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Theory and history of culture

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**EFFECTIVE READABILITY OF NEWS:
COMPARATIVE ANALYSES OF RUSSIAN
AND FOREIGN ONLINE NEWSPAPERS**

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Abstract: Data on the audience proves to be the main value on the Internet statistics market, while the issue of informational messages is gradually coming to the forefront both in Russia and abroad. There are materials intended for the middle class, some of them — for professional athletes only. The more precise the targeting, the more effective the texts are. The same happens with the manufacturers of goods, which have to know their buyer by sight. Basic minimum parameters are gender, age, financial condition and income. At the same time, the modern promotion of mediatexts is impossible without an effectively executed layout, if it concerns print mass media. Composition is the art of orderly arrangement of individual elements into a unit, and is applicable to everything that includes more than one element. If the symmetry balances the elements of the composition, then even static arrangement of elements in space is capable of stimulating the imagination in the presence of parallel lines or compositionally arranged points in it. Moreover, the organization and composition have common nature: the first generates the second.

Keywords: readability, print mass media, composition, mediatexts, layout of geometric form, editorial, text direction, sentence structure, subscribers of the paper version, spelling errors.

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ЭФФЕКТИВНОСТЬ ЧИТАЕМОСТИ НОВОСТЕЙ: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ ОНЛАЙН ИЗДАНИЙ В РОССИИ И ЗА РУБЕЖОМ

Аннотация: На рынке интернет-статистики данные об аудитории являются главной ценностью, а проблема донесения информационных сообщений постепенно выходит на первое место как в России, так и за рубежом. Существуют материалы, предназначенные среднему классу, некоторые — только для профессионалов-спортсменов. Чем точнее таргетирование, тем эффективнее тексты. Подобное происходит и с изготовителями товаров, которые должны знать портрет своего покупателя. Как минимум, необходимы знания о демографических параметрах — пол, возраст, статус, доход. В то же время современное продвижение медиатекстов, невозможно без эффективной навигации, если речь идет о печатных СМИ, то здесь главное — макет. Композиция — это искусство упорядоченного расположения отдельных элементов в целом, и оно применимо ко всему, что имеет более одного элемента. Если симметрия уравнивает элементы композиции, то даже статическое расположение элементов в пространстве способно стимулировать воображение в присутствии параллельных линий или композиционно расположенных точек в нем. Более того, макет и контент имеют общий характер: первый создает второй.

Ключевые слова: читаемость новостей, печатные СМИ, композиция, медиатексты, геометрическая форма верстки, передовая статья, направление верстки текста, состав предложения, подписчики бумажной версии газеты, морфологические ошибки.

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Study's problem and objective:

It seems that a new reality is coming. There are more than 3.885 billion Internet users worldwide. It means that 50% of this amount is connected to the Internet [4]. Internet gradually and surely occupies a niche where newspapers are traditionally located, but can it completely replace the function of print mass media? This new media phenomenon has shown the importance of understanding the written texts. Readers increasingly rely on Internet and web-based information despite evidence that it is potentially inaccurate and biased [2]. Therefore, this study sought to assess people's perceptions of the credibility of various categories of Internet information compared to similar information provided by other media. Media studies have tended to study the method that affects the readability, usability, legibility and visibility of the media language. The main idea is to read and understand, in terms of the factors that distinguish its difficulty or ease, the difference in the method and the speed of reading of the readers, groups of words, and the extent to which he/she memorizes the temporary meanings until finishing the media material. Color functions in mediatexts are quite diverse: attracting and keeping attention, promoting the interpretation of goods, creating liveliness and attractiveness, the allocation of the trademark and slogan.

There are four types of compositions: *Dramatic* — with the inclusion of contrasts and oppositions, transitions and cliffs that require control; *Lyrical* — maximally saturated with alternative elements and soft play of light and shadows; *Static* — fairly balanced due to the availability parallel lines and symmetry; *Passive* — with repetitions and continuation, aimed at comfort and relaxation, characteristic of design and decoration.

