

A SURVEY TO DETERMINE THE DEGREE TO WHICH  
THE KANSAS CITY STAR SATISFIES THE INFORMATIONAL NEEDS  
OF RESIDENTS OF MANHATTAN, KANSAS

by 500

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"News exists in the minds of men. It is not an event; it is something perceived after the event. It is not identical with the event; it is an attempt to reconstruct the essential framework of the event--essential being defined against a frame of reference which is calculated to make the event meaningful to the reader."

--Wilbur Schramm



## Chapter I

### Introduction

This is a study to determine to what degree The Kansas City Star and The Kansas City Times satisfy the informational needs of Manhattan, Kansas, subscribers and to determine some of the reasons why nonsubscribers do not take the paper.

Over the years The Kansas City Star has conducted many readership studies in the metropolitan Kansas City area, but only limited studies have been made in nearby cities and rural areas. The Star has never conducted a study of any type in the vicinity of Manhattan, Kansas.<sup>1</sup>

As modern transportation technology increases the geographical area over which a newspaper can provide home delivery, it becomes more important for newspapermen to understand factors that influence out-of-town, potential subscribers.

This study attempted to quantify some of those factors.

A relatively small percentage of the Manhattan area population of approximately 36,000 persons subscribe to the Star. Slightly less than one-sixth of the 6,725 listed households take the Star.<sup>2,3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Frank S. McKinney, general manager of The Kansas City Star, private interview, Kansas City, Mo., December, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>Kansas Statistical Abstracts 1968, (Lawrence, Kans., University of Kansas Press, 1969). p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Wayne Wash, manager of market research for The Kansas City Star, private interview, Kansas City, Mo., December, 1968.

## Review of the Literature

Since the paper's early days, The Kansas City Star's marketing department has done many studies of its audience and its audience's reading habits.

The studies have varied considerably in complexity, accuracy, and purpose. Presently the market research department conducts two or three surveys a year.<sup>4</sup> They usually are highly specific, designed to determine if a specific article, section(s), or feature of the paper is being read by the audience.

Star surveys usually are conducted at a large public gathering place like a major shopping center. Star personnel are stationed at an entrance and randomly select subjects for the questionnaire. In addition, the marketing department has conducted several surveys on a geographical basis. They are the door-to-door personal interview type. Data obtained are not available to the public.<sup>5</sup>

It is imperative that a newspaper keep abreast of changes in readers' attitudes towards it, and levels of reader satisfaction with it, especially if the newspaper wants to grow.

Most major newspapers conduct studies of their readership by various methods and at differing times, however very little of such information is published.<sup>6</sup>

Current (the past 10 years) academic research in journalism has produced relatively few true readership studies and only one

<sup>4,5,6</sup>Ibid., Wayne Wash, private interview.

study to determine levels of reader satisfaction with a newspaper. Readership Survey of the Ravenswood (W. Va.) News, by Donna Manula, M. S., West Virginia University, is a 1965 thesis reporting a study done to determine the reading habits of that newspaper's readers and to measure their reactions to the newspaper's contents.<sup>7</sup> Two methods were used: personal interviews and mailed questionnaires.

A random sample of 100 men and women in the Ravenswood area was interviewed. Interviewed subjects were guided through a fresh copy of the newspaper and asked to specify exactly what news items they had read or, in the case of advertisements, seen.

Several days after personal interviewing was completed, questionnaires in connection with the survey were mailed to each respondent with specific instructions to complete and return the questionnaire.

Responses indicated that readers of that newspaper react favorably to its editorial and advertising content.

The only other journalism research done in the area of informational satisfaction of readers was by J. P. Holman, M. S., Kansas State University, 1963. Holman's thesis, Non-farm Audience Awareness of, and Need for, University of Nebraska College of Agriculture Publications, concluded that 70 percent of the non-farm men in Nebraska, and 60 percent of the non-farm women were

<sup>7</sup>Journalism Abstracts, Vol. 4, 1968, p. 108.

not aware that publications were available from the College of Agriculture.

Holman's study revealed that more than 50 percent of the non-farm audience needed or desired information contained in College of Agriculture publications.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Journalism Abstracts, Vol. 2, 1964, p. 108.

### Purpose of the Study

This study was to determine the degree of success The Kansas City Star attained in meeting basic informational needs of residents of Manhattan, Kansas.

As one of many newspaper serving the Manhattan, Kansas, area, The Kansas City Star and Times has a certain basic informational service which is unique to it, when compared with other newspapers in the area. That is, the Star and Times has a "personality" about it due to editorial judgments, policies, layout, order of presentation, size, etc.

Does The Kansas City Star (and The Kansas City Times) provide the type of information the people of Manhattan, Kansas, think they should receive from a daily newspaper?

This study attempted to answer that question. That is, the study attempted to discover if the basic informational services of the Star are adequate for readers in the Manhattan area.

### Definition of Terms

Resident of Manhattan, Kansas---A person living within a five mile radius of the geographical center of the city.

