

# Studying Media Literacy of Isfahan Press Audience and Presenting a Solution to Increase It

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*The present study was conducted to study media literacy of Isfahan press audiences and providing a solution for increasing. The population of this research includes all audience of Isfahan local press at the age range of 25 - 44 years old and people in this population were selected randomly. The methodology of this paper is survey and data was collected by researcher- made questionnaire and interview techniques. The questionnaire included three sections: A-demographic characteristics, (gender, age, education and marital status) B-investigation of media literacy level including three parts: One, raising the awareness of consumption style. Second, studying skills and critical watching. Third, social analysis. Four, investigating the relationship between job's audiences with media literacy. Five, investigating the relationship between parties and political tendencies with media literacy. SPSS software was used for data analysis. The data was collected in the level of descriptive statistics by drawing tables and graphs and determining the frequency, percentage of mean and standard deviation and was collected in the level of inferential statistics using Pearson correlation, regression, t-test for one variable and finally the path analysis was used to show the effectiveness of each independent variable and the reality of their effects on level of awareness. Results showed the relationship between sex and education with people's media literacy in Isfahan, but there is no significant relationship between marital status and age, and also there is strong relationship between political parties and local media audience. The overall level of local press audience media literacy is above medium level.*

**Keywords:** Media literacy, audiences, local press, consumption style, skills

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## Introduction

Despite the fact that mass media are developing significantly every day, written culture has maintained its vital role globally and the first step to make people participated in different aspects of social, cultural, political, economic life etc. is having enough information, insight, and awareness of events.

One of the oldest and important notification tools is press which has maintained its effect on people compared to modern mass media from past, as far as other mass media with advanced technologies have not replace the specific function of press (McQuail,1388: 129).

On the other hand, nowadays, the importance of press has been increased to some extent that is considered not only as a communication tool, but also as one of the power sources besides the society and government and also has been called as 4<sup>th</sup> element of democracy. Therefore there is need to a knowledge that can be used to increase audience's ability, equip them in communicative spaces and change them to intelligent audiences. Media literacy certainly is a knowledge that makes the audience more active when benefits this knowledge and slowly is developed to an intelligent audience because he/she learns critical thought and so is able to criticize press content . Audiences with media literacy have high awareness of media information since they can identify

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and analyze messages planned and issued for impact on audiences in different levels and finally they select (Toloe, 1391). So when audience develops his/her media literacy can process messages actively and through this method has more supervision and control on media effect (Haman, 1994). This research will present some solutions to increase media literacy skills of Isfahan press audiences.

It should be said that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century information and communication systems have become increasingly complex. The complications caused confusion for audiences worldwide in selecting messages. This volume of information made mass of information for audiences that encountered them with a phenomenon named information overload and they should select among these information. Sometimes adverse information is received and so it is very difficult to find complete and accurate information. These days human is surrounded by mass of information like a drop in a ocean full of information that resources of these information and owners of each of these great media and main broadcasting institutions including press are looking for their economic, cultural and political benefits and have been made audiences confused. In this situation that it impossible to control, distribute and publish different news, the main duty of audiences is to recognize the main mission of media including press and to neutralize destructive effects of news by accurate and true perception of media messages nature. So some factors and condition like press are necessary to provide this level of awareness and recognition in audiences that in fact, the media literacy is a necessary factor among these effective factors.

“Potter” believes that media literacy is a set of perspectives which is utilized actively to be exposed to media and to interpret meaning of messages faced by audiences. Media literacy teaches special skills to audience for making thoughtful connection with media while provides analytic and critical view to media messages (Potter, 2006).

“Mohammad Soltanifar” (1386) proposes media literacy theory by presenting six obvious principles and a model of media literacy. These six principles are preliminary axioms and must be accepted to recognize this theory.

- 1- Individuals themselves are responsible to improve media literacy.
- 2- Audiences must be sensitive to the different effects of media. Of course some believed that many effects are positive.
- 3- Audiences must be interpreter of messages.
- 4- People should share the meaning to communicate with each other.
- 5- Knowledge is power, audiences must know what information help them more and show the way how to benefit them
- 6- Media literacy skills can empower people. If they cannot control duty of meaning creation, media will do that.

