

Run-through of Pakistani Media and its Impact in Quetta City:

By

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Abstract:

Media is now known as the big strength in any society. It not only informs, educate and entertain us but also derive us to know what is important in its eyes. Thus media plays a role of agenda setting. Media grasp a significant role in our society and have ample effects on the lifestyle of any individual. Hence, we can see that media in Pakistan seem uncertain from social responsibility due to commercial approach.

This paper sheds light on uncertain practices in Pakistani media and its influence on the social set up comprised of ethnic diversity of Quetta city. Moreover, the paper discusses the role of media as a responsible tool of social change among the society of Quetta.

Introduction:

Media are the main driving forces in all parts of the globe. In a democratic state, the mass media come from the liability of responsibility. How media fulfill the demands of responsibility is a topic of debate particularly in countries like Pakistan. Idealistically media have two functions: on one hand, to stress reliability and impartiality in the handling of ideas and issues of propaganda, on the other hand, to serve the interest of the general population as well as the special interest groups.

Mass media are a social product and as such have the moral obligation of accepting the responsibility that comes with such a significant role. However, research on Pakistani media reveals that there are still elements of irresponsible journalism such as sensationalism and violence among the mass media. Thus, unfortunately, now-a-days, Pakistani media is not exemplary ethical institution. (MM Shahid 1992)

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Media Practices in Pakistan:

Many codes of conduct for media have been framed and media have always been apparent by both its practitioners and its consumers as a duty with aiding the masses responsibility. The code of conduct for Media Broadcasters or Cable TV operators Programs by PEMRA is as under:

1. No program shall be aired which:
 - a. Passes derogatory remarks about any religion, sect, community, uses visuals or words contemptuous of religious sects and ethnic groups or which promotes communal and sectarian attitudes or disharmony.
 - b. Contains anything pornographic, obscene or indecent or is likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality.
 - c. Contains an abusive comment that, when taken in context, tends to or is likely to expose an individual or a group or class of individuals to hatred or content on the basis of race and caste, national, ethnic or linguistic origin, colour or religion or sect, sex, sexual orientation, age or mental or physical disability.
 - d. Contains anything defamatory or knowingly false.
 - e. Is likely to encourage and incite violence or contains anything against maintenance of law and order or which promotes anti-national or anti-state attitudes;
 - f. Contains anything amounting to contempt of court;
 - g. Contains aspirations against the judiciary and integrity of the Armed Forces of Pakistan;
 - h. Maligns or slanders any individual in person or certain groups, segments of social, public and moral life of the country;
 - i. Promotes aids or abets any office which is cognizable under the applicable laws;
 - j. Denigrates men or women through the depiction in any manner of the figure, in such a way as to have the effect of being indecent or derogatory;
 - k. Is against basic cultural values, morality and good manners;
 - l. Denigrates children;
 - m. Anything which tends to glorify crime or criminals;
 - n. Brings into contempt Pakistan or its people or tends to undermine its integrity or solidarity as an independent and sovereign country.
 - o. Contains material which may be detrimental to relations of Pakistan with other countries; or
 - p. Contains material which is against ideology of Pakistan or Islamic values.
2. Particular care should be taken to ensure the programs meant for children do not contain objectionable language or are disrespectful to their parents or elders.

3. Programs must be directed against the sanctity of home, family and martial harmony.
4. While reporting the proceedings of Parliament or the Provincial Assemblies, such portions of the proceedings of the Parliament and the Provincial Assemblies, such portion of the proceedings as the Chairman or the Speaker may have ordered to be expunged, shall not be broadcast or distributed and every effort shall be made to release a fair account of the proceedings of the Parliament or the Provincial Assemblies.

