

Role of Media in Developing Political Perceptions of the People

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ABSTRACT

This research paper analyzes the role of Pakistani electronic media in creating political awareness and developing political perceptions of the people. With the advent of modern technology, the electronic media has provided more opportunities for the common man in connection with government's policies and obligations, state tasks, and human rights. All the above narrated developments have taken place due to electronic media. This paper starts with a review of role of electronic media that attempts to explain that how electronic media can play its role in creating political awareness among people and educate people politically. A convenient sample of 120 respondents was collected from the both sides with equal representation of both male, female and a well-structured questionnaire was administrated using face to face data collection techniques. The findings reveal that majority of the people rely on electronic media for political news and it influences people's perceptions and they are becoming politically aware by the media.

Keywords: *Electronic media, Influence of media, Political perception of people*

Introduction

Communication is necessary for every individual. Through communication we share our culture, society and socio economic perspectives (Dwivedi, 2013). Media is a tool of communication. It plays a key role in our daily life. It is the main source of information. Mass media has different mediums to communicate like print and electronic media (Ali, 2011).

Print and electronic media plays a crucial role in modern society. Media is the fourth pillar of the state as it not only provides information but also educates, entertains and shapes the ideas & opinion of the people. The influence of media in our lives is immense, it is not only a source of entertainment but it also helps in forming our perceptions on major issues of social, political and economic importance. Electronic media help in creating awareness related to current affairs in an era of information. The effect of media in our lives cannot be ignored. Our opinions, thus, are not our own but what the media wants us to have. The highly sophisticated, commercialized media knows how to influence the human psyche. It plays an important part in revealing corruption and creating awareness against social evils and other sort of unhealthy practices in the society. It functions as a window to the outside world, and possesses the ability to shape people knowledge, attitudes, and voting behavior (Sadaf, 2011).

Media specifically television and newspapers keep their readers and viewers informed with new updates and developments. Usually it's a major source on which citizens relies for information. As Pippa Norris states the belief of liberal theorists in her book:

“The existence of an unfettered and independent press within each nation is essential in the process of democratization, by contributing towards the right of freedom of expression, thought and conscience, strengthening the responsiveness and accountability of governments to all citizens” (Norris, 2008).

Political parties also rely on media channels to identify public demands and problems, their patterns of behavior, attitudes towards politics and opinions concerning different political issues. Political parties attempt to make such policies that can generate maximum support among masses for them and so use media as one of major source to be aware of their preferred objectives. If media is not free it can also be misused by political actors to mobilize support for their preferred policy than of public (Javaid, 2014).

Role of Electronic Media

Media technologies have been changing day by day especially after the invention of T.V. It has become the most powerful source of information and entertainment. Through the satellite we have easy access to the world information. Today media especially the internet and T.V have become the main source of political news, immediate updates on different political issues, world occasions and more importantly the development of politics in the world (Mahsud, 2011). Media increases awareness by disseminating views and other information regarding important issues and present the reality of society. Each and every time we see media around us whether watching TV, accessing online books, listening radio, reading newspapers, etc. The only purpose is to gather knowledgeable material and information. In that entire scenario media plays a very responsible role for the society (Dwivedi, 2013).

Media is an important tool for youth to get knowledge about the political and economic system in Pakistan (Rehman, 2013). Media is considered to be a powerful instrument for education which can help students to realize their creative talent optimally and skill fully. Different educational programs which media presents give attention to creative educational skills of students, and increases more skills among students. Courtesy of media, people are now aware of their rights, government policies and economic ups and downs (Dwivedi, 2013).

With the passage of time media and its impact on social order has begun with the development of technology. People get information through broad communications sources, for instance, radio, TV, internet, newspaper etc. People needs new information for many reasons: it can be utilized to entertain and also to formulate decisions and generate opinion. Entertaining programs would be used mostly to amuse people in their hectic daily life. Media educate people about their moral values, their civil rights, religious obligations and so on. In the present time

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of globalization, mainstream of people in our society rely on information and communicate with others to stay connected with the globe and over every day exercise for instance, vigor care, socialization, entertainment, Voyaging, education, and anything that we need to do (Mughal, 2013). This is important enough that a medium apparently invested to help remedy the imbalance and inequalities of society. The media educate people about women's equality, by telecasting different programs on women empowerment and the present role of women in society (Dwivedi, 2013).