Media literacy theory has been embedded in a model that combines four main factors which connect together in an interaction system: knowledge structure, personal decision making center, ability, skills and information processing. In this regard, one can say that local presses can play a significant role in reflecting humans’ life needs and problems living in a neighborhood and the growth of local presses leads to overall growth of press. Therefore, audience’s tendency to this press is increased by making local press environment efficient and in result people will benefit these media more and this will lead to increase in media literacy.

Regarding theories used in this study, it should be said that one of the theory embodied in this research is “Highlighting Theory and Media Literacy”. In this theory the main hypothesis is that media tells us what is important. Media necessarily do not induce how to think about a subject, but only presents the priority and superiority dependent to covered type and amount. While media literacy is a combination of effective utilization of media techniques and style of insight and

understanding for distinguish between media. Media literacy tries to train audience who are able to choose, search for qualitative planning and evaluating it so that they have critical sense about the shape, format and content of media. Media literacy can be considered as access, analysis and providing communication in different media forms and content critical use. Media literacy can be defined as knowledge about performance of media in society (Soltanifar ,1386: 45).

Modeling or social learning is associated with media literacy since we learn behaviors by watching and imitating others. Media models can be considered as observational or random source of learning (Basirian H., Basirian R., 1385: 78).Therefore it is the media literacy that regardless of artificial highlighting teaches audience to know about performance of media and production of their messages better, define the importance of content and topics and follow a specified target in media world.

The concept of highlighting must not be decreased only to notion of prioritizing that means selecting priority of some subjects and events in media in form of newspaper headlines or first topics of radio or television news. Highlighting is further than prioritizing and has its special complications. “G. Lang” and “K.Lang” (1983) divided highlighting process into six stages during the study of relationship between press and public thoughts during “water gate” crisis in the United States.

- 1- Press highlight and emphasize some topics and events and make them significant.
- 2- Different topics and events need different type and level of new coverage to attract people attention. “Water gate” was an unfamiliar subject and vast media coverage was performed to attract people attention.
- 3- Issues and events of people’s interest should be framed or a scope of meanings should be assigned them to make them intelligible. At first “water gate” was introduced in frame of a minor issue in election campaign that made it difficult to be understood in other frame that is signs of widespread political corruption [in the U.S.].
- 4- The language used by media, affects understanding of subject importance. First “water gate” Eavesdropping was hinted as an “unethical work” that took several month to show this action unimportant but after that the usage of scandal word for eavesdropping action by media, gave more importance to the issue.
- 5- Press connects issues and events which are attracted by people to secondary symbols that have suitable and good situation politically and morally because people need a base for directing toward a topic. In “water gate” case, when the issue was connected to secondary symbols like “need to clarify facts” and “trust in government” helped people to directing.
- 6- When famous and well-known people present a comment about a topic, the highlighting process accelerates. For example when judge “John Sirika” said the reality of “water gate” has not been said to people this affected on people and other salient people like republicans significantly( 2002, 348-90). So the concept of highlighting is more complicated than prioritizing and indicates that the process of putting a issue in priority of public takes time and passes through several phases. This concept indicates that Media methods for framing an issue and important words use to describe it can be effective and role of well-known people have a significant impact when remarking about issue.

The second theory used in this study is called “Cultivation Theory”. This theory emphasize on long term and regular effects of media specially television on forming mental images from surrounding world and their concept formation from social reality. “G. Gerbner” developer of the theory began a research titled cultural indicators in 1960 to investigate effects of television watching on ideas and perspectives of audience about the real world. (Mehdizadeh, 1389: 98). One of these effects is in recognition level and related to the fact that exposing to these media to what extent can form public beliefs about external reality. This theory has been formed to propose a pattern of analysis to present long term effect of media that mainly act in social perception level. According to this theory television among modern media has found such central position in everyday life that has dominated on symbolic environment and massages about reality that has

been replaced by personal experience and other recognition instruments in the world (McQuail , 2006: 399). Cultivation is something that a culture does because culture is basic media that people live in it and learn from it. Culture is a system, story and ... that is produced increasingly and plays as a intermediate between existence and awareness about existence and in result helps both of them", (Morgan & Shanahan, 1997). It should be said that "Cultivation theory" discusses about effects of media on audience and emphasizes the significant role of mass media in shaping audience society. Television inclines to give similar and identical views about social realities which has been made by its' directors and managers opinion. TV messages follow an order and coordination over time.