Advertisements:

1. Advertisements aired or distributed by a broadcast or cable TV station shall be designed in such a manner that it conforms to the laws of the country and is not offensive to morality, decency and religious sects of the people of Pakistan.
2. No advertisement shall be permitted which:
 - a. Promotes or supports sedition, anarchy or violence in country;
 - b. Is against any provisions of the constitution of Pakistan or any other law for the time being in force;
 - c. Tends to incite people to crime, cause disorder or violence or breach of law or glorifies violence or obscenity in any way;
 - d. Glorifies adultery, lustful passions or alcoholic drinks or the non-Islamic values;
 - e. Distorts historical facts, traditions of Pakistan or the person or personality of a National Leader or a state dignitary;
 - f. Fans racial, sectarian, parochial, regional or class hatred;
 - g. Promotes social inequality, militates against concepts of human dignity and dignity of labour;
 - h. Is directed against sanctity or home, family and marriage;
 - i. Is wholly or mainly of a religious or political nature;
 - j. Contains references that are likely to lead the public to infer that the product advertised or any of its ingredients has some special property or quality which is incapable of being established;
 - k. Contains indecent, vulgar or offensive themes or treatment; or
 - l. Contains material which is repugnant to ideology of Pakistan or Islamic values.
3. The goods or services advertised shall not suffer from any defects which are harmful to human health. Misleading claims about the goods shall not be made.
4. No advertisement which is likely to be seen by the children in large number should urge children directly to purchase goods of a particular brand or ask their parent to do so.

5. All advertisements must be clearly distinguishable as such and be separate from the programs and should not in any manner take the form of news or documentary.

The Ethical Code of Practice is formulated as under for the press for the purpose of its functioning in accordance with the canons of decency, principles of professional conduct and precepts of freedom and responsibility to serve the public interest by insuring an unobstructed flow of news and views to the people envisaging that honesty, accuracy, objectivity and fairness shall be the guidelines for the press while serving the public interest in any form of publication such as news items, articles, editorials, features, cartons, illustrations, photographs and advertisements; etc.-

1. The press shall strive to uphold standards of morality and must avoid plagiarism and publication of slanderous a libellous material.
2. The press should strive to publish and disclose all essential and relevant facts and ensure it disseminates is fair and accurate.
3. The press should avoid biased reporting or publication of unverified material, and avoid the expression of comments and conjecture as established fact. Generalization based on the behaviours of an individual or a small number of individuals will be termed unethical.
4. The press shall respect the privacy of individuals and shall do nothing which tantamount to an intrusion into private, family life and home.
5. Rumours and unconfirmed reports shall be avoided and if at all published shall be identified as such.
6. The information including picture, disseminated shall be true and accurate.
7. The press shall avoid originating, printing publishing disseminating any material, which encourages or incites discrimination or hatred on grounds of race, religion, caste, sect, nationality, ethnicity, gender, disability, illness, or age, of an individual or group.
8. The press shall not lend itself to the projection of crime as heroic and the criminals as heroes.
9. The press shall avoid printing, publishing or disseminating any material, which may bring into contempt Pakistan orbits people or tends to undermine its sovereignty or integrity as an independent country.
10. The press shall not public or disseminate any material or expression, which is volatile of article 19 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
11. The press shall rectify promptly any harmful inaccuracies, ensures that corrections and apologies receive due prominence and afford the right of reply to persons criticized or commented upon when the issue is of sufficient importance.

12. While reporting on medical issues, care must be taken to avoid sensationalism, which could arouse baseless fears or false hopes in the readers. Early research finding should not be presented as though they were conclusive or almost conclusive.
13. Sensationalism of violence and brutalities shall be avoided.
14. In the case of sexual offences and heinous crime against children juvenile, women names and identifying photographs shall not be published.
15. Confidentiality agreed upon at briefings and background interviews must be observed.
16. The press while publishing findings of opinion wholes and surveys shall indicate the number of people, geographical area on which the polls and surveys were conducted, and the identity of the polls-sponsor.

However, even with all the above mentioned code of conducts, the last 10 to 15 years have witnessed a rapid change in the Pakistani media scenario as for as violation of the court of ethics is concerned, giving birth to several underhand media practices.