Functions of Media

(Rehman, 2014) identified major function of media in his study Increasing Role of Media in Pakistan.

- Reporting of the things which really happen
- Giving information to the people
- The Higher function is encouraging awareness among the overall population about socio-political and monetary issues, about flaws of authority, giving them option to evaluate the strategy being applied.
- Essentially, to create awareness.

Positive and Negative Impacts of Electronic Media

People can easily access global information. It not only increases their world knowledge but also advance technology has multiple effects both negative and positive on people's perception (Oak, 2016). Media analyze the government actions and take opinions from experts in favor of the government or against the government. Media anchors raise the voice of the people and put across the real point of crisis to them and try to sort out their problems. It also presents our government's development project on the international level for foreign investments. Media represent new business trends and offer new opportunities for the learners who are working on the machinery. Through advertisement, it gives advantage to the people to buy new and reliable things and also creates competition in the market among various companies like mobile phones, computer accessories, cosmetic etc.

Today's media has impact on the youth. Television, computer, video games and long range informal communication all have impact on teen's life with the exposure of different media outlets because they can create awareness among people about society and their surroundings. Cultural and political awareness is essential for a generation for grooming or for creating social responsibility. Most of the time, media is frequently reprimanded for its sting operations. But it should not be forgotten that it brings the truth into light. There are so many examples of news media giving voice to the neglected and poor people. It serves as the communication medium between the government and common man by imparting government policies to all individuals and become the voice of people and reaches to the government representatives.

Media exposes many of scandals, corruption cases, crimes and acts of abuses in front of the world. Corrupt people, criminals and those who exploit others, all

dread the law and also the media which can uncover their reality (Oak 2016). But the question is: how much critically do we judge the truth in reality shows and the reality behind genuine stories? People don't think, they trust. They don't judge, they get influenced and that is what is meant by media influence. Media power is a stern threat to them if they do anything wrong (Oak, 2015).

People Perception

Perception means the way you think about or understand something. Perception is the way of understanding of acoustic information in order to symbolize and understand the surroundings (Kravitz, 2015). The definition of perception includes recognition and sensory information. It also contains our respond to the information and how we use that information in order to interact with the environment. Perception permits us to focus and convert it in to something meaningful (Cooper, 2017). Perception not only creates our experience of the world around us, it allows us to act within the environment (Cherry, 2016). Social phenomena are known as public perception; it can be seen as a distinction between an outright truth which is based on realities and a virtual truth which is formed by popular opinion and also by the media reporting. All the politicians' corporations and celebrities confront the same scrutiny by the general people they serve and it is exceptionally hard to defeat a negative perception (Cooper, 2017).

A clear example was seen in 2008 US Presidential campaigns when both applicants faced difficult people perception issues. On the one side, Republican candidate, John McCain was often represented by the media outlets as being very old for the position and excessively sensible politically, making it impossible to speak to his whole political party. Democratic candidate Barak Obama had also experienced issues with people perceptions. Obama was depicted as an Ivy League elitist or inadequate commander in chief. Both candidates faced different negative perceptions, so they used different tactics like media interviews and public speeches to overcome these negative perceptions. People at large get enough precise information in order to frame a general assessment of a public personality, industry tycoon or celebrities without depending on tenuous gossip. For instance, people perspective of the tobacco industry is generally negative. Public perception recommends that the owner of Tobacco Company acts in favor of profits over people health and safety (Durant, 2012).

Media plays a very important role in developing people perceptions. The talk shows has brought more development and changes in people perceptions (Anwar, 2011). Nowadays these talk shows and political programs in which the problems of common men are discussed are quite valuable. These programs are simply effective (Ali, 2011). Our observations and beliefs interpret our reality. Perceptions depend on whatever situation we faced with people, circumstances which we face from physical environment and other individuals' attitudes towards other things. There's a strong link between our belief and our reality because what we want to see comes from our perception. Law of attraction shows us that our conviction drives our reality. If we need to change anything about our present reality we should need to work on changing our convictions and then our perceptions (Cadavid, 2015).