Television is the main instrument for imposing this effect. It does this by affecting on audience continuously and coordinately and also forming the society. Society with higher media literacy promotes active participation in a saturated media environment and also increases their awareness about the media consumption style or in other word determining the amount and consumption style of media food among different media sources. With regard to the fact that media dominate on our cultural and political life, teaching study skills or critical watching by media literacy can be effective and productive.

Of course media literacy is not a time or place limited process or assumed a constant phenomenon, rather media literacy is a constant process which is always changing and progressing, so people should always improve their information and knowledge structure and criticize and interpret messages using new solutions to benefit world's updated information (Potter, 1998: 45).

Many researches have been conducted on media literacy. One of these research which is conducted by "Nilipour"(2012) is a research titled "the relationship between media literacy and the consumption rate of cultural goods in students of virtual education faculty in Isfahan University (with emphasis on media)". The method of his descriptive research is correlation and the research population includes all post graduate students of Isfahan University. Results of this research indicated the correlation coefficient of awareness about media consumption style, critical thought skill and social analysis of media skill had a significant relationship with consumption rate of cultural goods and also no significant relationship was observed between media literacy level and demographic characteristics.

"Saveh" investigated the effective factors on media literacy growth among audience in Tehran in the year of 1390. Obtained data showed there is correlation between audiences' job and social position and their media literacy and also there is a correlation between rate of consuming inside and outside media and their literacy level and between audience's studies and their media literacy level. Another research was done by "Shahin" in the year of 1390 titled "the comparing media literacy among students in Tehran University and medical Sciences University of Tehran". The researcher used survey method as its methodology. Results of this study suggested generally targeted use of media is more than medium among students of both universities. And there is no significant difference between none of studied variables (perceiving and treating with media, evaluation, summarization, familiarity with English language and modern technologies) among two mentioned groups. the rate of perceiving and treating media, evaluation, summarization, familiarity with English language, computer and internet was more than medium in both groups and combination was lower than medium. "Burson" in 2010 conducted a research titled "measuring media literacy of journalist students". Data quantitative analysis was used in this research. Data was collected by online survey. Results showed that journalist students obtained a higher score compared other students who were not journalists. But generally media literacy was low among samples. Score and tendency of journalist students and other students in related majors were compared. Research's results suggested journalist students must use media for specific aims

more than other students who study other majors. Effect of potential intellectual leaders among journalist students was identified when comparing scores on evaluating media literacy with attitude about media literacy. “Patter theory” about media recognizing literacy contingency was used to describe findings. “Ark” in 2005, performed a research on the relationship between “media literacy and critical thought”. However there are a lot of claim about the relationship between media literacy and critical thought, investigating available effects did not show any academic support. Demographic investigation and test was done for measuring bachelor students’ skills. The result did not show a significant relationship between media literacy of students with media consumption and their critical thought.

Another research was performed by “Feuerstein” in 2002 titled “media literacy in support of critical thought”. Effect of schematic training of critical media literacy in students (10-12 years old) was studied in this research. Research proposed importance and necessity of developing media literacy and education for both producers of televisions’ program and audience. The result reported effectiveness of preventive programs and empowering critical thinking among elementary and junior high school students and also who are in low level socially.

Regarding the importance of research, one should say that media literacy teaches audience to change from a consumer to an active and intelligent evaluator. With regard to the fact that media literacy in all countries especially in the Islamic Republic of Iran not only promotes the quantitative, qualitative and scientific level but also induces positive attitude and selectivity among people. Unfortunately, nowadays the media literacy term has become common in society because people are not yet completely familiar with applicable area of this knowledge. According to increased penetration of media in societies and forming relationships between them, learning media literacy is inevitable. Media literacy increases ability to control and select information and this will enable audience to show appropriate reaction against massive information. So he/she can select his/her needed information and eliminate the rest. (Rezaee B., 1382: 65). It should be said that in developed countries, media literacy training is started from high school. Media literacy is a part of compulsory educations in these societies to keep the citizens updated and prevent from being back warded. But media literacy in our country (Iran) is faced a huge gap so government must put citizen empowerment programs on priority which means state must train media literacy in society and specially in schools as fights with illiteracy. Necessity of media literacy training is high to some extent that Media literacy training enables audience and society people to analyze issues and identify cases such as virtual images, advertisement and distorting facts by providing critical though. Media literacy provides us the opportunity to evaluate how media represents the reality accurate, fair and exact (Toloe, 1391).