In Pakistan, the media landscape has expended dramatically, the country has dozens of 24-hour news channels shoving for performance in crowded media markets and other entertainment channels. But vigorous competition has squeezed editorial standards. Networks pay little attention to the ethical norms in their rush to deliver a stream of sensationalism and scandals driven by ratings and the news agenda focused on violence, crime, sex and celebrity. The media's desire for more profit and market has seemingly overwhelmed the mission of responsible media content. Resultantly, the public trust seems to have been disappearing fast in the media content. Some scholars argue that the media need to earn enough to finance its professional obligations of gathering media content and then turning it into a consumable product before supplying it to the masses which is a tricky task and requires its share of finances. However, profiteering at the cost of media ethics and responsibility seems to have become the norm.

Theoretical Perspective

With the passage of time, thousands of theories have been formed on Mass Media to describe their role, objective or purpose and the profound impact they have on the society and the perceptions. Therefore, it is pertinent to take a look at few theories of mass media discussing the impact of the media on the perceptions and behaviour due to the media content.

The Aggressive Cues Theory:

The aggressive cues theory discusses that the frequent exposure to violence on television raised the excitement level in the viewers. This in turn, forms a catalyst to activate already learned behaviour resulting in

violent acts which might be repeated in real life settings. (Stanley J. Baran and Dennis K Devis Stanley J. Baran and Dennis K Devis, 2011)

Reinforcement Theory:

Similar to the aggressive cues theory is the reinforcement theory, which discussed that violence on television will reinforce behaviour already existing in an individual. However, there is likelihood that the aggressive individual may perceive violent behaviour as a real-life experience due to the violent tendencies. (Stephen Ray Flora, 2004)

The Observational Learning Theory:

As the name indicates the observational learning theory suggests that with observing the violent behaviour on television, individuals can learn aggression by only watching the violent shows on television. (David C Leonard, Learning 2002)

The Media Effects Theory:

The theory discusses the moral panic due to representations of sexual violence and deviant behaviour especially on the youth. Moral panic is a situation whereby a feeling develops that the situation is out of control somehow, therefore, might be a threat to the moral order. The media effects theory was first presented in 1920's by the Frankfurt School of Social Researchers due to the people's reaction to Nazi propaganda and the Hypodermic Model. (Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann, 2002)

Cultivation Theory:

The theory was developed by George Gerbner which discusses that the constant long-term viewing of TV content has measurable effects (perhaps small) on the audience's perceptions. Moreover, heavy television viewing establishes an exaggerated belief in the world to be materialistic and scary place. (James Shanahan and Michael Morgan, 1999)

The Magic Bullet or Hypodermic Needle Theory:

This theory refers to the idea that the media is like a drug that is one addicted to. The theory hold that the mass media have a direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audiences especially the mass media in the 1940s and 1950s were perceived as a powerful influence on the behaviour transformation and the mass media could not influence a very huge group of masses both directly and uniformly by directing at them or injecting in them the appropriate messages designed to evoke the required response.

Bullet or needle indicates the power of the flow of information from the sender to the receiver. The theory holds that the message is like a bullet which is fired from the gun of media into the viewer's head. It further discusses that media messages are inserted directly into an audience who is passive and is immediately influenced by the message. (Vir Bala Agarwal, VS Gupta, 2001)

The Spiral of Science Theory:

Elisabeth Noelle Neumann presented this theory regarding the impact of mass media producing the powerful effects on people and discusses the increasing effect if media crosses time as well as the experiencing of media messages almost all the time and the presentation of a consistent picture of the political world.

According to the Spiral of Silence, picture presented of the world by the media, impacts the minds and the masses perceive that they are in the minority, an assumption that makes them less likely to speak out about issues as a result, with time, as the silent masses remain silent, ideas that are held by minority of people start to dominate the political scenario. (Dennis McQuail, 2010)

Pakistani Media and Unethical Practices:

In a survey conducted by PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority), it was found that under the guise of investigative journalism some TV channels have gone overboard and have literally intruded public privacy.