Basic Informational Service of a Newspaper---Defined for this paper as: Informing readers objectively about what is happening in their community, country, and world; providing editorial comment to bring developments into focus; providing a means whereby goods and services can be advertised; and providing entertainment.<sup>9</sup>

Other authorities concur with that basic definition. George Gallup has stated:

"It is generally agreed that a newspaper must do four basic things to satisfy the informational needs of its readers. These are: (1) To inform. In a democracy the people have a right to know, and it is the primary purpose and responsibility of journalism to protect this right. (2) To interpret. Today's complex age only magnifies the need for full explanation of the news. (3) To guide. News is often described as the raw material of opinion. All forms of journalism try to influence their readers and listeners through public opinion columns. (4) To entertain. In many news happenings there is an element of fun, or as journalists call it, "human interest." Outside the news and opinion articles, these may take the form of crossword puzzles, comic strips and other items of pure entertainment."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Emery, Edwin; Ault, R. H.; Agee, W. K., Introduction to Mass Communication, (New York, N.Y.: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1960). p. 162.

<sup>10</sup>Gallup, George, "A Scientific Method for Determining Reader Interest," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 7, p. 7, 1930.

Journalistic experience over the years has shown five basic qualities readers demand before they endorse material from a newspaper as valuable or satisfying. They are: Timeliness; the information must be current enough to be of significance. Proximity; the occurrence of an event must have geographical relevance. Significance; the event must affect the reader's life in some way. Human Interest; the reader may require a human element he can identify with. Consequence; the event must effect his life in some way.<sup>11,12</sup>

In addition, analytical studies show a positive correlation between "text book definitions" of news and reader interest. In other words, studies have shown that the classical journalistic assumptions of what satisfies a reader's informational needs are correct.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Charnley, Mitchell V., Reporting, (New York, N.Y.: Holt, Reinhart & Winston, Inc., 1966). p. 30.

<sup>12</sup>Hixon, R. F., and Norton, F. R. B., Introduction to Journalism, (New York, N. Y.: Monarch Press, 1966). p. 6.

<sup>13</sup>"A Factor Analytic Approach of Reader Interest in the News," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 44, (1967), p. 327.

## Chapter II

## Methodology

## Procedure for Collecting the Data

The data for this study were collected by mailing a questionnaire to 425 randomly selected Manhattan, Kansas, residents, using 338 subjects from the 1968 Manhattan, Kansas, City Directory,<sup>14</sup> and 87 from a list of known Kansas City Star subscribers in Manhattan. The list of subscribers was obtained from E. V. Lutz, the Manhattan area Kansas City Star distributor.

Using a table of random numbers,<sup>15</sup> the author systematically selected a number in each row of the table and then selected a name in the position on the page that corresponded to the value of the number selected from the random digits table; i.e., if the number selected from the table was 22, the 22nd name, counting down the page, was selected. The same system was used for each page of the City Directory and the list of Star subscribers.

The 87 subscribers were added to assure a significant number of returns from subscribers.

No pre-testing, other than on an informal basis, was deemed necessary for such a noncomplex study. Final results confirmed

<sup>14</sup>Polk's Manhattan City Directory 1968, (Kansas City, Mo.: R. L. Polk Publishing Co., 1968).

<sup>15</sup>Peters, W. S. and Summers, G. W., Statistical Analysis for Business Decisions, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968). p. 504.



that assumption.

To increase responses, a self-addressed, stamped envelope was enclosed with each questionnaire.

A follow-up mailing, planned to obtain responses from at least ten percent of the original list of respondents, was not necessary.

### Construction of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to allow each respondent to indicate his level of satisfaction with 13 basic informational services provided by the Star. Additionally, respondents were requested to provide basic information regarding their residency, sex, age, whether they had read the Star within the last 12 months, and if they subscribed to it.

A seven point semantic differential scale was used for each question. Forced response questions were necessary for answers of respondents to be quantifiable.

The 13 questions were actually statements; they concerned these items: International news, national news, news of the state, local news, financial news, sports news, interpretative articles, columns, editorials, advertising, entertainment features, special sections, and the currentness of the information. The statements were declarative sentences written in the affirmative, so respondent had only to indicate the degree to which he agreed or disagreed by checking a box along the seven point semantic differential scale. The use of this system was explained in detail and by example in the instructions contained in the questionnaire.

If a recipient of the questionnaire had not read the Star within the last 12 months, he was requested to fill in the statistical information only and return the questionnaire.

Finally, there were several blank lines at the end of the

questionnaire where subjects were asked to make any comments they desired on how the Star might be improved. This question was optional.

The questionnaire is reproduced on the following three pages.

Dear Sir,

I sincerely request your help. I am a KSU Journalism student working on my Master's degree. I am doing a study to determine if The Kansas City Star (and Times) satisfies the basic informational requirements of Manhattan residents. The only way I can obtain this information, is by having you fill out the enclosed questionnaire, and return it to me, in the envelope provided.

This study is for academic purposes only.

Thank you very much for your help.

*Sincerely, Jon M. Pollock*

On the following pages you will find 17 statements about The Kansas City Star ( or Times, the Times is the morning edition of the Star). Below each statement you will find a rating scale as follows:

disagree				agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The points along the scale can be interpreted as follows:

1. Completely Disagree
2. Mostly Disagree
3. Disagree more than agree
4. Agree and Disagree equally (neutral feeling)
5. Agree more than Disagree
6. Mostly Agree
7. Completely Agree

The use of the scale can be illustrated with the following statement:

"Hot weather is good."

If you agree completely with the statement, you would place a mark in box 7. If you mostly agreed, you would place a mark in box 6. If you slightly disagreed, you would place a mark in box 3. In this manner you can indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

In some cases you may not know. If this occurs, please make the best guess you can.