## **Methodology**

Number of 646539 male and female citizens of Isfahan city in age range of 25 and 44 years old were selected as the research population. People in the population must be consumer of Isfahan local press. People were selected randomly and 383 people compose sample size in this research according to Chocaran formula. Method of this quantitative research is cross sectional and is according to survey research. The questionnaire was used to gather information. The research is in micro sociology level. In this research the multistage cluster sampling method was used due to structure of statistical population. First statistical population is divided into units named cluster. Then sample people are selected from these clusters using simple random sampling. According to this several state organizations were selected randomly in stage 1 and half of questionnaires were distributed between them and other half was distributed between public and guilds. Questionnaire is the most common and effective method of data collection especially in survey research. In this

research questionnaire has been used. Obtained data have been presented and analyzed in tables. To evaluate dependent variable a questionnaire including 30 questions were prepared. This questionnaire contains closed questions and mostly is planned through “Lekert” five points spectrum. Evaluating dependent and independent variables has been performed through identification and then presenting multi-choice questions based on the spectrum. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used for analyzing quantitative findings. After collecting data through questionnaire first all questions were coded and then data were entered into computer based on entered codes. Frequency tables and diagram in descriptive statistics part and 2-dimensional tables and Pearson correlation coefficient, Regression, single-variable T were used in Inferential Statistics to show presence or absence of relationship between independent and dependent variable and finally path analysis was used to show the effectiveness of each dependent variable and their real effect on level of awareness.

### Results and Discussions

According to findings of the first table and chart, it should be said that 28.5% of participants were between 25-29 years old, 32.9% were between 30-34 years old, 18.5% between 35-39 years old and 19.6% between 40 and 44 years old.

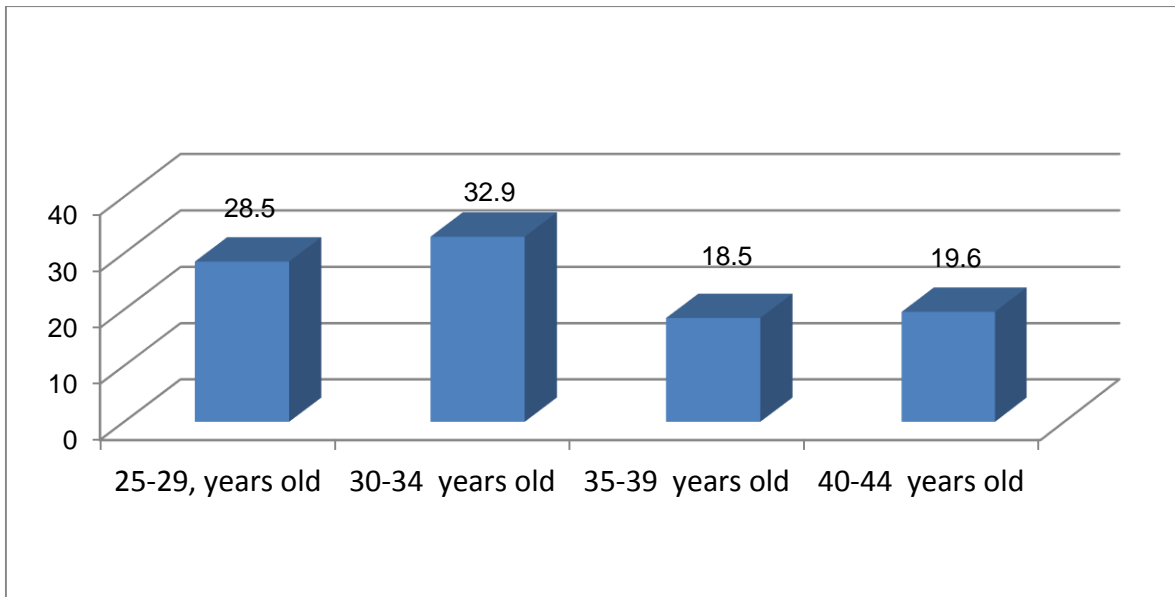


Chart 1: frequency distribution of sample group based on age

Percentage of frequency	frequency	statistical indices	
		Academic degree	
0.3	1	NULL	
2.6	10	UNDER DIPLOMA	
13.1	50	DIPLOMA	
19.8	76	ABOVE DIPLOMA	
45.4	174	BACHELOR	
15.4	59	MASTER AND ABOVE	
3.4	13	<i>Hawza</i> ( <u>Advanced Islamic Studies</u> )	
100	383	TOTAL	