In comparison with other cultures, the title of the newspaper in Russia, in contrast to, for example, Asian or Arab periodical, permanent and located in the upper left corner of the front page or at the top of the first strip line. Calendar data and number of the issue is placed under the name of the newspaper or in the box on the right. Editorial is usually placed at the opening of band to further highlight the title of the editorial gaining bright large clear print.

Official materials in Russian media are known to follow the editorial:

- 1 Selection — the material is homogeneous in the topic; it is placed in multiple columns and united by one common title — cap. The collection of mostly small combine informational articles (notes, interviews, reports). A selection at the top or bottom of the strip and is clearly separated from other material. Some collections comprise the frame.
- 2 Window — the article (figure) in the top right corner of the stripes. Window bounces from text bold rulers.
- 3 Lantern — art (drawing) in the center or at the bottom of the strip into two or three columns. The height of this column must be greater than its width paper is separated from other fatty material or curly rulers.

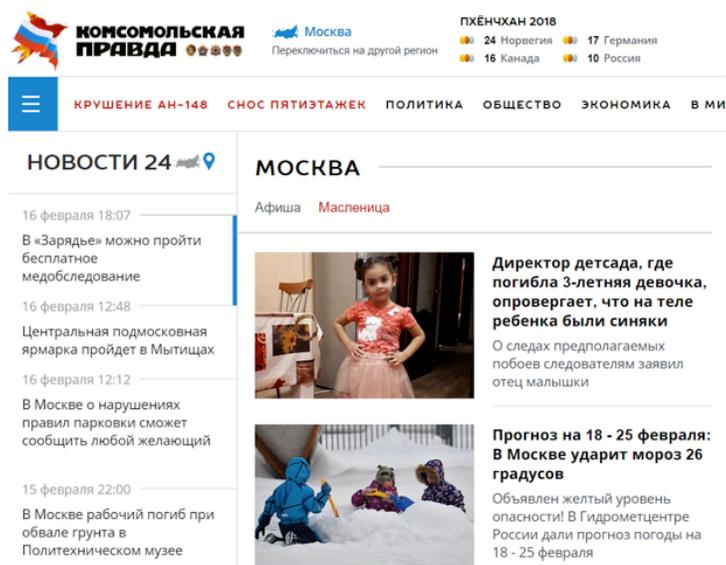


Figure 1 — Online version of Russia newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda has permanent title in the upper left corner of the front page [5]

- 4 Basement — an article placed in several or all of the columns at the bottom of the strip. Basement is separated from the previous text line; the basement has a header on the first two or three columns. Basement height should be less than 1/3 or less than 1/4 the height of the strip.
- 5 Riser — article into two or three columns across the strip height.
- 6 Area — article or illustration, placed in one of the corners of the strip, with the exception of the upper right. Corner is separated from the other rulers of the material.
- 7 Attic in appearance mostly like the basement, but placed at the top of the strip and placed in the entire width or multiple columns. It beat off by the following text in bold rulers or enclosed in a frame.

In Asia, according to the Institute of Culture of TV and Radio Broadcasting NHK, over the past 5 years the proportion of Internet users in Japan by size has also bypassed the reader segment [9, p. 131]. For example in Japan, the text direction is from top to bottom, right to left. Therefore, the article starts in the upper right corner, and the end, respectively, in the lower left. The language of the online media material must be more restricted in its ability to convey and express the meaning to the reader, as a more functional language that completely dispenses with the self-beauty of vocabulary and linguistic structures. People born between 1988 and 2004 called “generation yutori” [19], literally translated as “safety, easing”.

Especially for them the Government since 2002 has introduced a new program of education “yutoriikēiku”. For those people presented the so-called “facilitated education” which came under pressure from the idea of self-actualization, market situation is *terra incognita*. According to a survey of human resources of the Centre for the year 2012, conducted among HR managers of large enterprises, generation Yutori was y described as “passive” — 60% and “psychologically weak” — 40% [10]. During their childhood, actively developed information technology. For them the main objective is to describe events and convey reality as accurately and clearly as possible so that the information material is readable.

