.0	3.3	3.7	3.9	3.6	3.7
<i>...NOT more depressing than television</i>	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.6
<i>...thoughtful editorial and opinion section</i>	3.6	3.2	3.6	4.0	3.4	3.6	3.9	3.5	3.7
<i>...give me a local perspective on the war</i>	3.6	3.2	3.6	3.9	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.7
<i>...easy to find information I am looking for</i>	3.3	2.8	3.2	3.6	3.0	3.2	3.5	3.2	3.3
<i>...context to better understand current events</i>	3.2	2.8	3.2	3.6	3.0	3.1	3.4	3.1	3.3
<i>...better understanding what's on TV or radio</i>	3.1	2.7	3.1	3.5	2.9	3.1	3.4	3.1	3.2
<i>...report about opposing viewpoints</i>	3.1	2.8	3.0	3.3	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.0	3.1
<i>...makes me feel proud of my country</i>	3.1	2.6	3.1	3.6	2.9	3.1	3.5	3.0	3.3
<i>...nothing in paper is not available elsewhere</i>	3.1	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.0	3.1	3.3	3.0	3.2
<i>...cover all sides of the story</i>	3.0	2.6	3.1	3.3	2.8	3.0	3.3	2.9	3.2
<i>...report on what I really care about</i>	3.0	2.6	3.1	3.3	2.9	2.9	3.3	2.9	3.1
<i>...more in-depth information than I elsewhere</i>	2.9	2.5	2.9	3.2	2.6	2.9	3.2	2.8	3.0
<i>...point me to other sources of information</i>	2.9	2.7	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.9
<i>...read the newspaper more now</i>	2.9	2.3	3.1	3.1	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.8	2.9
<i>...dig harder than TV reporters to get the news</i>	2.7	2.4	2.7	2.9	2.4	2.6	2.9	2.6	2.7
<i>...use more expert sources than television</i>	2.6	2.3	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.8	2.5	2.7
<b>Total average</b>	3.6	3.3	3.6	3.9	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.6

Base: 1244; scale 1-5

## Competitive environment

Newspapers today operate in a crowded media environment. Not only are there many media platforms but fragmentation means more choices within each platform. In this environment how did newspapers fare? Did they rise above other media and be perceived as uniquely valuable?

Consumers were asked to choose which medium they thought best describes each of nine different perceptions:

1. ...my source for the latest news
2. ...provides the most complete information
3. ...the most accurate source of information
4. ...helps me understand what is going on
5. ...the most engaging
6. ...provides the best expert analysis
7. ...my primary source of news
8. ...has the greatest variety of viewpoints
9. ...the best guide to other sources of information

Overall, television scored highest on all perceptions. In only one instance was the competition close, with newspapers and the Internet scoring almost as high as television on “the best guide to other sources of information.”

These findings point out a blurring of the difference between objective reality and how it is perceived. For instance, an objective measure might well find that newspapers were more factually accurate than other media, but in consumers’ minds, television seemed far more accurate. An implication of this is the need to better promote newspapers’ strengths, especially those that really make a difference to consumers.

It is unrealistic to imagine that newspapers could ever dominate some perceptions – such as “my source for latest news” and “the most engaging.” But newspapers could have the substance, the packaging and the marketing to show more strongly, if not to dominate, the remaining perceptions. In those areas, newspapers are not “naturally” at a disadvantage – they can choose to excel or to fall behind.

### Source for the latest news...

% Source	Overall	RBS			Age			Gender	
		Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women
<b>Newspaper</b>	7.5	1.1	8.3	13.3	4.7	7.9	8.7	5.1	9.7
<b>Television</b>	74.0	73.7	76.2	72.4	72.1	71.5	82.2	71.1	76.6
<b>Radio</b>	10.0	11.9	8.6	9.1	8.2	12.0	7.0	11.9	8.2
<b>News magazine</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>www</b>	7.6	11.6	6.1	4.8	13.7	7.7	1.7	10.7	4.7
<b>None</b>	1.0	1.7	0.8	0.3	1.3	0.9	0.4	1.2	0.7