Table 1: frequency distribution and frequency percent of respondents based on academic degree

According to table 1 findings, 2.6% of participants were under diploma, 13.1% diploma, 19.8% above diploma, 45.4% bachelor, 15.4% master and above and 3.4% *Hawza* .

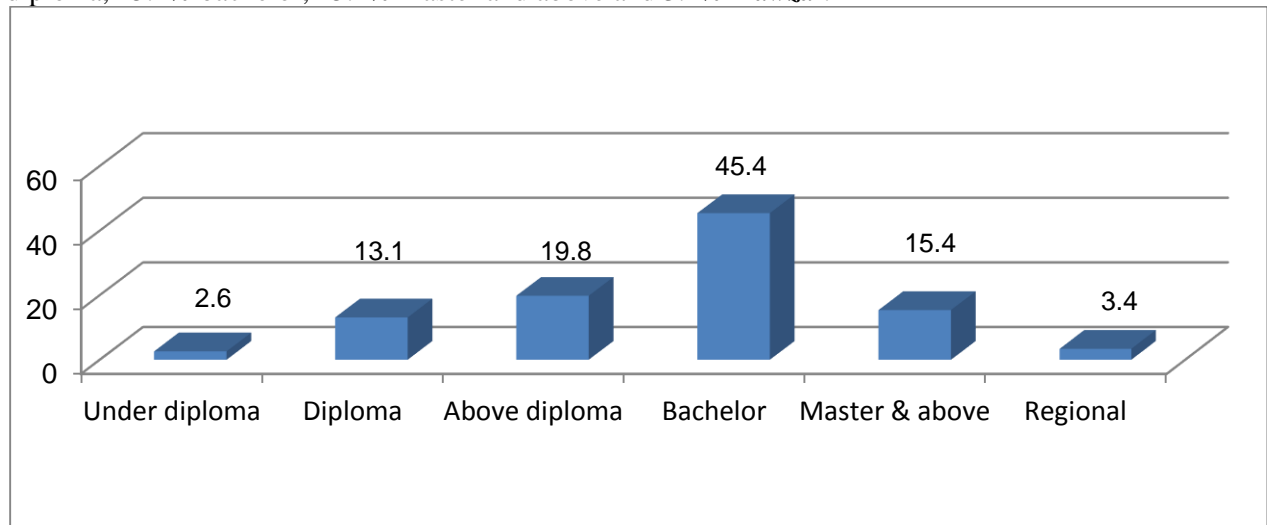


Chart 2: Frequency distribution of sample group regarding academic degree

The results of chart 3 shows that from respondents' point of view the highest mean is 3.23 (study skills) and the lowest is 3 (awareness of consumption style).