Please make only one mark per question, and put the mark in the box.

Example:

disagree				agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
				X		

On the first three questions just check the box which applies.



12. The Star and/or Times contains enough interpretative articles for me. ( These are articles that attempt to explain an event or situation.)

disagree				agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. The Star and/or Times provides enough columns (columnists' articles to satisfy me.

disagree				agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. The Star and/or Times provides enough special sections, such as, homes and gardens, travel, industry, etc., to satisfy me.

disagree				agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. The information provided by the Advertising in the Star and/or Times is what I require.

disagree				agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. The Kansas City Star and/or Times has enough editorials to satisfy me.

disagree				agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. The Star and/or Times provides enough entertainment features, such as comic strips, word games, puzzles, etc. to satisfy me.

disagree				agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. ( Optional ) I would appreciate your opinion on how the Star and/or Times might be improved.

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### Tabulating Data

The returned questionnaires were analyzed to determine to what degree The Kansas City Star satisfies the informational requirements of residents of Manhattan, Kansas.

The data were assembled in a tabular manner to simplify analysis (see appendix). Statistical information tabulated included the number of: respondents, male and female, subscribers and nonsubscribers, male and female subscribers, male and female nonsubscribers, Manhattan, Kansas, residents; Kansas State University students; Ft. Riley military personnel; and respondents who did not belong in any of the last three categories. Also derived from the data were average age of male and female subscribers; average age of male and female nonsubscribers; a numerical breakdown of subscribers and nonsubscribers by age groups of under 31 years, 31 to 50 years of age; and 51 years of age or older.

Responses to the questionnaire provided the following information: The average degree to which Manhattan, Kansas, residents are satisfied with The Kansas City Star in general. The satisfaction Manhattan residents have with each of the 13 specific sections of the Star. The degree of satisfaction subscribers and nonsubscribers have by age groupings with each of the 13 areas of the Star, and the degree to which male and female subscribers are satisfied with the 13 specific areas, by age groupings.

### Chapter III

#### Conclusions

##### Statistical Facts About the Returned Questionnaires

The 425 questionnaires were mailed in Manhattan, Kansas, May 5, 1969, and returns began coming in May 7, 1969. Approximately two weeks was allowed for respondents to return the questionnaires. Then analysis of data began. Only three questionnaires were received after the two-week period, consequently there was no significant loss of data.

The total return was 39 percent (167 questionnaires) of the number mailed out. Seventy-four of the 167 returned questionnaires were from the 88 known Star subscribers, approximately 84 percent of that group. A 22 percent return, or 93 questionnaires, was received from the 337 subjects chosen from the City Directory. Nearly all were nonsubscribers.

##### Statistics on all Returned Questionnaires

Average age of respondents was 44.2 years; males averaged 42.6 years; females, 45.8 years. Of the 167 returns, 123 were from men; 44 from women. There were 140 Manhattan residents, 30 Kansas State University students, two military persons stationed at Ft. Riley, Kans., and 21 "others."

The discrepancy in the total was caused by some respondents checking more than one category. For example, some checked



"Manhattan resident" and "KSU student." In such cases both categories were recorded. The numerical breakdown by age groups was: 46, under 31 years, 34 men and 12 women; 62 between 31 and 50 years of age, 50 men and 12 women; 59, 51 or older, 39 men and 20 women.

#### Statistics on Returns from Star Subscribers

Eighteen of the Star subscribers who returned questionnaires were women; 56 were men. Average age of subscribers was 54.2, 50.2 for males, 58.3 for females. All 74 of the subscribers classified themselves as Manhattan residents. In addition, nine were Kansas State students, and six checked the "other" category. By age groups, eight male subscribers were under 31; 22 men and six women were between 31 and 50 years old; 38 were 51 or older, 26 men and 12 women.

#### Statistics on Returns from Nonsubscribers

Thirty-eight nonsubscribers returned completed questionnaires, 30 were men and eight were women. Average age of nonsubscribers was 36; 35 for males, 37 for females. Of the nonsubscribers who completed all items, 26 were Manhattan residents, 11 were Kansas State students, four were classified in the "other" category, and two were military persons. Again, a discrepancy appears because some respondents checked more than one category. In age groups, 17 nonsubscribers were under 31, 13 men and 4 women; 15 were between 31 and 50 years old, and only six were 51 or older, four men and two women.

### Analysis of the Questionnaire

The 13 statements regarding the basic informational service of The Kansas City Star were stated positively. Instructions with the questionnaire explained that respondents should indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement. That in effect, would indicate subjects' level of satisfaction with that particular aspect of the Star.

As previously stated, a seven-point, forced-response type of question permitted quantifying degrees of satisfaction or dissatisfaction expressed by respondents. If the respondent checked box number one, he was considered to be totally dissatisfied with that item. If he checked number two, he was mostly dissatisfied. A check in box number four indicated a neutral feeling; that is, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. On the affirmative side, a check in box five indicated slight satisfaction; box six, general satisfaction; and box seven, total satisfaction, or agreement with the statement by a respondent.

By adding responses for a given question and determining a mean value, an average level of satisfaction was determined. That applied to the total questionnaire as well.

## The Results

Data from the questionnaire are discussed in the order that related questions appeared on the questionnaire, except that aggregate findings are discussed first.