Base: 1244

**Most complete information...**

% Overall	RBS			Age			Gender		
	Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women	
<b>Newspaper</b>	24.4	10.5	24.3	38.0	17.8	23.3	32.8	24.6	24.1
<b>Television</b>	54.6	53.4	57.2	52.9	54.4	53.6	56.9	50.6	58.5
<b>Radio</b>	4.0	6.8	2.7	2.5	4.1	4.4	2.3	4.7	3.2
<b>News magazine</b>	4.0	5.4	3.7	3.0	5.8	3.1	4.6	3.8	4.3
<b>www</b>	8.6	15.5	8.8	1.9	13.3	10.4	0.8	11.8	5.6
<b>None</b>	4.4	8.5	3.2	1.7	4.6	5.3	2.7	4.5	4.3

Base: 1244

**Most accurate source of information...**

% Overall	RBS			Age			Gender		
	Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women	
<b>Newspaper</b>	24.5	12.1	23.9	37.4	20.8	22.6	32.3	26.0	23.0
<b>Television</b>	46.3	45.8	49.7	43.3	46.2	45.8	48.1	43.0	49.5
<b>Radio</b>	5.3	7.3	3.8	4.8	6.8	5.4	3.5	4.8	5.8
<b>News magazine</b>	3.5	3.1	2.2	5.7	2.1	3.3	5.4	3.3	3.8
<b>www</b>	6.7	10.5	7.6	2.0	10.2	7.5	1.5	8.7	4.9
<b>None</b>	13.6	21.2	12.8	6.8	14.0	15.5	9.2	14.3	13.0

Base: 1244

**Helps me understand what is going on...**

% Overall	RBS			Age			Gender		
	Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women	
<b>Newspaper</b>	24.7	10.6	27.2	35.9	19.3	23.0	32.8	26.5	23.1
<b>Television</b>	55.5	55.9	55.7	54.9	54.2	56.7	54.0	51.7	59.1
<b>Radio</b>	6.8	10.9	6.1	3.4	6.7	8.1	4.2	7.8	5.9
<b>News magazine</b>	3.3	4.9	3.2	2.3	3.8	2.8	4.5	2.5	4.0
<b>www</b>	5.3	9.5	4.5	2.0	11.3	4.9	1.1	7.4	3.4
<b>None</b>	4.3	8.3	3.2	1.4	4.6	4.6	3.4	4.1	4.5

Base: 1244

**Most engaging...**

% Overall	RBS			Age			Gender		
	Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women	
<b>Newspaper</b>	8.7	3.6	8.5	13.8	6.9	8.2	11.7	8.2	9.3
<b>Television</b>	73.5	71.8	72.5	75.9	76.8	71.5	75.1	70.1	76.7
<b>Radio</b>	6.8	7.5	7.3	5.7	5.3	8.8	3.8	9.6	4.2
<b>News magazine</b>	1.9	2.8	1.8	1.4	0.8	1.8	2.6	2.6	1.2
<b>www</b>	4.0	7.5	3.4	1.1	6.5	3.8	1.5	4.5	3.5
<b>None</b>	5.0	6.7	6.5	2.2	3.7	5.8	5.3	5.0	5.1

Base: 1244

**Best expert analysis...**

% Overall	RBS			Age			Gender		
	Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women	
<b>Newspaper</b>	9.5	2.0	10.6	15.4	9.1	7.1	15.3	8.9	10.1
<b>Television</b>	67.6	63.6	68.8	70.7	68.7	66.6	68.7	69.5	65.6
<b>Radio</b>	6.1	8.6	5.3	4.7	3.3	8.1	4.6	5.5	6.7
<b>News magazine</b>	4.3	6.6	2.9	3.4	4.5	3.6	5.7	3.6	4.9
<b>www</b>	3.9	6.0	3.7	2.0	4.1	5.2	0.8	5.1	2.7
<b>None</b>	8.6	13.2	8.7	3.9	10.3	9.5	5.0	7.2	9.9

