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New Poll Shows...

BOSTON TV HOLDING ITS OWN AGAINST INTERNET IN BATTLE FOR YOUNG
Old and Young See Important Role for Newspapers
Business News Consumers Use Both Traditional and Digital Media

BOSTON, Sept. 22, 2009 – Television is holding its own against the Internet in the battle for young news consumers in Greater Boston, while young and old agree that newspapers continue to play an effective societal role, according to a new public opinion survey conducted by Fisher College and Howell Communications.

The telephone poll of 400 Greater Boston adults 18 years and older corroborated familiar consumer trends toward digital media, but it also showed that in the Greater Boston market, the traditional media remains a force. Conducted from July 16 to Aug. 6, the survey has a margin of error of +/- 4.9 percent.

The highest percentage of respondents by far – 74.2 percent – said they receive news “regularly” from television. Newspapers were next, with 50 percent. The Internet ranked highest among respondents aged 20 to 29 and 30 to 39, at 71 percent each, but television was a close second, with 68 percent and 67 percent, respectively.

The poll makes clear why paid newspaper subscriptions are a fading business model. Only one in three respondents (32 percent) reported having a paid newspaper subscription, and only one in three of those people (29 percent) said they would be willing to pay for an online subscription if their paper were no longer in print.

In addition, the age gap among newspaper subscribers was profound. Among those 60 to 69 and 70 to 79, the percentage was approximately 50 percent. Among those 20 to 29 and 30 to 39, by contrast, the percentage of newspaper subscribers was less than 15 percent.

At the same time, however, a strong majority of 56.5 percent agreed with the statement that newspapers “carry out the role of watchdog effectively” – a margin that was consistent across all age groups. In addition, government and politics – a traditional strength of newspapers because of their superior resources – were ranked as an important topic by the largest percentage of respondents, at 86 percent. Those who said business news is important included the highest number of paid newspaper subscribers, at 35 percent.

“While the survey confirms some popular conceptions about the trend toward digital media, it also shows the traditional media is a long way from dead,” said Dr. Thomas M. McGovern, president of Fisher College. “The business model has to keep evolving, but the poll has a lot of good news for the traditional media.”

“The survey shows just how essential an integrated approach is to an organization’s communication’s strategy,” said Raymond P. Howell, president of Howell Communications. “Clearly, digital media is important to reaching young people. But just as clearly, traditional media is important to reaching not just an older audience but anyone who cares about government and business news.”

The survey also found that:

- Business was the second-most important news topic – and respondents who care about business news use both traditional and digital media. Those who said business news is important had the highest number of paid newspaper subscribers (35 percent) and the highest number of people with Internet-capable phones (39 percent).
- Satellite radio has not become a major factor in the Boston media market, with less than one in 10 (8 percent) of respondents reporting having it.
- Cable television is vastly preferred over satellite television, 82.2 percent to 15.2 percent.
- One in three Greater Bostonians (34 percent) owns a mobile communications device, but the percentage doubles, to 60 percent, among those aged 20 to 29.

About the Center for Leadership in Public Service

The Center for Leadership in Public Service (CLPS) at Fisher College is an initiative that brings together faculty, staff, students, practitioners, and external partners to positively impact public service. Fisher's emphasis on career-based education affords students the opportunity to support projects while earning academic credit and invaluable professional experience. The CLPS is committed to offering superior consulting services and training facilitation through time tested methods, focusing on improving individual and organizational effectiveness, and encouraging a creative and fresh approach to problem-solving.

About Howell Communications

Howell Communications is a full-service public relations firm founded in 1995 by one of Boston's most respected communications strategists, Raymond P. Howell, a former reporter and press secretary to former Massachusetts Governor William F. Weld. The company offers strategy development, media relations, digital and social media services, crisis management, media training, and marketing communications to New England's business community. Howell Communications' clients have included such brand names as Arco, AT&T, BearingPoint, Boston Medical Center, Cablevision, Comcast, GlaxoSmithKline, IBM, Microsoft, National Grid, NESN, Sherwin-Williams, the University of Massachusetts, and Viacom.

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The Future of the Media in Greater Boston

Abstract: In July 2009, Fisher College’s Center for Leadership in Public Service and Howell Communications partnered to conduct a survey of Greater Boston residents (as defined by those living in the 617 and 781 area codes) to examine issues that will determine the future of the Boston media. With 400 total respondents, the margin of error for this survey is +/- 4.9 percent.

Published by the Center for Leadership in Public Service at Fisher College in collaboration with Howell Communications.