At the same time, there are significant differences between the online submission of materials on Russian and Japanese websites of “Izvestia.ru” and “Asahi Shimbun Digital” editions. The site of Russian Izvestia newspaper is much simpler in appearance than the website of the Asahi newspaper: usually there are too many materials on Japanese sites. The website of the newspaper Asahi also has many special materials with different banners and links. The site of Izvestia looks less saturated, although it attracts attention the abundance of “special projects”.

The main meaning of color in the text is the promotion of a more effective demonstration of the consumer qualities of the product. It is effective, for example, while promoting goods with the aim of psychological and symbolic impact on the object of advertising, i.e. the consumer. It is useful to attract and retain attention, to convey the natural range of colors and to emphasize the form and style (as in the case of reception of the «turnout»). In addition to color, the geometric form of the advertising medium can have a significant impact on the perception of content [4, pp. 26–27, 305].

In addition to color, the geometric form of the advertising medium can also have a significant impact on the perception of content: remote the elements used in outdoor advertising make it easy distinguish the company text from competitors' ads. Clearly and distinctly look white letters on a dark background — this technique is called “twist” — they dominate the band regardless of the size of the message

The research problem was identified in terms of the declarative and the nature of the relationship between the reader and the online newspaper. It could be explained by the theory of information representation and its multiple models. The focus of this theory is to reach the reader who fully interacts with the content that he reads and derives its meaning based on his own abilities and knowledge of representation and interpretation.

In the framework of this task, one must take into consideration — the least well-off strata of the population (for Moscow this income is up to 60 thousand rubles a month) read Kp.ru, Gazeta.ru and M24.ru. The most affluent people (in Moscow it is more than 130 thousand rubles) — Kommersant.ru, Meduza.io, Inosmi.ru, Slon.ru, RBC.ru. Furthermore, among the bachelors the most popular are E1.ru, LifeNews.ru, Rg.ru, Kp.ru, and Izvestia.ru. At family readers, the leaders are M24.ru, Newkalininingrad.ru, Russia.rt.com, Gazeta.ru, and Kommersant.ru [7].

In the narrowest sense, readability means the sum of the parts of the text that need readers and this success is the extent to which the reader read at a moderate speed with understanding and fun. This definition focuses on understanding; speed, fluency and the tendency to make online newspaper effectively use the building elements of the Internet in an easy and readable way to benefit the readers of these online newspapers.

Hence, the study problem can be developed to identify the ease and difficulty of the online newspaper and the factors affecting the public follow-up. Within the overall objective, the following sub-objectives are underlined: describe analytical the news format published on the online Russian, Asian and Arab newspaper as a modern means of journalism.

Identify the factors affecting the readability of the text (vocabulary, sentence structure, length, expansion, consistency, unity, and text structure) in the study online newspapers. Find out the ease and difficulty of news readability in the study of online newspapers. Identify the flexibility degree of readability on the websites of the study online newspapers.

Study's questions:

This study seeks to answer the main question of: How readable is the brand communication on the Arab, Asian, European online newspapers, and what are the factors influencing the public's follow-up.

- 1 How often is the use of unfamiliar, personal words and specialized terms that affect the ease or difficulty of news readability of the headlines published on the websites?
- 2 To which extent are linguistic and spelling errors found in news headlines published on the websites of the online newspapers, and what are their impacts on the ease or difficulty of readability?
- 3 To which extent are the news heading published in the online newspapers committing to the factors contributing to ease or hard-pace readability?
- 4 To what extent does the published news on the study online newspapers comply with the appropriate length standards for increasing punctuality, whether the number of title's words, introduction or subject?
- 5 To what extent are the websites of the online newspapers available for expansion to increase the news readability?
- 6 How much do online newspaper use photos and videos within their published news?
- 7 What are the types, sizes, and colors of fonts used in the news published on the websites of online newspaper?
- 8 Do these online newspapers offer accessibility to the number of readings received by the published news?

Study's theoretical framework:

The follower of information theories and methods of influence will find overlapping and revolving correlation between them. Therefore, this study is based on one theoretical approach of the theory of information representation (information processing).