Base: 1244

**Primary source of news...**

% Overall	RBS			Age			Gender		
	Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women	
<b>Newspaper</b>	18.2	3.4	18.6	32.7	10.2	16.9	29.1	19.2	17.4
<b>Television</b>	67.0	72.0	68.2	61.0	69.0	67.1	65.1	62.8	71.1
<b>Radio</b>	7.3	12.0	6.9	2.9	5.7	9.2	4.3	8.8	5.8
<b>News magazine</b>	0.5	0.9	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.2	0.7
<b>www</b>	6.0	9.7	5.3	2.9	13.9	4.9	0.8	7.7	4.3
<b>None</b>	1.0	2.0	0.8	0.6	1.2	1.2	0.8	1.3	0.7

Base: 1244

**Greatest variety of viewpoints...**

% Overall	RBS			Age			Gender		
	Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women	
<b>Newspaper</b>	18.1	9.7	20.6	23.9	10.3	18.6	24.7	19.7	16.7
<b>Television</b>	55.4	48.6	59.3	58.3	54.5	52.1	63.5	55.6	55.3
<b>Radio</b>	8.8	11.6	6.9	8.1	7.9	10.9	4.6	7.5	10.1
<b>News magazine</b>	2.9	4.5	1.6	2.2	2.5	2.9	3.0	1.3	4.3
<b>www</b>	8.7	16.8	4.5	5.3	16.5	9.2	0.8	11.2	6.3
<b>None</b>	6.0	8.8	7.1	2.2	8.3	6.2	3.4	4.7	7.2

Base: 1244

**Best guide to other sources of information...**

% Overall	RBS			Age			Gender		
	Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women	
<b>Newspaper</b>	27.0	13.6	28.0	38.9	16.5	26.3	38.2	27.6	26.4
<b>Television</b>	31.3	33.8	32.5	27.9	37.2	25.8	38.6	29.1	33.5
<b>Radio</b>	4.1	5.1	4.0	3.1	3.3	5.0	3.1	4.8	3.4
<b>News magazine</b>	2.4	0.9	2.9	3.4	1.2	2.2	3.5	3.0	1.8
<b>www</b>	27.3	37.8	25.7	18.6	34.7	32.3	8.9	27.9	26.8
<b>None</b>	7.9	8.8	6.9	8.2	7.0	8.4	7.7	7.6	8.1

Base: 1244

Though television was the medium of choice for all consumers, including medium and heavy readers, there were differences among groups of readers in their perception of different media.

Light readers rated newspapers very low, while heavier readers gave newspapers higher marks. Light readers preferred the Internet to newspapers on all but “most accurate source of information” and “helps me understand what is going on.” Younger readers also favored the Internet, but a higher percentage of younger readers chose newspapers than did light readers – an indication that “light” and “young” are not totally synonymous. There are similar differences between men and women, most notably that women chose television as their primary source of news in greater numbers than do men.

## General content preferences

Respondents were also asked to give importance and satisfaction ratings for 25 broad content areas.

War and international conflict rated as most important (2.51 on 1-3 scale). But even during a time of a major news event interest in other topics was high. Several other topics besides the war ranked as important: Weather, natural disasters & accidents, politics & government, business, education, home & garden, health & fitness, police & crime, sports, community announcements and the environment.

Interestingly, light readers' importance ratings, while generally lower than the overall population, showed a similar rank pattern. In other words, there were no content areas that light readers deem relatively more or less important than heavier readers.

Younger readers, on the other hand, diverged from the overall population in that they place relatively more importance on jobs & career, home & garden and health & fitness (i.e., they rank these content areas relatively higher). Some such differences can also be observed between men and women – men ranked most content areas as less important with the exception of business, automotive and, most notably, sports.