News Sources

Television is by far the main source of news, with 74 percent, followed by newspapers, with 50 percent, and the Internet, with 44 percent. The Internet’s ranking climbed among respondents aged 20 to 29 and 30 to 39, with approximately 71 percent each – just barely above the 68 and 67 percent, respectively, of those who cited television as their main news source.

63 percent of all respondents reported listening to, watching or reading news “several times a day”, including nearly half (46 percent) of 20-to-29-year-olds. Only 7 percent of all respondents said they get news “less than once a day”.

Newspapers

Only one in three respondents (32 percent) reported having a paid newspaper subscription. While there was little age-based variation in subscriptions for television and satellite radio, the difference in newspaper subscriptions among age groups was profound. The highest percentage of newspaper subscribers (59 percent) was among respondents 80 to 89 years old. Among those 60 to 69 and 70 to 79, the percentage was approximately 50 percent. Among those 20 to 29 and 30 to 39, by contrast, the percentage of newspaper subscribers was less than 15 percent.

Worse still for newspapers, only 29 percent of current newspaper subscribers reported being willing to pay for an online subscription.

At the same time, however, 57 percent of respondents said newspapers effectively fill the important role of watchdog of big institutions in society. Surprisingly, given other results in the survey, that majority view was consistent across all age groups.

News Topics

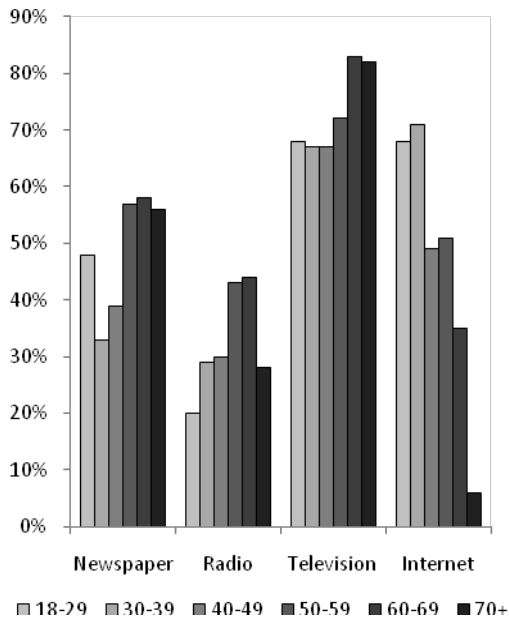
Coverage of government and politics – traditionally a strength of newspapers with their superior resources – was judged an important topic by the highest percentage of respondents (86 percent). Judged the least important was entertainment and celebrity news, at 50 percent. The other topics were business (73

Top News Topics

in order of popularity

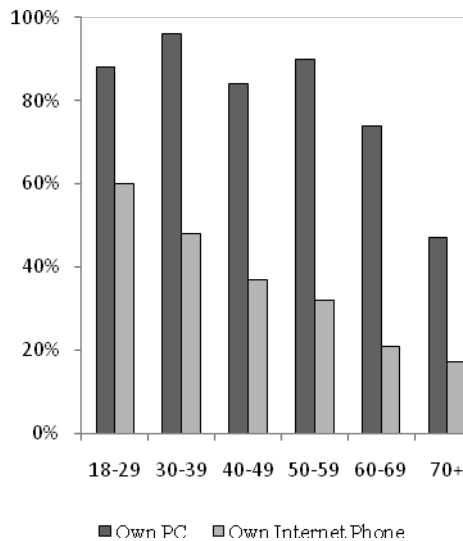
Government & Politics	86%
Business	73%
Crime	63%
Sports	55%
Entertainment	50%

Primary Sources of News by Age



Note: 18-29 age group consists of 18-19 and 20-29 aggregated. 70+ age group consists of 70-79, 80-89, and 90-99 aggregated.

Technology Ownership by Age



Note: 18-29 age group consists of 18-19 and 20-29 aggregated. 70+ age group consists of 70-79, 80-89, and 90-99 aggregated.

percent), crime (63 percent), and sports (55 percent).

Business News

73 percent of respondents reported that business news is an important topic to them – the second highest ranking. Interestingly, respondents in their 20s were the age group most drawn to business news, at 83 percent. Business also tied with crime as the most important topic for this age group.

Those who said business news is important to them had the highest newspaper subscription rate, at 35 percent. They also had the highest percentage of people with Internet-capable phones, at 39 percent.

Technology

Ownership of mobile communication devices varied widely among age groups. In total, 34 percent reported owning such a device, compared to 78 percent who reported owning a personal computer. But among respondents aged 20 to 29, ownership of mobile communications devices rose to 63 percent.

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