Figure 2 – Site of online newspaper “Dan Tri”: The problem of unemployment has become a “hot topic” of modern Vietnamese journalism: 636 publications with the keyword “unemployment” on seven sites were found [шока 11].

Study's tools, community and sample

Content analysis in this study is based on the factors affecting the reading of the text: vocabulary, sentence structure, length, expansion, consistency, unity, text structure. The editor-in-chief of the electronic newspaper “Vietnam plus” Le Kuok Min rightly added one more fundamental feature to the research, having mentioned that the revenues from paid information provision gradually changing the habits of readers. If readers want to read quality analytical articles, they will have to pay [15]. These factors reflect the ease or difficulty that readers encounter as well in understanding the text.

In Japanese, the text direction is from top to bottom, right to left. Therefore, the article starts in the upper right corner, and the end, respectively, in the lower left. The name of the Japanese newspaper is located in the upper right corner of the front page. In terms of the layout of the newspaper, readers look also pay the legal upper part of the left lower part. In other words, the diagonal part — the upper left and lower right corners of the pages are “dead corners”. Therefore, the basic layout of the Japanese newspapers located photos in the “dead corners”, images or quadrangular column, called “box”.

Significant materials are located on top of the legal angle on the bottom left corner. This layout is called the X-model. In addition, there are T-model and boxed model. T-model is the location at which the uppermost column header is horizontal and is located in the center of the vertical subtitle. Location header looks like the letter T. This model is applicable to the materials in which it is important, or compare two positions or opinions. According to the box model, line of the page is separated into several rectangular pieces.

By the “box” are editorial, “Tatami” and “what”. Inside the “box” is usually the location of the text is different from other materials to create a contrast. “Tatami” — a method that is carried out line and pushes the materials at the edge of the page, or put a material between the rulers with a view to forming quadrangular materials. In addition, “Tatami” is a Japanese traditional straw mat in the shape of a rectangle. Usually “tatami” used for review and comments. In addition “what” — a column in the newspaper, surrounded by rulers as a whole. “What” is more noticeable than the individual and the “Tatami”. Usually, “which” are used publications in installments [17, pp. 223–236].



Figure 3 – Layout of “Kakomi” and “Tatami” in the newspaper Asahi December [3]

Further, the basic ways of a set are divided into the following three types: the district set — text located around the frame photos and images; through the set — the text crosses the 2–3 column; carry-over set — text surrounds the header, in the center. Readers transcend the title, when they read the text; let them set — text does not cross over the line or title, unlike the

rolling set. As the location of the characteristics of the text, Japanese text can be positioned both horizontally and vertically. This is because the Japanese font adapt to its shape becomes square. It is considered important that the preservation of smooth pitch letters location unlike European and American layout, which requires an even density of the text [20].

In Arab countries, the community of this study is the sites of the following online newspapers: “Youm 7” — Egyptian online newspaper; “Elaph” — Saudi online newspaper; “Al-Akhbar” — Lebanese online newspaper; “SANA” — Syrian online newspaper. The sample of the news published on the home page of these online newspapers was selected in a comprehensive inventory method.



Figure 4 – On line version of Lebanese newspapers “Al-Akhbar” [1]

The researchers monitored more than 25 items for ease of news in the online newspapers, while monitoring (9) elements of the difficulty of news in the study newspaper. The percentage of ease of news of the four study sites was (86.8%) as follows: “Al-QuYoum 7” was the extinct (90.2%), followed by “Elaph” (89.9%), and followed by “Al-Akhbar” (86.2%) and “SANA” by (80.7%).