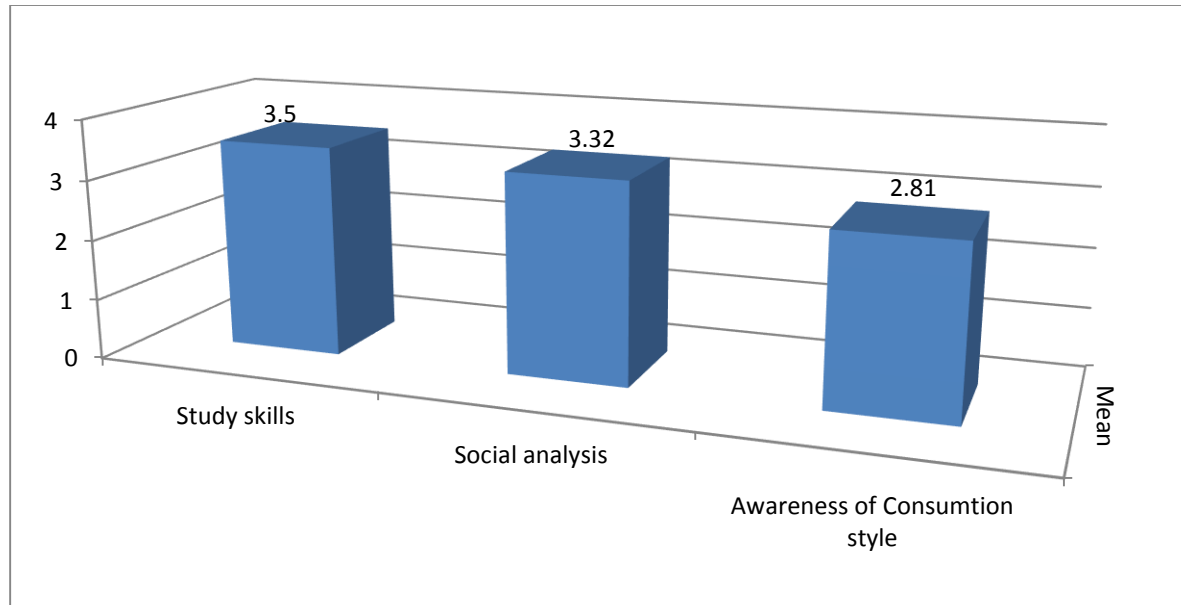


Chart 3: Comparison of media literacy score mean and its levels

Question 1: To what extent audience of Isfahan local press are aware of consumption style?

Table 2: comparison of Mean of awareness level among Isfahan local press audience with assumed mean of three

Sig.	Freedom Level	T	SA	SD	Mean	Component
0.001	371	-6.849	0.026	0.51	2.81	Awareness of level of consumption

According to Table 2 findings the mean awareness level among Isfahan local press' audience is 2.81. Calculated absolute value of t is greater than t in table, so awareness among Isfahan local press' audience is lower than medium.

Question 2: How is the level of study skills among audience of Isfahan local press?

Table 3: Comparison of study skills Mean level among Isfahan local press audience with assumed mean of three

Sig.	Freedom Level	T	SA	SD	Mean	Component
0.001	378	19.045	0.026	0.51	3.50	Study skills of audience

Table 3 indicates the mean of study skills level among Isfahan local press audience is 3.50. Calculated t is greater than t in table and so study skills level among Isfahan local press audience is more than medium.



Question 3: How is the level of social analysis among Isfahan local press audience?

Table 4: Mean level of social analysis among Isfahan local press' audience comparative with the mean hypothetical of three.

Sig.	Freedom Level	T	SA	SD	Mean	Component
0.001	378	19.04 5	0.026	0.51	3.50	Social analysis of audience

Table 4 indicates the mean of study skills level among Isfahan local press audience is 3.32. calculated Absolute value of (t) is greater than (t) in table so Social analysis of audience is more than medium.

In this part research inferential findings are set and studied according to research questions.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a significant relationship between demographic of Isfahan local press audience and study skills.

Table 5: Regression coefficient between demographic features and study skills of Isfahan local press audience

Sig.	F	Sig.	t	Standard Beta	SD	Regression coefficient	R <sup>2</sup>	R	Statistical indicators Regression model
0.283	1.267	0.001	22.220	-	0.168	3.728	0.014	0.118	<b>Constant factor</b>
		0.732	0.343	0.018	0.057	0.019			<b>Gender</b>
		0.627	0.488	0.029	0.028	0.014			<b>Age</b>
		0.035	-2.118	-0.111	0.026	-0.054			<b>Education</b>
		0.473	-0.719	-0.043	0.062	-0.044			<b>Marital Status</b>

P<0.05

Table 5: Findings show that regression coefficient is not significant between demographic features, age and marital status of Isfahan local press audience and study skills but there is a significant relationship between level of education and study skills.

According to table 5 the below regression equation can be set for predicting study skills level considering sex, age, education and marital status:

Study skills= 3.728+(0.019) sex+ (0.014) age+ (-0.054) education+ (-0.044) marital status

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a significant relationship between demographic features and social analysis of Isfahan local press' audience.

