

Media Reliance and Information Seeking Habits of Pakistani**Millennial**Wajid Zulqarnain¹, Taimur-ul-Hassan²**Abstract**

The mushroomed growth of private news TV channels and speedy diffusion of social media in Pakistan has provided many options for the Pakistani youth to get information from different media sources. This study explores primary information sources of Pakistani youth, their information seeking habits, media reliance and believability on the medium. The data collected through survey method suggests that the primary source of the majority of Pakistani youth is social media as they consider it to be more credible than the mainstream media. They primarily use social media to seek political information. The findings of this study suggest the policy makers, advertisers, media strategists, political parties and media content producers to be vigilant for media consultation and consumption patterns among youth.

Keywords: *Political Entertainment, TV Comedy, Political Satire, Humor, Parody, Politicians' traits, Election Campaigns*

Introduction

Pakistani media industry since 2002 has grown up speedily and with the penetration of the internet and other social networking sites, general audience and particularly Pakistani millennial are provided with multiple options to seek information in Pakistan. Majority of the Pakistani youth who belongs to upper middle or elite class has smart phones and internet access. As the Internet World Stats (2018) discloses that more than 44 million internet users are in Pakistan. Therefore, the study aims at exploring the primary

¹ Assistant Professor, (Program Manager) SZABIST, Islamabad, Pakistan

² Dean, School of Media & Communication Studies, Beaconhouse National University (BNU), Lahore, Pakistan

source of information of Pakistani millennial. Today, politics has become an important issue for almost all the people especially the youth of our country. They are more passionate and energetic about the future of the country and mass media has played a very vital role in cultivating this taste. The study of Bhatti, Ali and Hassan (2016) about media uses and gratifications suggests that 90.8% respondents have been using TV and radio for information and 28.3% for education purpose, while 60.8% use media for entertainment. Among the media users, 92.5% claim that e-media is used for political awareness while 61.7% claimed that the political shows provide them with much knowledge and awareness regarding the politics of the country. Consequently, the second goal of this study is to find out the information seeking habits of the Pakistani millennial. Stockwell's (2006) study about news media endorses strong relationship between media and democracy as media is a vital source for debates and opinion in a democratic society. Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart (2007) found that the information disseminated through media is a major source in shaping people's opinion and attitudes. Opinions and perceptions are developed on the quality of the content that media delivers. Many scholarly debates establish this fact that such content has also the potential to create latent effect on the politics and political thinking.

According to Garrett (2009) media has a strong relationship in building opinions and in influencing the outlook of the masses by providing them information on certain political issues. David (2009) on the other hand studies that the masses do receive information through media however, it is not always obligatory that masses do

build opinion through media. Therefore, the third objective of this study is to enlighten the media reliance of the Pakistani millennial. Rahman (2014) studied that TV is the main stream medium of mass communication in Pakistan which provides political information effectively. Johnson and Kaye (2000) studied the relationship of individual internet users, political information and credibility and found that traditional media is less credible as compared to the online magazines and newspapers. Therefore, this study aims at assessing the believability of the Pakistani millennial on social or traditional media.

Theoretical Framework

Mass communication has turned into an essential part of the economy. Mass communication in Pakistani society is tri-dimensional that is helping people to get information, education and entertainment. The media is said to be the fourth pillar of the state that plays an important role in opinion building and it reflects the society while serving as a mirror. Xenos and Becker (2009) suggest that media has a key role in pointing out and explaining the ineffectiveness of a political system and incompetency of the politicians so as to improve it. Electronic media is an effective mode of communication that consists of both TV and radio. Through these forums, more knowledge is being disseminated to the audiences.

Many researchers found that there are a lot of changes between old and new media. Aelst (2017) found that in many political programs on media there is a significant impact of political information on the participation of voters. These days the quality and system of political communication is very much different and better than the old media. Cook (1998) proposes that influential

politicians are demonstrated powerful on media which creates a double dose of their power. Politically dynamic voices, especially young voters, who utilize the mass media to express their opinions and sentiments, are moving far from impartial news locales and moving close to the spaces where content matches to their own political perspectives. James (1984) describes that the press is significantly more than an outlet of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling readers what to think about. It manipulates the opinions of public on their issues which are mostly sensitive issues that create a frustration in public about the government.

Khan (2013) found that with regard to stimulation of mass communications in Pakistan, there is no relationship between age groups and wellspring of mass communications stimulation. Happer (2013) found that organization of any event or public speaking is also another kind of mass media. Vahlberg (2010) surveyed about media habits of young people and found 33 million teenagers with the age group 13 to 19 in the United States. This demographic wields tremendous influence beyond the sheer mass, their parents, culture and their peers at large. Also, year's formative nature has implications of everything from the consumer packaged goods marketing to the self-governing process.

Zulqarnain (2017) in a survey with 1383 sample, found that majority of media users (40.6%) were in the age group of 21-25. With reference to need gratifications and media preference, 37.8% preferred the social media in order to seek the information. While traditional media users were 34.9%. For both soft and hard news,

the usage of the social media was seen highest i.e. 53.9% and 32 % respectively for only soft news. However, the usage of traditional media is highly significant for the hard news 42.0%. Also results show that social media or traditional media are more concerned to know that what is happening in their vicinity as 31.4% were more interested in knowing about their surroundings. Second priority of the social media users is entertainment i.e. 27.33% followed by 23.2% for disaster and relief activities news.