It has been observed that since the 24-hour news channels cannot survive merely on news and current affairs programs they are hooked by advertisement and entertainment industry in order to contain their audiences. Thus influenced by these trends, the reporters, in the coverage of mishaps such as blasts and calamities try to entertain their audience by showing tragic footage which in turn violates the code of conduct.

The results of the online survey revealed that 697 out of 1025 respondents felt that local media spreads negativity, violence, is sectionalist and is sponsored by different stake holders.

A minority of 5%, approximately 51 people, felt that the government was effectively regulating the media in Pakistan. A majority of 79% of voters felt that the government is not effectively regulating the Pakistani media. Whereas the remaining 12% were unsure. (Newspaper)

In another study, it was revealed that on April 3rd 2009 a video was released on Pakistani television channels showing a 17-year-old girl being publically flogged. However, what the video released did unfold were debated on various levels raising questions about the authenticity of the video. The timing of the video, media responsibility in news making, and international and local conspiracies surrounding the “war on terrorism” and Pakistan. Concerns over media responsibility, were largely over the question of what makes news and why. Although the overall majority chose to raise their voice, rightly so, against the brutality of the public flogging act. There were voices that came up arguing that the media should be more responsible before blasting the television with an

unverified or rather, incomplete (taken to mean out-of-context) video (Fiza Fatima Asar, 2010)

Study and Findings:

Some survey samples were also used from the residents of different sectors of Baluchistan in the surveys on the mercenary of the Pakistani media. Primary Data Collection was based on Questionnaires and survey method with close-ended Questions. A total of 100 respondents were selected from Universities and a college in Quetta city.

