

## **A comparative study of traditional and social media consumption patterns among youth**

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### **Abstract**

This research study examines the consumption trends of media by the youth of Lahore. It investigates how both traditional and social media are being used by the youth and how much time they give to each media. A survey method was employed to collect information from 250 respondents who were active users of media. The study concluded that both social and traditional media are consumed by the youth, however, social media is most popular among the youth and various reasons are accounted for its popularity.

*Keywords: Youth, traditional media, social media, consumption patterns*

### **Introduction**

This study explores consumption patterns of media among youth of Lahore, Pakistan. Media has performed a significant role in converting the world into a global village. It has vital importance and cannot be alienated from our life. It has an ability to influence our society by reaching a large number of audiences with powerful messages. Youth is considered to be a significant part of any society and it consumes the media of its choice. The power, consumption and technical advancement of media can be viewed as the most distinctive aspect of our era. Be it the conventional media (TV,

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newspapers, radio) or social media (facebook, twitter), both play an important part in our lives. Media is a major source of information and enjoyment, consumed by the people. Throughout the past years, media has made progress appreciably. With the advancement in media, people are constantly looking for modern and easier ways of communication to gain more knowledge about the world around them. Previously, people used traditional media to get information, but with the passage of time the youth specifically uses various types of digital media or social media as a source of communication.

The rapid increase of the social media usage by youth has led to a decrease in the popularity and usage of other media sources. Struggling media sources include television, radio, newspaper and magazines. Due to the popularity and availability of everything on the social media, the average time of young people online has also increased. It is also obvious that young people are still watching television, listening to radio and reading publications but this usage is quite less as compared to the past. Youth has played a fundamental role in the growth of social media. At present a wide variety of social media tools are in use by the youth such as blogging tools, media sharing tools, social networking sites, wiki, and forums.

### **Literature Review**

Callejo (2013) explores the type of media mostly preferred by adults and youth in Spain. The overall media utilization among youngsters is 12.8 % per day and television is found to be the most utilized medium. Among the population, 60.6 % are found to be the average consumers of media and the remaining 39.4 % were the consumers of

other mediums. In the light of the above findings, it can be concluded that with regard to the consumption of media youth is not a consistent group but factors such as age, sex, qualification and other social aspects of young generation are very important in the selection and utilization of diverse media.

Saleem (2013) in her study found the impact of social networking websites (SNWs) on youth's real life contacts. The study finds out whether extreme usage of SNWs disengages the youth with their real life close relations due to an increased interaction with online friends. The findings revealed that a strong correlation exists between the usage of social media sites and solitude. Similarly, it is found that the heavy users of social media live more isolated lives.

Chadha and Chhabra (2012) in their study analyze the close competition between TV and internet in order to catch the attention of consumers especially the youth. The results revealed that the most preferred medium among the Haryana youth is "traditional media" due to its affordability and expensive rates of internet service. They further explained that with the expansion and growth in ICTs the preferences of young people are varying. The youth does not want to use only one particular media instead want to use a variety of mediums gradually with each passing day.

Ibold and Adams (2012) discuss in their article the different functions of various media types and compare old with new media. They favor the new media (social media) due to its variety of popular features and utility in the lives of individuals and suggest that soon this fast moving media will beat traditional media like television,

radio, magazines etc. They further add that social media provides people lots of things to interact and share with; however; the social media is facing the challenges of authenticity, reliability and objectivity. Knight (2012) explores media preferences of youth in one of the leading universities of Canada and concludes that both traditional and social media are consumed by the youth on the basis of their gratifications and choices. Wok, Idid and Misman (2012), examine the popularity of social media and how it is used for information-sharing activities by the young people of Malaysia. They also suggest that social media is popular among the youth particularly for sharing information. The study explores which social media sites are popular among the youth, for what purpose the youth consumes social media sites and the categories of information sharing activities available on social media sites. Survey findings of the 17-30 years old youth of the country indicate that the young generation uses social media 5-7 times a week to share information including personal information. Results also reveal that youth uses social media more for sharing negative information as compared to positive information.