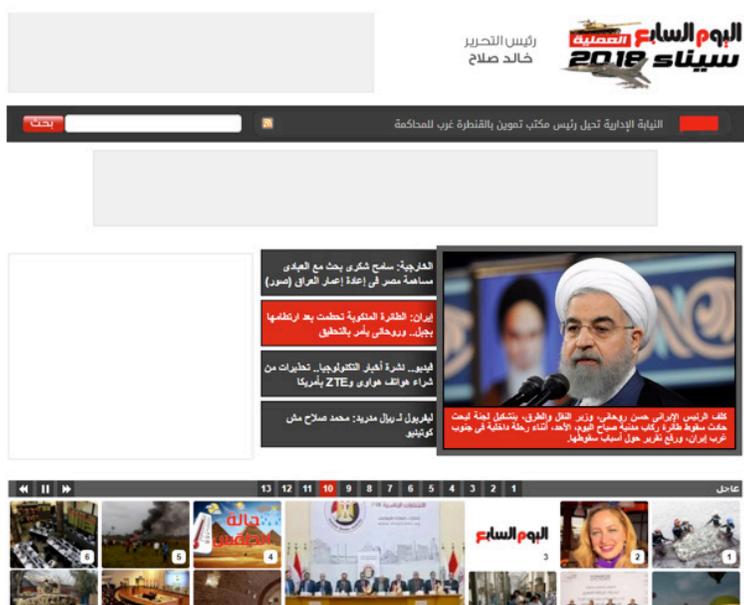


Figure 5 – Site of Egyptian online newspapers “Al-Youm 7” [16]

The titles of the published news in the study newspaper avoided the unfamiliar words with a percentage of (94.9%) with only one word in the titles (4.5%), with two or more words in the headlines with a very small percentage (0.6%). The percentages of news headlines published in the newspapers were close. “Elaph” online newspaper did not have unusual words with the percentage of (96.3%), while “SANA” had (95.3%), “Al- Akhbar” (94.6%) and finally “Al-Youm 7” (94%).

The titles of the news published in the study sites were excluded from specialized terms by a percentage of (94.9%), while only one term existed in the headings (2.8%), while two terms and more existed in the titles came at a percentage of (2.3%). The percentages converged among the newspaper of the study, where the titles of news published in “Al-Akhbar” were (98.2%), followed by “SANA” (96.2%), “Al-Youm 7” (94.8%), “Elaph” (91.9%) [12; 13].

The titles of the news published in the study newspaper did not have personal words with the percentage of (80.4%), while only one personal word in the headlines (15.1%), with two or more personal words in the titles with a lower percentage (4.5%). The percentages varied between the study newspapers: the titles of news published by “Al-Akhbar” did not have personal words with a percentage of (90.2%), while the personal words were missing in “Al-Youm 7” with a percentage of (79.7%), followed by “Elaph” (78.1%), and “SANA” by (75.5%).

The titles of the news published in the study newspaper did not have grammatical or spelling errors with the percentage of (88.6%), while there was only one error in the headlines with the percentage of (9.5%), and two or more errors with the percentage of (1.9%). The percentages varied between the study newspapers in the presence of errors, where news headlines published in “Al-Akhbar” ranked first in error absence (96.4%). The second place was the news headlines in the “Elaph” (90%), followed by the news headlines of “SANA” (89.6%), then “Youm 7” with a percentage of (84.2%) [12; 13].

The length of the first sentence in the introduction to the news published in the study newspaper with more than 15 words came first with a percentage of (88.5%), while the length

of sentences with 15 words was (6.1%), and sentences with less than 15 word (5.4%) 4 which contributed to the difficulty of these news readability. In comparison, in analyzed online Russian media in a period of 2015–2016, only 1 headline consisted of two words, 11 — of three, 3 — of four, 12 — of five, 17 — of six, 17 — of seven, 10 — of 8, 15 — of nine, 11 — of ten, six headlines consist of eleven, three -consist of twelve, one headline consist of thirteen, one headline consist of sixteen words. Typical were the headlines of 8–11 words (38%) [8].

2. The percentages varied between the newspapers of the study, where the sentences consisting of more than 15 words in the news introductions published in the newspaper “Al-Akhbar” were very high with a high percentage reached (94.6%), followed by “Youm 7” (89.5%), then “SANA” (86.8%), then “Elaph” (83.8%). In Russia the tendency to headline materials, using 12 or more words is quite indicative, if the task is to convey to the addressee an idea without distortions and errors [8].