The average value of all responses to all items on the questionnaire from all classes of respondents was 5.02, barely above slight satisfaction, with a male average of 5.03, and a female average of 5.02. As expected, Star subscribers were somewhat more satisfied with the paper, rating it at 5.24. Nonsubscribers rated it 4.84. Female subscribers rated it 5.17; female nonsubscribers, 4.86.

Three age groups were chosen for the study, under 31 years of age, 31 to 50 years old, and 51 or older. In general, those over 30 years of age were more satisfied with the informational services of the Star than were those under 30. Average of responses by those under 31 was 4.96, while the 31 to 50 year category registered 5.17, and the 51 and older group, 5.23. The subscriber data indicated that older persons are more satisfied with the Star's contents than younger ones are. The responses for the 51 and over category averaged 5.46; 31 to 50, 5.28. An almost neutral rating of 4.56 was expressed by non-subscriber respondents 30 years or younger; older nonsubscribers were only slightly more satisfied, 5.06 and 5.00, respectively for the 31 to 50 and the 51 and over age groups.

### Findings for the 13 Specific Areas

Statement 1. "The Kansas City Star and/or Times provides the international news I require."

This statement was designed to determine to what degree residents of Manhattan are satisfied by international news in The Kansas City Star. The average value of all responses on this question was 5.84, quite near "mostly agree." Women were more satisfied (6.21) while men were only moderately satisfied (5.47). Typically, the 6.10 response by subscribers was higher than the 5.59 response by nonsubscribers. Male subscribers were considerably less satisfied (5.77) with the international news, than were female subscribers (6.43). The same was true among nonsubscribers. The value for male nonsubscribers was 5.18; for female nonsubscribers 6.00.

By age-group categories, older respondents were more satisfied than younger ones. The under 31 group rated statement one only 5.26, whereas the 31 to 50 and the 51 and older groups were fairly satisfied at 5.80 and 5.90, respectively. Similar differences among age groups held in subscriber and nonsubscriber categories.

Statement 2. "The Kansas City Star and/or Times provides the national news I require."

This statement was to determine to what degree residents of Manhattan are satisfied with the national news provided by the Star. The average of all responses was 5.90, an indication

of rather high satisfaction. In general, male residents were moderately satisfied, 5.78; female respondents, quite satisfied, 6.03. Subscribers were highly satisfied (6.13); nonsubscribers fairly satisfied, 5.68. A 6.06 response for male subscribers showed them to be quite satisfied, although less so than female subscribers at 6.20. Nonsubscribing males again were moderately satisfied at 5.50, while female nonsubscribers were somewhat more satisfied at 5.86. A somewhat unusual case appears in the age groupings. A 6.20 response by those between 31 and 50 showed that group highly satisfied; however a 5.43 by the 30 and under group, and a 5.82 rating by the 51 and older group indicates that both the youngest and oldest were less satisfied by the Star's national news. Among the subscribers, the 51 and older group was least satisfied at 5.86, and the 31 to 50 group the most satisfied at 6.35. The 30 and younger value was 6.00. Nonsubscribers over 30 were, in general, satisfied with the Star's national news. The 31 to 50 group rated it 6.05 and the 51 and older group rated it 5.86. However, the younger, 30 and under, rated it only 4.87.

Statement 3. "The Kansas City Star and/or Times provides the state (Kansas) news I require."

This statement was to determine the degree of informational satisfaction subjects received from news of the state of Kansas in the Star. The aggregate response (4.37) indicated minimal satisfaction, or almost no satisfaction. Men in general received

little satisfaction, registering 4.65, but more than women who registered an almost neutral 4.10. Subscribers indicated little satisfaction at 4.59, while nonsubscribers were barely satisfied at 4.16. Male subscribers registered a low 4.71; nonsubscribing males a still lower 4.59. Both women subscribers and women nonsubscribers were lower than their male counter parts at 4.47 and 3.72; the latter is below the neutral 4.00.

By age grouping, a correlation between increasing age and dissatisfaction appeared. Although only minimally satisfied, the 30 and younger people were most satisfied at 4.82; the 31 to 50 group at 4.62, and the 51 and older group received almost no satisfaction, registering 4.12. The same trend appeared among subscribers, with the youngest most satisfied at a moderate 5.12, whereas the 31 to 50 group reported 4.57, and the 51 and over group reported small satisfaction with state news at 4.44. Nonsubscribers were even less satisfied with the state news. Those over 51 were slightly dissatisfied at 3.80. Nonsubscribers 31 to 50 were slightly more satisfied than subscribers at 4.69, while nonsubscribers 30 and younger (4.55) were approximately as subscribers of that age.

It is apparent from the findings that there is a correlation between increasing age and lack of satisfaction with the Star's news of the state among Manhattan residents. In addition, intensity of dissatisfaction increases sharply among residents over 51 years of age.

Statement 4. "The Kansas City Star and/or Times provides the local (Manhattan) news I require."

This statement was designed to indicate the level of satisfaction Manhattan residents receive from news of, or about, Manhattan in the Star. Due to the nature of the Star, a metropolitan daily, and its distance from Manhattan, one would expect it to score low in this category, and it did. The average for all respondents was 2.33, that is, definite dissatisfaction with news of, or about Manhattan. Women were strongly dissatisfied at 2.07, and men were nearly as dissatisfied at 2.44. Again, women were more dissatisfied than men, with women subscribers recording 2.71 and women nonsubscribers 1.43, or extreme dissatisfaction.