According to Nielsen (2009) despite the emergence of social media networks, young children use "television" as a part of old media. In fact this trend is at an increase and has been for the last five years as the time utilized by teenagers on television increased by 6%. They do use internet but the ratio of using internet is higher among adults as compared to teenagers. Instead they prefer to watch television advertising (TV ads) than virtual online videos. This trend of viewing virtual videos is higher among adults with 25 to 34 age

groups. Roberts and Foehr's (2008) study focuses on the most consumed media among individuals. They observe that the use of any media and its experiences differ with sex, age, community and social and psychological factors. They suggest that the young generation is more aware about media messages due to the emergence of digitalized new media however it is not substituting traditional media such as the radio, TV, newspapers etcetera rather both mediums are being utilized side by side.

Ferle, Edwards and Lee (2000), in their article examine the utilization of conventional media and the internet by teenagers. They view teenagers as the cyber generation because they are being groomed in a universally connected globe and spend approximately 65% of their time online. Their research includes how teenagers use each media and how medium options differ by actions and desires.

Tapscott (1998) maintains that digital media is determining the psyche of the youth. Since television is not an interactive medium and delivers messages in one way passively as compared to internet, young consumers tend to use internet and social media, owing to its two-way quick communication. Youth has different dynamics and vary from each other on the basis of classes, ethnicities, faith and societal perceptions; therefore they can select contents on the internet as per their choices.

The above literature review establishes that whether it is conventional media or social media, both have their own significance and functions. Despite the fact that new media is popular across the globe, due to its peculiar features, traditional media continues to have its own benefits which cannot be undermined.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The present study is carried out in the light of the “Uses and Gratification Theory” developed by Blumler and Katz in 1974. The theory explains that consumers of media are active users and play a pivotal role in choosing and utilizing any media that best accomplishes their various wants or requirements. The theory believes that media users have alternating choices to satisfy their desires. Mainly there are three goals in developing uses and gratifications concept:

- To examine how individuals consume various types of media to fulfil their needs. “What do people do with media?”
- To explore the major causes as to why people make use of media.
- To determine the pros and cons of media utilization by persons.

According to the theorists there are four kinds of satisfactions:

- Information- people use media in order to know about the global affairs and community.
- Own personality- to check one’s own attitudes and behaviours.
- Incorporation and public communication- people utilize it to get familiar with one another.
- Recreation- people make use of media for entertainment, amusement or to just pass their time.

Katz, Gurevitch and Haas have defined five different categories of needs. These categories are as follows:

*Rational desires:* Community members use several forms of media for attaining awareness and information. Few of them have logical requirements to gain understanding e.g. educational contents on television, for obtaining education; information they get from news

and also open expression of opinion in discussion boards on social media.

*Emotional desires:* It incorporates all types of feelings, gratification, and other gestures and so they use a wide range of media to gratify their emotional wants.

*Individual incorporative wants:* It is a desire based on self-worth. People utilize different channels to assure their position, get integrity and become stable.

*Societal Incorporative wants:* It covers the desire to meet people especially close relations like family units, peers and dealings among the general public.

*Anxiety free desires:* Persons at times employ different media as tools of distraction as well as to alleviate anxiety.

The theory suggests that users of media make their own decision about which media to choose and which to leave. Accordingly they fulfill their variety of needs. The theoretical framework supports the considerations of the study and focuses on the selection of media by adolescents for the fulfillment of their various desires. In the past, traditional media was the only source of entertainment, information and news gathering but with the advancement of technology young people have a wide range of media available including social media that best satisfies their needs. They now consume different media depending on their needs, easy access and availability. Amongst the young generation, few use traditional media (TV, newspapers and magazines) for awareness while others use different social media sites, read blogs online or take part in discussion forums to get information about different things.

Since the utilization of media by the youth differs from each other similarly their desires also vary. Some people make use of media for diversion and for recreation whereas others utilize it for educational reasons or for social contact. Hence, it only depends on the individuals, which media they like to use to satisfy their needs.