The results of the analysis of Arabic online editions confirm that the four study newspapers did not absolutely use the three types of hypertext (HTTP within page, HTTP within site, HTTP outside the site) in its published news. The analyzed newspapers used photos in their news, with a total percentage of (93.6%), while did not use them with a percentage of (6.4%) in their stories. Besides it, the newspapers differ in their use of photos. “Elaph” in the first place using it as a single photo with a percentage of (97.4%), followed by “Youm” 72 with (94%). In third place was “Al-Akhbar” with (89.3%), and in the last position “SANA” with (74.5%). “Youm 7” used more than one photo in its news (6%) [12; 13].

- 1 The study online newspapers varied in the use of the video, which was used mostly by “SANA” with the percentage of (15.1%), followed by “Youm 7” (2.3%), then “Elaph” (1.9%), while “Al-Akhbar” didn’t use any videos.
- 2 All the online newspapers, except “SANA” offered a space for comments within the published news with a percentage of (100%). The researcher added a number of comments during the study period but the newspaper sites did not publish them, and therefore this service is not considered effective.
- 3 Type of font used in news published on the websites of “Al-Akhbar” and “SANA” was the “The new Helvetica neue Bold” with a size of 21Px and 23PX respectively. While the type of the font used in the news published in “Youm 7” was “Tahoma” with a size of 16PX, while 16PX while the type of font used in “Elaph” was “Arial” with a size of 20PX.
- 4 “Al-Akhbar” and “Youm 7” allowed accessibility to the number of readings received by the published news with a percentage of (100%), while “Elaph” and “SANA” did not allow such accessibility for the number of readings [6].

Locality is a strong side not only of Japanese, but also of American newspapers, especially during the period of election campaigns. So, in 2010, the third survey of “information behavior of the Japanese”, conducted by the laboratory of Y. Hashimoto from the University of Tokyo, showed: for 10 years, Internet access reached 9%, while a similar figure for newspapers fell by 8.6% — to 30, 5% [18, p. 169]. In terms of layout in the online version, Japanese and Russian newspapers are as different as Internet sites, which are known; in the upper left corner is the name of the newspaper with the date and logo, signifying read prohibition for children. In the right place is the search frame, links to social networks and link to subscribers. Under the title has a menu strip, which shows the main sections of the site. The main part of the page is divided into the following: top stories, breaking news, top stories one by one on each sphere, and the choice of materials for the editor, opinions of different specialists. Apart from these, the direct link to your account “in contact” and “Twitter” there.

Certain advertising space located on the top of the page on the right of the name and major news.

Residents of distant regions of Russia also prefer to read about local news. In Russia, the audience from 18–24 years requires more criminal information, news materials on everyday issues, entertainment. Readers of 25–44 years are interested in news on everyday topics, sports and problems of social and political life. Those who are older than 45 are interested in socio-political topics, they do not read much sports information and advertising. In Japan, young people aged 15–29 years, read criminal information and news on life. They like regional news, but after 30 years, they begin to be interested in the economy. This trend continues up to 60 years. Older people at the age of 60 prefer political and economic news. 94% of them read news on the topic of society, including criminal information [17].

The Russian Post and the Alliance of Russian Regional Media Leaders (ARS-PRESS) launched a joint project for the retail sale of regional newspapers and magazines in all 42,000 post offices, which are visited on average by more than 2.5 million people a day. At the same time, the process of further specialization of newspaper publications is intensifying, new publications appear that represent the interests of various political movements. The number of online publications, designed to satisfy the needs and interests of small readership groups, small communities of interest, etc., has grown.

No wonder, younger generation is characterized by a large involvement in the world of digital. Solving this task, Asahi offers great discount on the rate of the electronic version, which is called “off to look for work”. Students can become a paid subscriber to 2 thousand Yen per month as against 3.8 thousand Yen per month for regular subscribers. I believe that this approach to Japanese students is correct, because the opening day in Japanese companies, students always ask what news they had been interested in lately. Usually students do not read newspapers, but if all the friends around them begin to read it willingly or unwillingly have to keep up with the others.