Role of Electronic Media in Developing People Political Perceptions

A key role played by the media is forming opinion. It has the power to develop people's view in the positive or negative sense. Media not only provide political news, it also provides national and international level knowledge and information. It provides information on all issues and happenings; it provides a path to people for making their judgments and developing perceptions. Earlier, it was impossible to change people views but with the progress of technology and development in journalism, it is now possible and easy to inform people wherever they live or belong. The whole world turning into the global village and now it is feasible to get information on every aspect of their choice. No doubt media is now able to set the scheme to produce desired effects on people perception. Media convert people thinking like "what people think of what people thinking about" (Sadaf, 2011, p.228). Media acting as an observer in society always questions governance-related issues, for example, corruption, brutality, terrorism and other issues which are related to education and health. Sometimes media do not play its role responsibly"(Rehman, 2014).

Freedom of press and media is the litmus test of democracy. As Mahatma Gandhi used to say, "If you did not have the freedom to go wrong, then you have no freedom" (Chkravarty, 2006, p. 201). Media contents also plays role in reshaping opinion of educated youth. Mass media have become the much influential in informing and developing perception and behavior of people. And mass media have the power to influence the perception of the educated youth. In Pakistan, media also emerges as a tool to educate the youth.

Mass media is a powerful tool in our country. And they have the ability to develop the perception of the people. But they are not providing the proper information. On the other side, mass media also entertain the society of Pakistan because people of Pakistan totally rely on media for entertainment and information (Ali, 2013).

Theoretical Perspective and its implication over Pakistani Society

Considering the prevailing situation in Pakistan i.e. the high saturation levels of media consumption and its reflection in the public attitudes as well as in political opinions suggests the implication of certain mass media theories such as Cultivation theory. This theoretical composition introduces and identifies the theory which makes clear why the investigation trouble underneath research prevails. It has also the set-theoretical foundation of the "Role of Media in Developing Political Perceptions".

This theoretical composition will be the design that could store for or perhaps service a new research on the basis of this study. Cultivation theory was developed by George Gerbner in 1967. The Cultivation theory suggests that media and in specific television shape or cultivate the ideas of social reality of the audience. The overall impact of immense television disclosure delicately and gradually constructs the views of individual and finally the entire culture. According to Gebner, the already existing norms and values are promoted by Media. This through upholding and promulgating these values links the individuals of society with one another. In Pakistan a larger portion of population relies on broadcast media such as television and radio to acquire information than newspaper (Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

Cultivation theory explains that how people's conceptions of reality are influenced according to exposure to television. The theory which is called George Gerbner's theory also known as Cultivation theory accentuates the effect of television viewing on the attitude of the audience. People who spend more time on TV are more influenced. Theory of cultivation looks at the mass media as a source of bringing change in people's opinion and society; people who watch television are more influenced and watch the world through the eyes of TV.

George Gerbner's cultivation theory suggests that this role can best be understood by establishing a correlation between effects and degree of exposure to the media. Gerbner made an attempt to chart the types of messages that are repeated on television and measure long-term cumulative effects on people perceptions. Political awareness can be utilized as a tool for developing a theory of political knowledge which can be useful to explain the emergence of political doings of a conceived concept (Khan, 2012).

This conceptualization of TV in our lives is the substance of George Gerbner's cultivation theory. Watching a lot of TV will be connected with a tendency to hold particular and different conceptions of reality; conceptions that are harmonious with the most reliable and invasive pictures and the importance of the medium may at first place, come to be so thoroughly sensible and plainly obvious to wonder what all the fuss is about. Cultivation study is the study of TV's independent contribution to people's conceptions of social reality.

Cultivation theory is that the individuals who spend more time sitting in front of TV are more likely to see the real world with the eyes of T.V. Cultivation theory is a core theory of media impact which has improved only since Bryant made his observations. Further he explains that media effect was distinct completely in terms of revolutionizing them. It means no effect no change. Cultivation is a significant theory; it's a theory of media's role in social systems to build consensus on position through shared terms of discourse and assumptions about priorities and values (Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

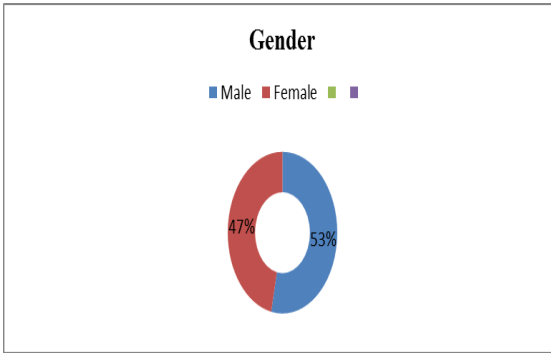
Methodology

This study is aimed at analyzing the impact of media on political perceptions of the people. In this research, perceptions of people measured through quantitative method and the questionnaire used as a tool to measure the perceptions. For this purpose four universities of Lahore were chosen as sampling frame according to convenience sample. In this study 120 respondents was chosen from these universities and 30 students were selected from each university through quota sampling. A valid questionnaire was prepared as the instrument of data collection. Questions were designed according to funnel format. The reason for choosing funnel format was that the questions were from general towards specific: first questions about general information than specific information were asked. Descriptive analysis such as percentage distribution analysis was made by using SPSS.