### **Research Method**

Quantitative method is applied as it is a more coherent and data-led approach which offers an evaluation of what people think from an arithmetical and statistical point of view. Quantitative research can assemble a great sum of statistics that can be simply structured and operated. It employs methods such as questionnaires, surveys and polls. In this particular study the researcher has selected a survey method to have a comparative analysis of both media. The population for this research study consists of male and female students of four educational institutes of Lahore. These include; Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore College for Women University, Punjab University and Forman Christian College. The institutes are selected for having a large number of academic youth. Convenience sampling is applied since the process requires no orderly system to select the number of cases (people).

A total of 250 cases, both male and female are drawn from four renowned academic institutions of Lahore with equal ratio i.e. 125 male and 125 female with age bracket of 19-24 years. A questionnaire is constructed for gathering data to evaluate traditional and social media consumption trends amongst the youth of Lahore. The questionnaire included 20 close ended questions and is designed in a



manner that is comprehensible by the respondents.

The collected data is processed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to make valid comparisons and evaluations.

### **Pre-testing and Reliability**

Pre-testing is the prospect to see what questions work well, what questions sound odd, what questions can be removed and what needs to be included. The survey questions are pretested on a sample of 25 respondents to check the reliability of the instrument. The term reliability refers to the dependability and uniformity of a measure. The numerical approach to approximating consistency differs depending upon the rationale of the measure. Reliability of the items of questionnaires is tested by conducting the test of "Cronbach's alpha." This test is a measure of central consistency. It is considered to be a measure of scale dependability. The formula is not a mathematical experiment. It is a coefficient of uniformity. The constancy figures of the present study shows that the value of Cronbach's alpha is 0.651, which is around 0.7. The values 0.8 and 0.9 are considered excellent whereas the value of 0.5 is also acceptable. Hence, the instrument used for the study is reliable.

### **Findings**

H<sub>1</sub>: Traditional media and social media are equally consumed by the youth.

H<sub>2</sub>: Traditional media and social media are not equally consumed by the youth.

The result of P-value(.000) shows that alternative hypothesis is

accepted at 5 % level of significance and void supposition is discarded. Therefore, an alternative hypothesis of significant association between traditional and social media (independent variable) and youth (dependent variable) is proved.

H<sub>2</sub>: Social media is more popular than traditional media among the youth.

H<sub>0</sub>: Social media is less popular than traditional media among the youth.

The result of P-value is significant (.000) that shows alternative hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of significance and other invalid assumption is refuted. Therefore, a working proposition of significant correlation between social media (independent variable) and youth (dependent variable) is proved.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

This study aimed to find out the consumption patterns of media by the young generation. The present study found out the way young people interact with different forms of media and the time they like to spend across traditional and social media. Moreover, the research examined the medium which was given more preference by the youth and which was more popular among them.

According to the findings of the study youth interact with media for a number of reasons. For instance they consume various media depending on their needs e.g. for entertainment, for news and information, for communication, for relaxation and so on. But the results of the study show that youth mainly use traditional media for

entertainment and for gathering information. Social media is also used for direct access to information, pictures and video sharing sites, discussion forums and for communication with friends and family. Additionally the results of the study show that between conventional and new media, the widely used medium amongst youngsters is social media. A number of reasons are accountable for its popularity and usage such as easy access, fast updates; easy contact with friends and for entertainment purposes. According to the youth traditional media lack all these factors and that is why its use is declining amongst the youth. The findings of the research questions show much time youngsters spend on each medium, demonstrating that before the arrival of social media majority of the young people on average used to spend 1-2 hours or more than 4 hours on the traditional media like television, newspaper, magazines and radio. However, with the advent of social media greater part of the young generation now spends less than an hour on traditional media. Therefore, there is a drastic change and decline in the consumption of traditional media. The popularity of social media shows that majority of the youth spends 3-4 hours or more than 4 hours on social media. Moreover, the result regarding significance of both media for the adolescents reveals that new and old media both are important for young people and one cannot deny their significance. Traditional media is important because it's the oldest form of media and provides reliable information to its audience, which social media lacks. Whereas social media is vital for the youth because in this technologically complex era, where everything is getting advanced with each passing day they need a medium which helps them in their

academic activities and also in their routine life.