Table 6: Regression coefficient between demographic features of Isfahan local press audience and social analysis

Sig.	F	Sig.	t	Standard Beta	SD	Regression	R <sup>2</sup>	R	Statistical indicators Regression model
0.001	4.746	0.001	20.962	-	0.185	3.874	0.051	0.226	<b>Constant factor</b>
		0.017	-2.406	-0.127	0.064	-0.153			<b>Gender</b>
		0.892	-0.135	-0.008	0.032	-0.004			<b>Age</b>
		0.001	-3.432	-0.178	0.029	-0.099			<b>Education</b>
		0.770	0.293	0.017	0.069	-0.020			<b>Marital Status</b>

P<0.05

Table 6: Table findings show that regression coefficient is no significant between demographic features, age and marital status of Isfahan local press audience and social analysis but there is a significant relationship between sex and academic degree of audiences with social analysis.

According to table 6 the below regression equation can be set for predicting social analysis according to sex, age, education and marital status:

Social analysis = 3.874+ (-0.153) sex+ (-0.004) age+ (-0.099) education+ (0.020) marital status

**Hypothesis 3:** There is a significant relationship between demographic features of Isfahan local press audience and consumption style awareness.

Table 7: Regression coefficient between demographic features and consumption style awareness of Isfahan local press audience

Sig.	F	Sig.	t	Standard Beta	SD	Regression	R <sup>2</sup>	R	Statistical indicators Regression model
0.503	0.835	0.001	17.077	-	0.167	2.859	0.009	0.097	<b>Constant factor</b>
		0.120	-1.559	-0.085	0.057	-0.089			<b>Gender</b>
		0.912	-0.111	-0.007	0.028	-0.003			<b>Age</b>
		0.337	0.962	0.051	0.051	0.024			<b>Education</b>
		0.954	0.058	0.004	0.004	0.004			<b>Marital Status</b>

P<0.05

Table 7: Findings of table 7 show that regression coefficient is not significant between demographic and consumption style awareness of Isfahan local press audience.

According to table 7 the below regression equation can be set:for predicting consumption style awareness according to sex, age, education and marital status

Consumption style awareness = 2.759+ (-0.089) sex+ (-0.003) age+ (0.024) education+ (0.004) marital status

**Hypothesis 4:** There is a significant relationship between job and media literacy of Isfahan local press audience.

Table 8: Correlation coefficient between job and media literacy of Isfahan local press audience

			Criterion variable media literacy
			Statistical indicators
Sig.	R Square	Pearson correlation	Predictor variable
0.001	0.100	**0.316	JOB

P<0.01

Table 8: Findings of table 8 show that Correlation coefficient has significant relationship between job and media literacy of Isfahan local press audience. According to R<sup>2</sup> coefficient, 10% of job and media literacy variance of Isfahan local press audience has been common. So the fourth hypothesis is confirmed.

**Hypothesis 5:** There is a significant relationship between political tendency and media literacy of Isfahan local press audience.

Table 9: Correlation coefficient between political tendency and media literacy of Isfahan local press audience.

			Criterion variable media literacy
			Statistical indicators
Sig.	R Square	Pearson correlation	Predictor variable
0.001	0.190	**0.436	POLITICAL & OTHER TENDENCIES

P<0.01

Table 9: findings of table 9 show that Correlation coefficient has significant relationship between political and other tendencies and media literacy of Isfahan local press audience. According to R<sup>2</sup>, 19% of political tendency and media literacy of Isfahan local press audience variance has been common. So the fifth hypothesis is confirmed.

## Conclusion

Research results shows that media literacy of Isfahan local press audience is more than medium level. (Nasiri, 2004; Sahabi, 2002; Iranpoor, 2011; Burson, 2010) investigated the level of media literacy among University professors in Tehran city, post graduate students in Isfahan University and Isfahan university of technology and results showed their level were mean, which supports results of this study.

The results showed there is a significant relationship between sex and media literacy but this result do not confirm previous researches done by Shahin, 2011 and Nilipoor, 2012. results show that there is no significant relationship between marital status and media literacy and these results confirm results of researches performed by Shahin, 2011 and Nilipoor, 2012; Nasiri, 2004; Sahabi, 2005; Iranpoor, 2010.

In table 8 correlation coefficient between job and media literacy of Isfahan local press audience shows there is a significant relationship between job and media literacy that these result confirm result of research conducted by Saveh, 2012. In table (9) correlation coefficient between media literacy of Isfahan local press audience and political tendency shows a significant relationship between media literacy of Isfahan local press audience and political tendency that these result confirm results of study performed by Saveh, 2012.

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