By age group categories the 31 to 50 group, both subscribers and nonsubscribers, registered considerably more dissatisfaction with local news than did those younger or older. The results were: under 31, 2.25, 31 to 50, 2.14; 51 and over, 2.78. Subscribers results were: under 31, 2.50, 31 to 50, 2.53; 51 and older, 2.97; nonsubscribers recorded: under 31, 3.00; 31 to 50, 1.75; 51 and over, 2.60.

Statement 5. "The Kansas City Star and/or Times provides the financial news I require."

This question was to determine the degree to which the Star satisfies the financial information need of Manhattan residents. They were fairly well satisfied with the financial coverage; the total response was 5.36. As expected, subscribers were more

satisfied than nonsubscribers, 5.69 to 5.04. Male subscribers reported higher satisfaction than nonsubscribers, 5.49 to 4.94, and the same was true among women, subscribers 5.90 and nonsubscribers 5.15. Women in all categories were more satisfied with the financial sections than men were.

By age groups respondents 51 and over reported an average score of 5.94, fairly well satisfied; however, the 31 to 50 group had a moderate 5.05, and the under 31 group a similar 4.98. Subscribers and nonsubscribers were somewhat similar except those under 31: Subscribers, over 50, 5.88; 31 to 50, 5.15; under 31, 5.72. Nonsubscribers recorded: Over 50, 6.00; 31 to 50, 5.06; under 31, 4.25. No definite trends were apparent except that the oldest group was somewhat more satisfied than the other groups.

Statement 6. "The Kansas City Star and/or Times provides the sports news I require."

This statement was to determine the degree to which sports news in the Star satisfies Manhattan residents. The aggregate response was 5.39, but it includes large deviations. Several respondents expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the Star's sports information, however their responses were cancelled mathematically by a few high ratings. Men in general, were less satisfied than women, 5.26 to 5.53. Typically, subscribers registered higher than nonsubscribers, 5.71 to 5.07, and the same was true for male subscribers and nonsubscribers, 5.53 to 5.00. Women in both categories were somewhat more satisfied than their male



counterparts: women subscribers, 5.90; nonsubscribers, 5.07.

By age groups, satisfaction increased with respondents' age. For all residents over 50 the figure was 5.57; for those 31 to 50, 5.33, and for those under 31 it was 4.71, very slight satisfaction. The trend was similar for both subscribers and nonsubscribers: subscribers and nonsubscribers under 31, 5.12 and 4.31, respectively. Subscribers and nonsubscribers 31 to 50 recorded, 5.40 and 5.37, respectively. Finally, subscribers and nonsubscribers over 50 recorded, 5.76 and 5.40, respectively.

The extreme responses, masked by averages above, are discussed in a later section.

Statement 7. "The news in the Star and/or Times is current enough for me."

The purpose of this statement was to determine if the information presented in the Star is current enough to satisfy Manhattan residents. The 5.92 total-response average indicated that news presented, for the most part, was current enough to give satisfaction. Women were very satisfied with the currentness of the news, recording 6.33; men were considerably less satisfied, recording 5.52. Again, male subscribers were more satisfied than male nonsubscribers, 5.77 to 5.27. Highest rating received by any item on the questionnaire was 6.95 by women subscribers on currentness, indicating almost complete satisfaction. Women nonsubscribers, however, were much less satisfied at 5.71.

Again older subjects were more satisfied than younger ones.

Scores by age groups were: over 51, 5.68; 31 to 50, 5.46; under 31, 5.43. Subscribers reported: over 50, 5.95; 31 to 50, 5.67. Here the under 31 subscribers ranked high, 6.00. Nonsubscribers rated the item as follows: over 50, 5.40; 31 to 50, 5.25; and under 31, 5.43.

Statement 8. "The Star and/or Times contains enough interpretative articles for me."

This statement was to determine the degree to which residents are satisfied by articles in the Star that attempt to explain an event or situation. The average for all respondents was 4.96, showing only slight satisfaction with interpretative articles, with little difference between men and women, 4.91 and 5.03, respectively. Male subscribers were only slightly satisfied at 5.10, and little more than male nonsubscribers at 4.64. The same was not true of women, however. Women subscribers were well satisfied at 5.90, while women nonsubscribers were only slightly satisfied at 4.64.

The under 31 respondents scored a nearly neutral 4.12, well below the 31 to 50 and the over 50 groups at 5.07 and 5.46, respectively. The following scores, with similar trends were found among subscribers: under 31, 4.25; 31 to 50, 5.21; and over 50, 5.51. Nonsubscribers recorded these scores: under 31, 4.00, 31 to 50, 4.93; over 50, 5.40.

Statement 9. "The Star and/or Times provides enough columns to satisfy me."

This statement was designed to determine if the Star provided Manhattan residents with enough information in the form of columnists' articles. Here again, the Star rated only "fair"; the response from residents was 5.24, or only slight satisfaction. Male residents were marginally satisfied, rating 5.35, while women rated a slightly lower 5.14. In subscriber-nonsubscriber categories, men rated columns higher than did women, 5.69 to 5.28; nonsubscribing men and women rated the item an identical 5.00.