In this regard findings of the present study demonstrate that social media and traditional media are not equally consumed by the youth in today's era. The study also reveals that the time spent on various forms of traditional media have decreased from 4 hours to less than an hour. The use of social media dominates all other forms of media that are being used on a daily basis by the youth. Studies have supported the fact that there is a drastic decrease in the consumption of traditional media with the arrival of social media and on average there is an increase of 3-4 hours of time spent by youth online.

Social media is a two-way communication and provides one with the facility of getting in contact with anyone around the world. Social media also gives the youth a chance to know more about the world and its latest happenings. One main reason for social media being more popular among the youth than traditional media is its accessibility. Almost 62.4% youth of the present study, answered that social media is a more suitable and convenient media for them to use. 100% respondents of the present research believed that social media is more popular among the youth than traditional media.

Social media is used as a tool of learning as the findings show that almost 45% youth consumed the social media for educational purposes and for getting help in their assignments, projects, presentations etc. An interesting finding of the study is that despite the popularity of social media and decline in the use of traditional media youth still considered traditional media as the most reliable source of information and news gathering. The results of the study also show that 52% of the respondents prefer traditional media over

social media for gathering news and information and 62.4% of the respondents agreed that social media is not a trusted source of information in contrast to traditional media. Though the youth believes that social media has substituted the traditional media they also agree that television still maintains its position as the most utilized media by majority of the youth around the globe. The findings of the current study also uncovered that 88% of the respondents had television be the most widely used media among other forms of traditional media that they use and 89.2% of the respondents answered that television is still the most widely used media around the globe. However the use of media also varies with the demographics and psychographics like era, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status and psychological variables. For example in some parts of the world male majority outnumbers the female majority in the usage of social media. On the contrary females are heavy users of television programs and are listeners of different radio transmissions than the male users.

The popularity and usage of each medium exclusively depends on the young people and the needs that they want to gratify. As demonstrated by the 'uses and gratifications theory', people use media in order to satisfy their numerous wants. The young generation has a vast range of media available to them. The use of any form of media makes them heavy or moderate users of that media. Some young people use social media for information, education, and entertainment, while others use it for picture and video sharing sites, and discussion platforms. On the other hand a few use traditional media for news and information gathering or for

entertainment.

### **Conclusion**

In this contemporary age media has power over our lives. Individuals make use of diverse media for their numerous goals depending on their satisfactions. Hence, the media utilization completely depends on individuals. The methodology used for gathering data is survey. The universe for the present study was Lahore and the population was the youth of Lahore with age group of 19-24 and four different universities of Lahore were selected to assemble the data. The sample for the study was 250 respondents that included 125 males and 125 females. The tool for collecting the data was a questionnaire and statistical software of SPSS was used for interpretation of results. The results reveal that H1 and H2 both are accepted and the null hypotheses were rejected. Hence social media and traditional media both are consumed by the young generation but social media is more popular amongst the youth than traditional media.

The Uses and Gratification theory also supports the present study because according to the theory audience play a significant function in choosing and using the medium that greatly fulfill their wants and requirements. So in the light of this theory, the given research analyzed that people use both traditional and social media depending on their desires.

A variety of media is being used by the youth now days. Some still use television, radio newspapers as part of traditional media while others completely rely on social media such as social networking sites, media sharing sites etc. However, the development

of social media has reduced the consumption of old media among the youth. It does not mean that at the present time traditional media is no more in use by the youngsters. Previous studies have focused on whether the fame and utilization of social media is replacing the traditional media and lessening its use among young generation. This study focused on media consumption habits of youth as it examined that the younger people still make use of traditional media along with the social media. However, the time spent on social media is relatively high in contrast to the traditional media.

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