In addition, web logs on the site are also products for the young and middle generations. In addition, it should be mentioned that the subscribers of the paper version of the newspaper could become paid subscribers of the site for thousands of rubles. PR-Texts are usually placed in the middle seat. On the website of the newspaper Asahi, also in the upper left corner is the name of the newspaper, but no date. Date written below the menu ribbon. When you click on the main division offers pull-down menus with subcategories. To the right of the name of the search frame are located, links to social networks and link to subscribers.

The main part is divided into the following: the main latest news, materials selection editor, a special publication of parts and materials from Asahi online journals rating read news, top stories one by one on every sphere, including the news yesterday. Certain advertising space located below the menu tape on the left and right side of a major news in the right middle and at the bottom of the page. Many PR-materials are located in the right place of the page in bold. In addition, the lower right-hand side contains links to different conditions that the Asahi newspaper publisher manages: a database, information of an educational institution, exhibition information, crowdfunding.

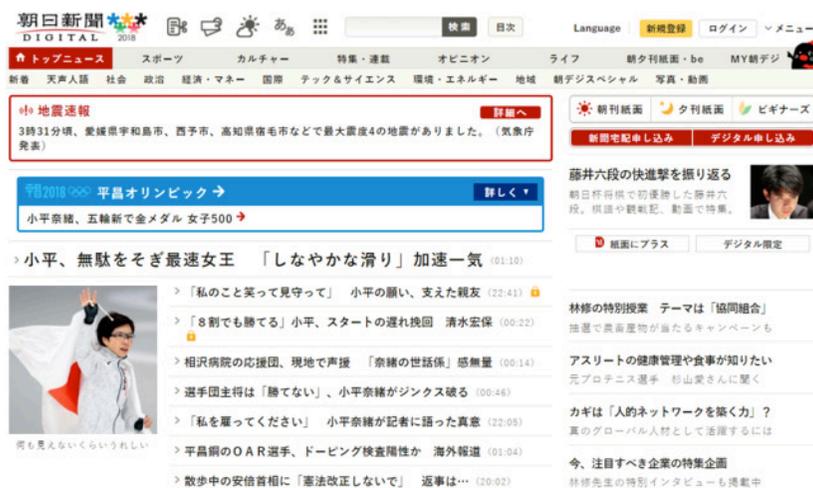


Figure 6 – PR-materials very often are located in Asahi in the right part of the page with bold letters [15]

In addition, at the bottom to the right you can see the links on different conditions, controlled by the newspaper publisher Asahi: database, information on educational institution, information shows, crowdfunding. The structure is similar on news pages belonging to Asahi. Links to social networks are located under the headings. The adverts are on the right side of the page. A news story usually follows ads and PR-materials. Photos` size varies according to given material.

Recommendations:

- 1 The need to enhance the elements of news readability ease on the websites of online newspapers.
- 2 Commitment when editing news headlines to avoid using unusual and specialized words, linguistic and spelling errors, and increasing the use of personal words that contribute to the increase of readability ease.
- 3 Take into account the length of the appropriate sentence when editing news to online newspapers and reduce the missing sentences and intercept. In addition to strengthening the use of hypertext in the news especially the HTTP within site, to ensures that the reader will not exit the same website.
- 4 Increase the use of video, audio clips and graphic images in online newspaper because it is an additional advantage for newsreaders.
- 5 The necessity of activating the service of adding comments inside the news because it contributes to increased readability through the participation and interaction of the reader with the news.
- 6 The researchers recommend the need to keep updated with the current events and the commitment to clarity of the news published in the online newspapers.
- 7 Work hard to link the websites of online newspapers to the social networking sites so they enjoy high popularity, and wide spreading across them to increase the news readability.
- 8 Pay more attention to the editing of interesting headlines for news stories posted on online newspapers because it is the first reason in reading the news of the study newspapers, in addition to interest in the method of writing news and selection comfortable colors for eye and convenient fonts when designing newspaper websites.

- 9 The need to consolidate the news published on the study newspapers with more photo album, video and balance in the multimedia usage.
- 10 Focus more on the content and the language of the published news and on the use of easy suitable terminology to readers. In addition to developing the form and location of newspaper websites, and to avoid linguistic and spelling errors in the published news.

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