Younger respondents were noticeably less satisfied. The under 31 group reported a marginal 4.50; the 31 to 50 group, 5.68; and the over 50 group, 5.54. Young respondents amplified the dissatisfaction with a 4.50 average to the other groups' 5.82 and 5.88, for 31 to 50, and over 50, respectively. Nonsubscriber scores were similar: 4.50 for those under 31; 5.55 for 31 to 50; and 5.20 for those over 50.

Statement 10. "The Star and/or Times provides enough special sections, such as homes and gardens, travel, industry, etc., to satisfy me.

The purpose of this statement was to find the level of satisfaction Manhattan residents had with the quantity and quality of special sections and features in the Star. Overall satisfaction again only moderate at 5.43. The level of satisfaction among men was fairly high 5.65, with little difference between subscribers, 5.84, and nonsubscribers, 5.45. However, there was

a wide range of opinion among women. Average for all women respondents was 5.30. Women subscribers registered a very high 6.04 and women nonsubscribers, a low 4.57. There was no trend apparent in the age groups except that those over 30 continued to be slightly more satisfied, as a whole, than those under 30. The results were: over 50, 5.54; 30 to 51, 5.77; and under 31, 4.78. The under 31 nonsubscribers were more satisfied than subscribers, 5.06 to the subscribers marginal 4.50. That apparent contradiction was confirmed by the 31 to 50 group whose nonsubscribers were as well satisfied, 5.76, as subscribers at 5.75. In the over 51 bracket, subscribers were highly satisfied at 6.08, while nonsubscribers were considerably less satisfied at 5.00.

The large difference in degree of satisfaction between women subscribers and nonsubscribers, and younger nonsubscribers being more satisfied than subscribers indicates an aspect of the Star that might be publicized to increase circulation.

Statement 11. "The information provided by the advertising in the Star and/or Times is what I require."

This statement was to indicate the degree of satisfaction residents receive from advertising in the Star. The average degree of satisfaction with advertisements for all respondents was a somewhat low 4.95, which was true of all categories except women subscribers, who rated advertising 6.20. Males rated it at 4.52 and females, 5.38, which is somewhat misleading because

nonsubscribing women rated it only 4.57, compared with subscribing womens' 6.20. Male subscribers and nonsubscribers gave the item similar ratings at 4.82 and 4.24, respectively. The all-subscribers category was 4.82, compared with all nonsubscribers' 4.40.

Differences by age groups were small: under 31, 4.34; 31 to 50, 4.80; and over 50, 4.38. Again, a group of nonsubscribers (the 31 to 50 group) was more satisfied than their counterpart subscribers, although marginally so, at 5.06 to 4.54. In the other two groups the ratings were: subscribers under 31, 4.50; nonsubscribers under 31, 4.18; subscribers over 50, 5.28; and nonsubscribers over 50, 4.00.

Statement 12. "The Kansas City Star and/or Times has enough editorials to suit me."

The design of this statement was to determine if Manhattan residents were satisfied with the number of editorials presented in the Star. Total response averaged 5.17, with males at 5.32, and females at 5.02. Male subscribers were a little happier at 5.74 than male nonsubscribers at 4.91. Women subscribers were well satisfied at 5.80, but women nonsubscribers gave editorial quality a low 4.75.

The 31 to 50 age group was most satisfied, 5.62, while the average response of those under 31 was 4.43, and the average for the over 50 group was 5.14. Subscribers under 31 rated editorials at only 4.25, less than the nonsubscribers' 4.62. Ratings of the

remaining groups were: subscribers 31 to 50, 6.00; subscribers over 50, 5.28; nonsubscribers 31 to 50, 5.25; nonsubscribers over 50, 5.00.

Statement 13. "The Star and/or Times provides enough entertainment features, such as comic strips, word games, puzzles, etc. to satisfy me."

The purpose of this statement was to determine the degree to which Manhattan residents were satisfied by entertainment features of The Kansas City Star. Their overall rating was a high 6.07, males 5.67; females, 6.57. Female subscribers were quite satisfied at 6.43, but less than female nonsubscribers at 6.71, almost total satisfaction. Male subscribers were quite satisfied at 5.77 and male nonsubscribers were fairly satisfied at 5.38.

There was little difference among age groups on this question. Those under 31 recorded 5.65; 31 to 50, 5.62; and over 50, 5.86. The only unusual result was in the 31 to 50 age bracket where nonsubscribers were somewhat more satisfied at 5.75 than were subscribers at 5.53. Ratings of the other two groups follow: subscribers under 31, 5.31; subscribers over 50, 6.15; nonsubscribers over 50, 5.60.

Statement 14. "I would appreciate your opinion on how the Star and/or Times might be improved."

This statement had a dual purpose. Primarily, it was to provide subjects with an open-ended question so they could make any type of comment they desired, relative to the Star. Its sec-

ondary purpose was to increase motivation to return the questionnaire.

Approximately 40 percent of the respondents commented. Many comments, however, seemed irrelevant to this study. The author attempted to classify the remainder and found the following information.

The number one "gripe" among all respondents was the lack of coverage Kansas State University sports receives in the sports section of the Star. Most of the comments were to the effect that the Star simply neglected Kansas State sports, although several subjects stated that the Star's sports editors were biased in favor of the University of Kansas.