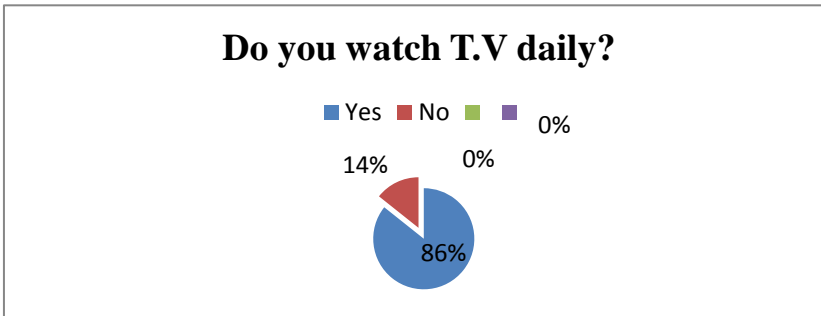
Results and Discussions

The respondents were male and female. The result shows that 53% of the respondents were male while 47% of the respondents were females from the selected universities of Lahore who participated in this survey.

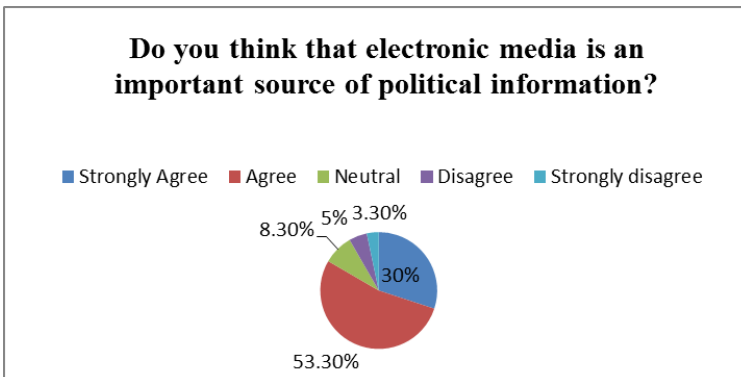
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There is 86% of selected population who watched television daily while 14% didn't watch television daily. The result shows clearly that people have a daily routine to watching television.

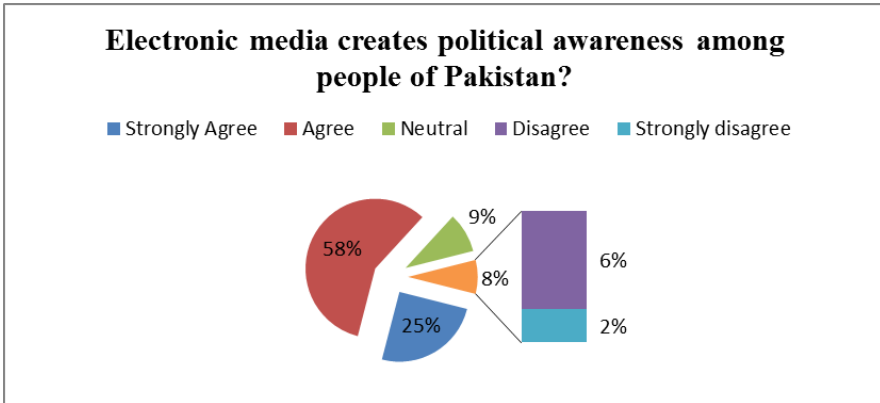


In order to inquire about the source of information that electronic media is an important resource of political information majority of the respondents (54%) agree that electronic media is an important source of information while 30% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement, 8% respondents partially, 5% disagree and only 3% strongly disagree. This result shows that majority of people consider electronic media is an important source of political information.

