

The Media Audit

NEWS RELEASE

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Research Shows Pulitzer Prizes Bring Respect But Not Readers

Houston - (6/19/02) - The Dallas Morning News won four Pulitzer prizes during the 1990s while the percentage of adults in its market who read a daily newspaper on an average weekday declined from 56.4 percent in 1997 to 41.7 percent in 2001, according to The Media Audit.

The same scenario has played out in metro markets all across the United States. "There are a lot of factors that impact daily newspaper readership, obviously quality journalism is just one of those factors," says Bob Jordan, co-chairman of International Demographics, Inc., a 31-year-old research firm which publishes The Media Audit (TheMediaAudit.com).

According to Jordan, long commutes to work by automobile, significant recent immigrant populations and greater competition for readers, viewers and listeners by all media "make it very difficult on English language dailies." In the 85 metro markets surveyed by The Media Audit each year the percentage of adults who read a daily newspaper on an average weekday declined from 60.7 percent in 1997 to 54.7 percent in 2001.

Even In New York City

"Even in New York City where the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Newsday win Pulitzers every year," says Jordan, the percentage of adults who read a daily newspaper on an average weekday declined from 64.8 percent in 1997 to 58.7 percent in 2001."

The Media Audit numbers do reveal what appears to be a very significant "Pulitzer impact" on daily newspaper readership in New Orleans in 1997. "That year the Times-Picayune won two Pulitzers," says Jordan, "and our numbers show a very significant increase in the percentage of adults who read a daily newspaper on an average weekday. The following year the numbers started back down." The New Orleans numbers for 1996-2001 were: 1996, 65.3 percent; 1997 (The Pulitzer Year), 71.3 percent; 1998, 69.2 percent; 1999, 67.7 percent; 2000, 63.4 percent; and, 2001, 61.1 percent.

In Eighteen Metro Markets

An article in the May/June issue of Columbia Journalism Review included a list of 18 cities with daily newspapers that won at least four Pulitzers during the 1990s. Only two of the 18, Detroit and Des Moines, had an increase (between 1997 and 2001) in the percentage of adults who read a daily newspaper on an average weekday. However, the Detroit and Des Moines surveys for 2001 were conducted after 9/11, and the readership levels in those markets were no doubt affected by those events. The cities/metro areas and the change from 1997 to 2001 in their percentage of average weekday daily newspaper readers are: Atlanta, 51.2 to 44.7; Detroit, 50.9 to 51.7; Los Angeles, 53.1 to 46.9; Miami-Fort Lauderdale, 53.7 to 48.2; Dallas-Fort Worth, 56.4 to 41.7; St. Louis, 56.7 to 50.9; Baltimore, 57.5 to 53.9; Seattle-Tacoma, 59.7 to 54.4; Philadelphia, 60.2 to 55.9; Des Moines, 61.7 to 62.2; Louisville, 61.9 to 58.4; New York, 64.8 to 58.7; Tampa-St. Petersburg, 64.7 to 61.7; Charlotte-Gastonia, 65.4 to 58.3; Chicago, 66.3 to 59.5; Washington, D.C., 67.3 to 63.1; Denver, 68.8 to 55.3; and, Boston, 70.4 to 63.5.

"The decline in newspaper readership, as a percent of the adult population, in these markets," says Jordan "is not attributable to a decline in the percentage of market population that is 50+ years of age - the prime newspaper readership group. All 18 markets experienced an increase in the percentage of population 50+. That may mean that the baby boomers, which started joining the 50+ group in 1996 probably won't offer much of a growth opportunity for daily newspapers."

The Media Audit, a syndicated media ratings service currently covering 85 markets, provides both quantitative and qualitative data for media web sites as well as for traditional media. In addition to comprehensive audience profiles, The Media Audit provides trend data on market penetration and market share.

The Media Audit is a product of International Demographics, Inc., a 31-year-old Houston firm that is engaged exclusively in syndicated, multimedia surveys conducted at the local market level.

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