The number one "gripe" among subscribers concerned the physical delivery of the paper. They were dissatisfied with where the paper was thrown, its exposure to wet weather, and irregular delivery.

Several comments indicated that the Star was "biased" (although none indicated which way) and that it needed local competition.

Other comments given by more than one respondent were about the size of the paper. Some thought it was too big or had too much advertising.

The only other common comments concerned poor proof-reading, poor arrangement of sections, and confusing indexing.

## Chapter IV

### Discussions

#### Limitations of the Study

Mailed questionnaires were used in this study. There are certain limitations that are inherent in the use of mailed questionnaires, such as: The possibility that respondents did not give true answers or the possibility the subject chosen for the study was not the person who completed the questionnaire. The possibility of the occurrence of such inherent errors must be assumed.

No attempt was made to determine why a respondent answered the question as he did. The answers were taken at face value.



### Suggestions for Further Study

Results of this study suggest possibilities for further study. They are: A similar study involving radio and television stations serving the Manhattan, Kansas, area; a similar study involving another newspaper serving the Manhattan area; a study using the same questions in an area close to but outside the Kansas City metropolitan area; a study using the same questions for another newspaper and another town.

### Background and Significance

Manhattan, Kansas, the location of this study, is 125 miles west of Kansas City, Missouri. It is a town with a permanent resident population of approximately 23,000 and a transient student population of nearly 12,000. There are 6,725 listed household units in Manhattan.<sup>16</sup>

Presently, The Kansas City Star (evening) has 1,188 subscribers; the Times (morning) has 1,464, while 2,192 subscribe to the Sunday Star. The current subscription price to the Star is \$5.95 a month, for all editions. The price is uniform to all subscribers, metropolitan or rural.<sup>17</sup>

Metropolitan Surveys, the market research division of the Star, has never conducted a formal study west of the Kansas City area except for a 260-person sample study in Topeka, Kansas. The last survey taken in a rural area was by the Star's agricultural department, approximately 20 years ago.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Kansas Statistical Abstracts 1968, (Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas Press, 1969). p. 12, 22.

<sup>17</sup>Wayne Wash, private interview, January, 1969.

<sup>18</sup>Frank S. McKinney, private interview, December, 1968.

## Appendix A

## Data on Questionnaire Returns:

Total number mailed: 425   Total number returned: 167  
Total percent mailed: 100   Total percent returned: 39  
Total number mailed to subscribers: 88  
Total returned by subscribers: 74  
Percentage return by subscribers: 84  
Random sample of residents from city directory: 337  
Percent return from random sample: 22  
Total number returned from random sample: 93  
Number of Manhattan residents: 140  
Number of Kansas State University students: 30  
Number of "other" category: 21  
Number of Ft. Riley persons: 2  
Number of respondents: 167  
Number of male respondents: 123  
Number of female respondents: 44  
Number of respondents under 31 years of age: 24  
Number of respondents between 31 and 50 years of age: 44  
Number of respondents over 50 years of age: 44

## Data on Subscribers:

Number of subscribers: 74  
Number of male subscribers: 56  
Number of female subscribers: 18  
Average age of subscriber: 54.2  
Average age of male subscriber: 50.2  
Average age of female subscriber: 58.3  
Number of Manhattan residents: 74  
Number of Kansas State University students: 9  
Number of "other category": 6  
Number of Ft. Riley persons: 0

## Data on Nonsubscribers:

Number of nonsubscribers: 38  
Number of male nonsubscribers: 30  
Number of female nonsubscribers: 8  
Average age of nonsubscribers: 36  
Average age of male nonsubscribers: 35  
Average age of female nonsubscribers: 37  
Number of Manhattan residents: 26  
Number of Kansas State University students: 11  
Number of "other category": 4  
Number of Ft. Riley persons: 2

## Appendix B

## Data on Specific Statements

Data on all classes of respondents:

Question No.	average	male	female	under 31	31 to 50	over 50
5	5.84	5.47	6.21	5.26	5.80	5.90
6	5.90	5.78	6.03	5.43	6.20	5.82
7	4.37	4.65	4.10	4.82	4.62	4.12
8	2.33	2.44	2.07	2.25	2.14	2.78
9	5.36	5.21	5.53	4.98	5.05	5.94
10	5.39	5.26	5.53	4.71	5.33	5.57
11	5.92	5.52	6.33	5.43	5.46	5.68
12	4.96	4.91	5.03	4.12	5.07	5.46
13	5.24	5.35	5.14	4.50	5.68	5.54
14	5.43	5.65	5.30	4.78	5.77	5.54
15	4.95	4.52	5.38	4.34	4.80	4.38
16	5.17	5.32	5.02	5.43	5.62	5.14
17	6.07	5.67	5.57	5.65	5.74	5.86

## Data on Questions Answered by Subscribers:

Question No.	average	male	female	under 31	31 to 50	over 50
5	6.10	5.77	6.43	5.72	6.18	6.00
6	6.13	6.06	6.20	6.00	6.35	5.86
7	4.59	4.71	4.47	5.12	4.57	4.44
8	2.74	2.77	2.71	2.50	2.53	2.97
9	5.69	5.49	5.90	5.72	5.15	5.88
10	5.71	5.53	5.90	5.12	5.40	5.76
11	6.36	5.77	6.95	6.00	5.67	5.93
12	5.50	5.10	5.90	4.25	5.21	5.51
13	5.48	5.69	5.28	4.50	5.75	6.08
14	5.86	5.84	6.04	4.50	5.75	6.08
15	5.51	4.82	6.20	4.50	4.54	5.28
16	5.52	5.74	5.30	4.25	6.00	5.28
17	6.10	5.77	6.43	6.00	5.53	6.15