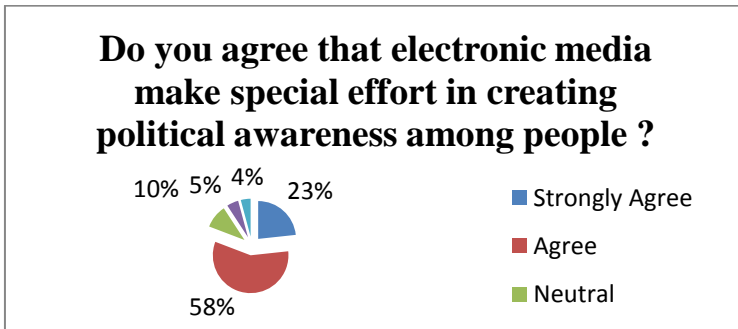


Further, asking the question that electronic media creates political awareness among people of Pakistan majority of respondents agree i.e. 58% while 25% strongly agree, 9% partially and 6% disagree while 2% strongly disagree with the

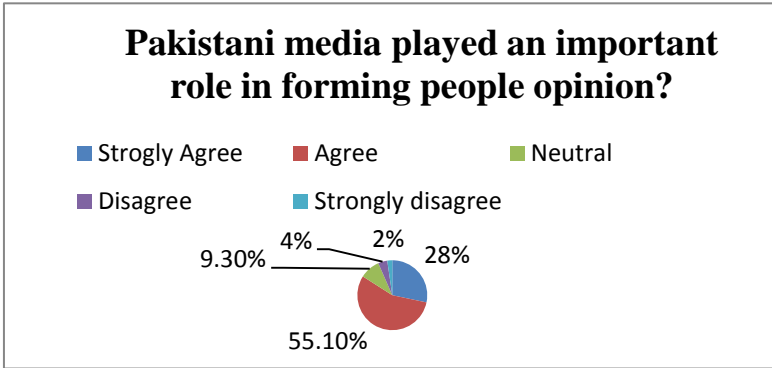
statement. The results show that electronic media create political awareness among people of Pakistan.



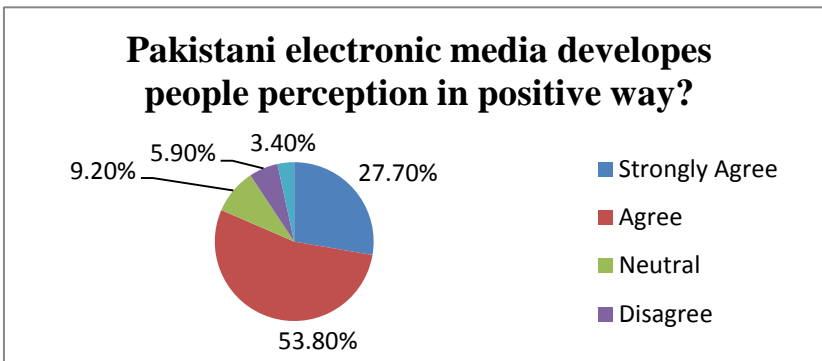
The majority of people agree that electronic media did a special effort in creating political awareness 58% agree and 23% strongly agree while 10% neutral and 5% disagree and 4% strongly disagree that media did not make a special effort in creating political awareness.



Upon asking the question that Pakistani media played an important role in forming people opinion 56% respondents agreed while 28% respondents strongly agreed that media played a significant role in forming people opinion. Only 10% partially and 4% strongly disagreed. The results show that a great number of people believe that media form people opinion.

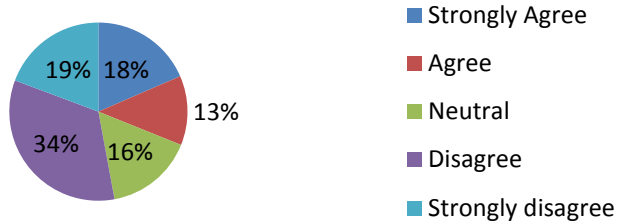


Upon asking question that Pakistani media develops people perceptions in positive way 54% people agree while 28% strongly agree while 9% partially and 6% disagrees that media play positive role in developing people perceptions. Only 3% strongly disagree. The stated result shows that majority of people agree that Pakistani media play a positive role in developing people perceptions.