BGR Energy Systems India (2015) reported that young consumers prefer the mobile devices over traditional media for information i.e. TV and radio as source of entertainment as well as current affairs and in the coming years this trend is poised to surge. Further the report mentions that the internet is for both news and entertainment accounting for 40 percent and 45 percent of the space. Mobile access is dominated with a 33 percent of millennial (new generation consumers) in the first instance for news consulting mobile (compared to just 7 percent through a fixed connection). For entertainment and leisure information (just 9 percent for fixed connections) 36 percent are using the same platform. One third of the respondent turning directly to the social media e.g. Facebook and twitter etc. The study also explains the declining significance of information related to traditional platforms as a primary source of information, with respect to the entertainment and subject of leisure particularly. There is an increased trend towards mobile content studies in India that is already under way as 63 percent of mobile users are comfortable with advertising of mobile as they are with online advertising and television. However, the study reports that only 3.1% of Indian millennials consider the brands that advertise

on TV as being modern, as compared to those brands advertised on smartphones are considered to be twice as modern, with same quality.

According to the Hunter (2015), young people don't have any loyalty to political parties as well as news organizations. They are more interested in using digital platforms across the globe. He further said by adding Hallam remarks that both new and also traditional media play a fundamental role in order to examine that how young people engage with politics, but this is a shared role. Nulty (2016) study analyzed media consultation patterns during elections and found that during elections, TV remained the peak and top platform people turn to.

Theoretical Framework

As the basic focus of this study is to find out the information seeking habits, media reliance and believability on the medium therefore the uses and gratification theory is closely related to this study as (Blumler and McQuail, 1969; McLeod and Becker, 1974) explain that this theory was also in practice to observe the politics and the political messages campaigns. There is large extensive literature about the relationship of media usage and gratification, with reference to traditional media and social media usage patterns. Therefore, this study partially employs uses and gratifications theory as the basic goal is to find the users trends and their reliance on medium in a comparison between social and traditional media.

Methodology

This study is quantitative in nature and survey method is used for data collection. Through convenient sampling technique, 190 questionnaires were distributed among the students of media

studies from the two private universities; SZABIST University and Riphah University. Before administrating the questionnaire, it is made sure that all the respondents have been using both traditional and social media for quite some time.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

Primary Source			
Social Media		Traditional Media	
152		38	
Information Seeking Habits			
Political	Show biz	Science & Tech	Inter Affair
79	63	27	21
Media Reliance for Political Information			
Social Media		Traditional Media	
137		53	
Believability on Source of Information			
Social Media		Traditional Media	
130		60	
Influence on Political Opinion			
Social & Traditional Media		Friends & Family	
79		111	

The results show that 152 respondents are the ones who use social media as their primary source of information. This study is conducted from millennial and it was made sure that they are the users of both traditional and social media but they prefer social media as their primary source. It is evident from literature that usage of social media has increased due to easy access to mobile devices that can be one reason. The low prices and easy access to mobile devices and internet have greatly enhanced the use of social media as preferred medium for seeking information. The findings

illustrate that respondents tend to seek political and showbiz news more as compared to science and international news, respondents of this study are millennials who prefer social media as their primary source of information. Teenagers are curious beings and what interests them, they follow it. That is the reasons that millennials are more attracted to political and entertainment news. In Pakistan, political groups engage people through social media to develop favorable attitude towards their political party, which no doubt effects young generation to gather political information from social media and to participate in the discussions. The results also show that majority of the respondents depend on social media for the access of political news and with time reliance on social media has become a stronger predictor as compared to traditional media. The active participation of political groups on social media mostly on Facebook and twitter has made them popular platforms among youth for political news, which is also endorsed by this study. In addition

The findings confirm that millennial trustworthiness is more on social media as compared to traditional media. Majority of the respondents (130) believed in the news from social media. Political content on social media is more used and greatly trusted by the youth which shows increasing believability on social media. However, it is also found that respondents tend to influence more from friends and family as compared to media when it comes about formation of political opinion. On the other hand, the percentage of media as source of political opinion making is also encouraging, which shows that social and traditional media also contribute in making up minds of millennial for political views. In youth, the

opinion making regarding politics through social media has improved over the years after its break through. Yet other factors like peers and influential friends with knowledge contribute more to make up political views amongst youth.

Conclusion

Social media has become important factor in millennial lives for seeking information. People are influenced by media content and their individual predispositions effect on how they exercise the information accessed from the media. The study has shown that the youth of Pakistan is more interested in the news of politics than the news of showbiz, science, technology and of international affairs. Although to a certain extent it is proved that media is effecting the youth of Pakistan who are actively taking part in it. The modern media is halfway involved in all of the processes, and it has particularly involved young people.

As results show that youth is becoming more habitual of using social media which is making it a preferred medium not only for access of general information but largely for political information, which is eventually contributing in political opinion formations. Though interpersonal communication and group communication also contribute in formulating opinion however, media portrays a broader picture. Media not only provides information but also creates awareness with respect to politics. Therefore, it is concluded that both traditional and social media are playing a key role in disseminating political information, shaping perceptions, formulating opinions cultivating political attitudes and beliefs however, youth is more inclined towards using social media for political content. The use and believability of social media

particularly with reference to political content increases because of the transactional communication, easy access, and active engagement.

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