### Content area importance rating

	Overall	RBS			Age			Gender	
		Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women
<i>War / International conflict</i>	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.7	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.5
<i>Weather</i>	2.3	2.1	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.4
<i>Natural Disasters / Accidents</i>	2.3	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.4
<i>Politics / Government</i>	2.2	1.9	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2
<i>Health, Fitness and Medicine</i>	2.1	1.9	2.2	2.3	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.0	2.3
<i>Education</i>	2.1	1.8	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.2
<i>Business</i>	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.0
<i>Police / Crime/ Courts / Legal</i>	2.1	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.1
<i>Home, Garden and real Estate</i>	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.2
<i>Community Announcements</i>	2.0	1.7	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.8	2.2
<i>Sports</i>	2.0	1.8	2.1	2.1	1.8	2.1	2.1	2.3	1.8
<i>Environment</i>	2.0	1.8	2.0	2.1	1.8	2.0	2.1	1.9	2.0
<i>Food</i>	1.9	1.7	1.9	2.1	1.7	1.9	2.1	1.8	2.1
<i>Obituaries</i>	1.9	1.5	1.9	2.2	1.7	1.8	2.3	1.8	2.1
<i>Science / Technology</i>	1.9	1.8	1.9	2.0	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.0	1.8
<i>Jobs and Career</i>	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.8	2.2	2.0	1.4	1.9	1.9
<i>Ordinary people</i>	1.9	1.5	1.9	2.2	1.7	1.9	2.1	1.8	2.0
<i>Travel</i>	1.9	1.7	2.0	2.0	1.8	1.9	2.0	1.8	2.0
<i>Movies</i>	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.1	1.9	1.7	1.8	2.0
<i>Television</i>	1.9	1.6	1.9	2.1	1.8	1.8	2.1	1.8	1.9
<i>Religion / Spirituality</i>	1.8	1.6	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.9
<i>Parenting and Relationships</i>	1.8	1.5	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.9
<i>Arts</i>	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.5	1.9
<i>Automotive</i>	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.8	1.4
<i>Popular Music</i>	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.5
<i>Fashion and Beauty</i>	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.2	1.8

Base: 1244; 1-3 scale; ranked in descending order by overall importance.

Consumers not only ranked the war as the most important topic, they also ranked it as the premier topic in terms of satisfaction (3.74 on a 1-5 scale). Consumers were also satisfied with the coverage of other highly important topics, such as weather and natural disasters & accidents.

Light readers rated all topics lower than heavier readers on satisfaction but demonstrated a similar ranking pattern. Younger readers also tended to be less satisfied than older readers, but less consistently. For example, they were more satisfied than older readers with coverage of community announcements, movies, and popular music. Men rated all content areas consistently lower than women.