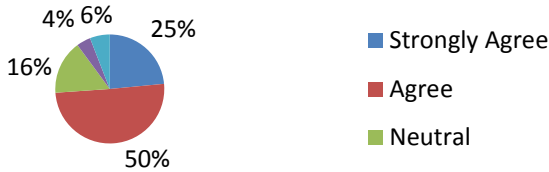
Responding to the statement that media play a negative role in developing public perceptions 34% people disagree while 18% strongly agree on that statement. 19% people strongly disagree and 13% agrees while only 16% people partially agree with this statement. The stated result shows that majority of people disagree that Pakistani media didn't develop public perception in a negative way.

Pakistani electronic media develops people perception in negative way?



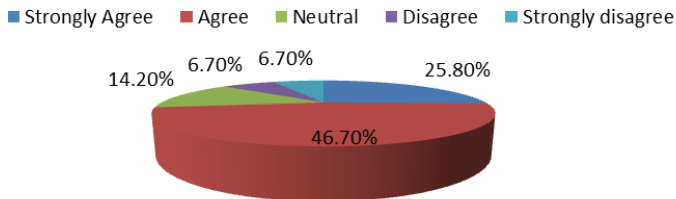
This question results shows that a majority of 50% people agree and 24% strongly agree that electronic media motivate people to cast votes; only 16% of the respondents neutral on this statement.

Electronic media motivate people to cast their votes?



The results on this question that people are now able to learn about their social and political rights through media 46% agree and 26% strongly agree that now they are able to learn their social and political rights; only 14% were neutral and 7% disagree and strongly disagree.

Do you agree that people are now able to learn about their social and political rights through electronic media?



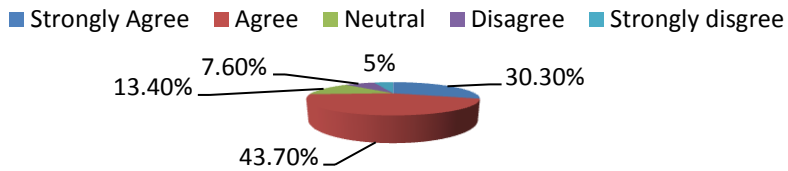
There are 49% of people who agree that electronic media programs extend their intellectual horizons and 29% strongly agreed; only 12% people partially agreed with the statement. The results show clearly that majority of people agrees that media enhance their intellectual skills.

Electronic media programmes extend your intellectual horizons?



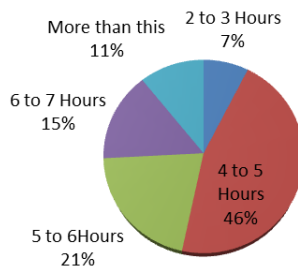
Upon asking a question that do you understand politics in a better way through media 44% of selected population agrees and 30% strongly agree only 13% people partially and 8% disagree. The above-mentioned statement results show that people understand politics in a better way through media.

Do you understand politics in a better way through news channel?



This study shows that people spent much time on watching television. 46% people watch 4 to 5 hours and 21% people watch 5 to 6 hours and 15% people watch 6 to 7 hours while 11% watch more than this. The result shows that people spent their quite time on watching television.

How often you spent time watching T.V?



Conclusion

Media has penetrated deep into our society through several channels. The majority of the people in urban areas uses media as the primary source of information and has high levels of consumption patterns or at least average for those even without having a keen interest in politics. This research paper was basically concerned to measure the role of electronic media in creating political awareness among people and develops their political ideas about politics. Majority of urban population, which utilizes towering level of information as a courtesy of media, tend to vote on the basis of performance and policy. Also they strongly believe that media does influence over citizens voting behavior and do agree with the stance of media over many of the matters. This shows there exists a positive relationship between the two as the more public is exposed to media. The more they are politically aware, updated the more they tend to poitically aware.

According to results media communicate with people and aware them about their voting rights and their social and political rights. Media present different political programs which are consider the main source of creating political awareness among people who take part in these programs and discuss politics with each other. Through these political programs now people can directly talk with political candidates during televised debates, citizens can make live calls during political talk shows and give opinions about political occasions and issues. All these developments clearly show that nowadays people political perception is developed through electronic media.

Suggestions

The news should be brought to audience without any addition of elements such as suspense, glamour or bias.

Media should promote programs such as civic education and voter's awareness because of its capability to reach audience and the potential to influence.

Instead of leg pulling all the media streams should promote a strong culture that encourages justice, positive deeds and public participation.

All the facts regarding political affairs should be placed in front of public in order to adequately enlighten them for a wise decision making.

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