## Data on Questions Answered by Nonsubscribers:

Question No.	average	male	female	under 31	31 to 50	over 50
5	5.59	5.18	6.00	4.80	5.43	5.80
6	5.68	5.50	5.86	4.87	6.05	5.80
7	4.15	4.59	3.72	4.55	4.69	3.80
8	1.93	2.44	1.43	3.00	1.75	2.60
9	5.04	4.94	5.15	4.25	5.06	6.00
10	5.07	5.00	5.15	4.31	5.37	5.40
11	5.49	5.27	5.71	5.43	5.25	5.40
12	4.64	4.71	4.57	4.00	4.93	5.40
13	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.50	5.55	5.20
14	5.01	5.43	4.57	5.06	5.76	5.00
15	4.40	4.24	4.57	4.18	5.26	4.00
16	4.83	4.91	4.75	4.62	5.25	5.00
17	6.04	5.38	6.71	5.31	5.25	5.60

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A SURVEY TO DETERMINE THE DEGREE TO WHICH  
THE KANSAS CITY STAR SATISFIES THE INFORMATIONAL NEEDS  
OF RESIDENTS OF MANHATTAN, KANSAS

by

JON MICHAEL POLLOCK

B. S., Kansas State University, 1968

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Technical Journalism

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
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This is a study to determine to what degree The Kansas City Star and The Kansas City Times satisfy the informational needs of Manhattan, Kansas, subscribers and to determine some of the reasons why nonsubscribers do not take the paper.

Over the years The Kansas City Star has conducted many readership studies in the metropolitan Kansas City area, but only limited studies have been made in nearby cities and rural areas. The Star has never conducted a study of any type in the vicinity of Manhattan, Kansas.

The Kansas City Star's marketing department has done many studies of its audience and its audience's reading habits. The studies have varied considerably in complexity, accuracy, and purpose. They usually are highly specific, designed to determine if a specific article, section(s), or feature of the paper is being read. The data obtained from these surveys is not available to the public.

Most major newspapers conduct studies of their readership, however very little of such information is published.

Current (the past 10 years) academic research in journalism has produced relatively few true readership studies and only one study to determine levels of reader satisfaction with a newspaper. Readership Survey of the Ravenswood (W. Va.) News, by Donna Mamula, M. S., West Virginia University, is a 1965 thesis reporting a study done to determine the reading habits of that newspaper's readers and to measure their reactions to the newspaper's

contents.

The only other journalism research done in the area of informational satisfaction of readers was by J. P. Holman, M. S., Kansas State University, 1963. Holman's thesis, Non-farm Audience Awareness of, and Needs for, University of Nebraska College of Agriculture Publications, concluded that 70 percent of the non-farm men in Nebraska, and 60 percent of the non-farm women were not aware that publications were available from the College of Agriculture.

As one of many newspapers serving the Manhattan, Kansas, area, The Kansas City Star and Times has a certain basic informational service which is unique to it, when compared with other newspapers in the area. That is, the Star and Times has a "personality" about it due to editorial judgements, policies, layout, order of presentation, size, etc.

Does The Kansas City Star (and The Kansas City Times) provide the type of information the people of Manhattan, Kansas think they should receive from a daily newspaper? This study will attempt to answer that question.

The data for this study were collected by mailing a questionnaire to 425 randomly selected Manhattan, Kansas, residents, using 338 subjects from the 1968 Manhattan City Directory and 87 from a list of known Kansas City Star subscribers in Manhattan.

The questionnaire was designed to allow each respondent to indicate his level of satisfaction with 13 basic informational

services provided by the Star. Additionally respondents were requested to provide basic information regarding their residency, sex, age, whether they had read the Star within the last 12 months, and if they subscribed to it.

A seven point semantic differential scale was used for each question.

The returned questionnaires were analyzed to determine to what degree The Kansas City Star satisfies the informational requirements of residents of Manhattan, Kansas.

The 425 questionnaires were mailed May 5, 1969, and returns began coming in May 7. The total return was 39 percent (167 questionnaires) of the number mailed out. Seventy-four of the 167 returned questionnaires were from the 88 known Star subscribers, approximately 84 percent of that group. A 22 percent return, or 93 questionnaires, were received from the 337 subjects chosen from the City Directory.

The average value of all responses to all items on the questionnaire from all classes of respondents was 5.02, barely above slight satisfaction, with a male average of 5.02, and a female average of 5.03. As expected Star subscribers were somewhat more satisfied with the paper, rating it at 5.24. Nonsubscribers rated it at 4.84.

Three age groups were chosen for the study, 30 years and younger, 31 to 50 years old, and 51 and older. In general, those over 30 years of age were more satisfied with the informational

services of the Star than were those under 30.

Findings from the 13 specific areas studied indicated that Manhattan residents were moderately satisfied with most areas of the paper except coverage of news of the state of Kansas and local news of Manhattan. Sports news had two extremes. Those who were satisfied and significant minority who were very unsatisfied. Women were more satisfied with the news sections of the Star than were men.