**Content area satisfaction ratings**

	Overall	RBS			Age			Gender	
		Light	Medium	Heavy	<35	35-59	>60	Men	Women
<i>War / International conflict</i>	3.74	3.34	3.62	4.10	3.68	3.70	3.88	3.64	3.83
<i>Obituaries</i>	3.67	3.10	3.63	4.03	3.49	3.62	3.92	3.52	3.81
<i>Natural Disasters / Accidents</i>	3.60	3.09	3.58	3.92	3.56	3.54	3.77	3.52	3.69
<i>Sports</i>	3.60	3.28	3.55	3.83	3.59	3.58	3.66	3.47	3.73
<i>Community Announcements</i>	3.51	3.01	3.46	3.84	3.72	3.39	3.58	3.24	3.75
<i>Weather</i>	3.49	3.19	3.40	3.74	3.59	3.34	3.72	3.33	3.63
<i>Police / Crime/ Courts / Legal</i>	3.41	3.01	3.38	3.66	3.46	3.33	3.53	3.31	3.50
<i>Politics / Government</i>	3.39	2.89	3.35	3.72	3.39	3.36	3.48	3.34	3.45
<i>Home, Garden and real Estate</i>	3.38	2.87	3.40	3.65	3.37	3.38	3.40	3.22	3.53
<i>Movies</i>	3.28	3.04	3.17	3.53	3.42	3.26	3.19	3.07	3.48
<i>Business</i>	3.25	2.85	3.16	3.58	3.16	3.23	3.38	3.12	3.37
<i>Food</i>	3.24	2.95	3.08	3.56	3.12	3.22	3.40	3.01	3.45
<i>Television</i>	3.21	2.80	3.12	3.54	3.06	3.17	3.43	3.11	3.31
<i>Education</i>	3.17	2.76	3.11	3.45	3.07	3.13	3.32	3.01	3.31
<i>Jobs and Career</i>	3.17	2.89	3.12	3.39	3.21	3.23	3.01	2.99	3.34
<i>Ordinary people</i>	3.11	2.56	3.07	3.46	3.02	3.06	3.28	3.01	3.20
<i>Health, Fitness and Medicine</i>	3.08	2.70	2.99	3.39	2.94	2.99	3.42	2.93	3.22
<i>Automotive</i>	3.05	2.63	3.07	3.29	3.10	3.03	3.07	2.91	3.19
<i>Religion / Spirituality</i>	3.01	2.54	3.00	3.27	2.87	2.98	3.19	2.90	3.11
<i>Arts</i>	3.00	2.60	2.95	3.28	3.00	2.93	3.16	2.74	3.24
<i>Environment</i>	2.96	2.67	2.82	3.26	2.98	2.88	3.12	2.81	3.11
<i>Travel</i>	2.95	2.64	2.91	3.16	2.86	2.94	3.04	2.90	3.00
<i>Science / Technology</i>	2.82	2.50	2.72	3.10	2.79	2.76	2.97	2.77	2.86
<i>Parenting and Relationships</i>	2.79	2.42	2.78	3.01	2.71	2.79	2.85	2.75	2.83
<i>Fashion and Beauty</i>	2.72	2.52	2.57	3.00	2.77	2.69	2.76	2.53	2.90
<i>Popular Music</i>	2.65	2.41	2.55	2.89	2.71	2.64	2.63	2.63	2.67

Base: 1244; scale 1-5; ranked in descending order by overall satisfaction

## Appendix A – War-related content

	Needs attention			Keep it up			Doing enough			Low priority		
	High importance Low Satisfaction			High importance High satisfaction			Low importance High satisfaction			Low importance Low satisfaction		
	Light	Medium	Heavy	Light	Medium	Heavy	Light	Medium	Heavy	Light	Medium	Heavy
<b>Go and do</b>												
How I can contribute to a pro- or anti-war effort										X	X	X
How I can help with relief and humanitarian efforts for victims of war										X	X	X
How I can support U.S. service people and their families				X	X	X						
How to keep myself and my family safe at home	X				X	X						
How to keep safe while traveling	X		X		X							
What to do in case of emergency				X	X	X						
Where I can go to find more information							X				X	X
Who I can contact to make my opinion heard							X		X		X	
<b>Me &amp; my community</b>												
How the war affects my life and my community				X	X	X						
How the war affects the average person in the United States			X	X				X				
<b>Tell compelling story</b>												
Personal stories about U.S. military men and women				X	X	X						
Photos showing what is happening and who is involved				X	X	X						
Visual information (e.g., maps, graphics, charts)	X				X	X						
<b>Core news and analysis</b>												
Accounts of military action in Iraq				X	X	X						
Analysis and commentary about the war in Iraq						X	X	X				
<b>Official activity</b>												
Government officials in other countries on the war in Iraq									X	X	X	
U.S. government officials on the war in Iraq				X	X	X						
<b>Context and background</b>												
General information about Iraq and the region							X				X	X
How ordinary people in other countries are reacting to U.S. actions										X	X	X
How post-war Iraq will be rebuilt and governed	X	X										X
How the media cover the war							X		X		X	
How the war affects Iraqi civilians	X										X	X
<b>Long-term implications</b>												
How the war could affect the next U.S. presidential election in 2004							X				X	X
Information about relief and humanitarian efforts					X					X		X
The impact of war on natural resources & the environment										X	X	X
The impact of war on the stature of the U.S. in the world	X	X				X						
The impact of the war on U.S. and global economy		X	X	X								
Information about threats to U.S. civilians	X		X		X							
<b>Readers' opinions</b>												
Information and perspectives from other readers								X	X	X		