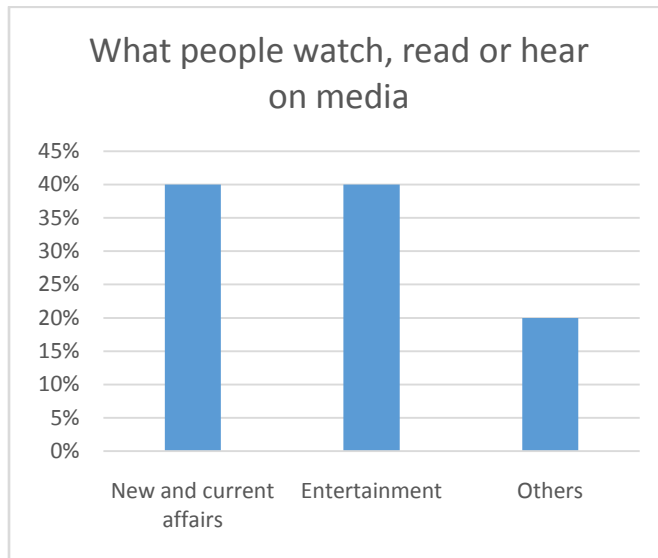
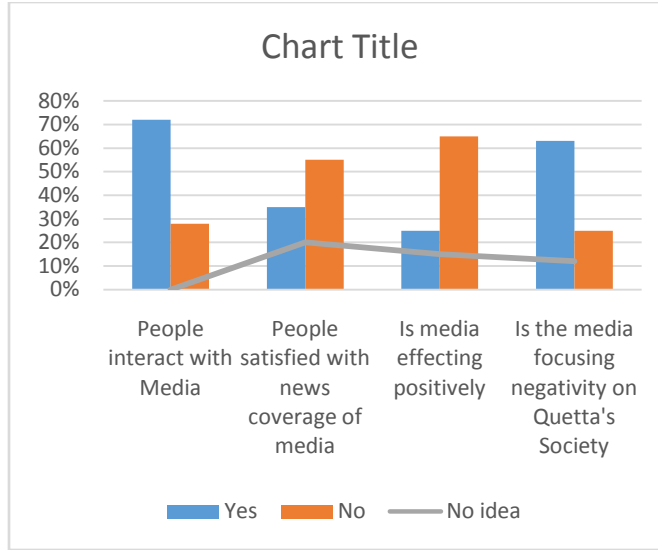
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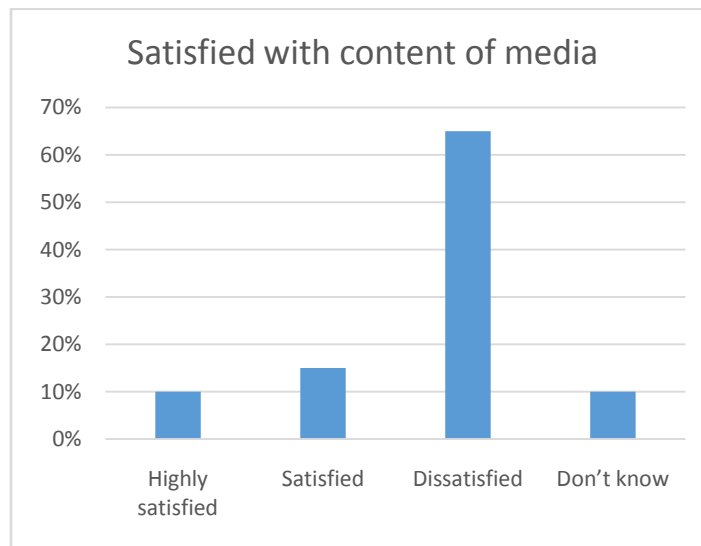
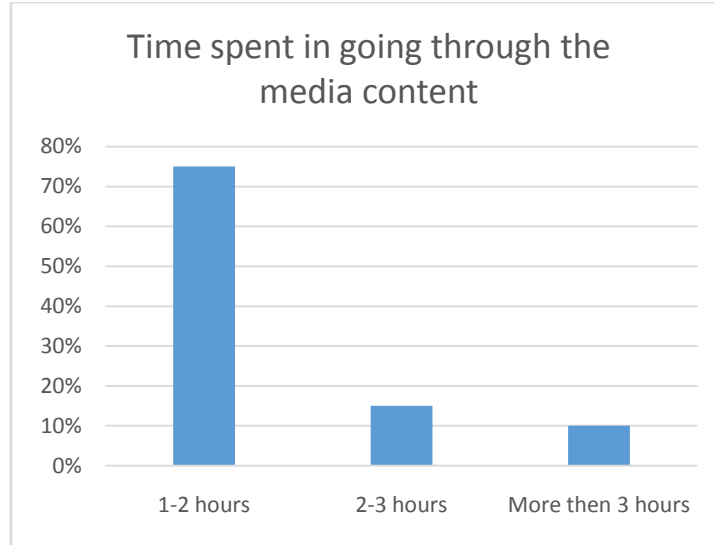
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1. Do you interact with Pakistani media?			
YES	No	No Idea	
72	28	-	
72%	28%	-	
2. Are you satisfied with the news coverage on Pakistani media?			
YES	No	No Idea	
35	45	20	
35%	45%	20%	
3. Is the media effecting people of Quetta positively?			
YES	No	No Idea	
25	65	10	
25%	65%	10%	
4. Do you think that the news and programs focus negativity in Society of Quetta?			
YES	No	No Idea	
63	25	12	
63%	25%	12%	
5. What do you watch or read or hear on the media?			
News and Current Affairs	Entertainment	Other	
40	40	20	
40%	40%	20%	

6. How much time you spend in going through the media content?			
1-2 hours	2-3 hours	More than 3 hours	
75	15	10	
75%	15%	10%	
7. Are you satisfied with the content of media?			
Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Don't Know
10	15	65	10
10%	15%	65%	10%
8. What is the result of these effects on the behavior of the masses in Quetta?			
Stop watching Pakistani Media	Continue watching Pakistani media with negative feelings	Don't know	
55	35	15	
55%	35%	15%	

Total sample size is 100.





Findings:

- Majority of the respondents encounter Pakistani media.
- Majority of the respondents read, hear or watch news on the media.
- Majority of the respondents consume the media for at least an hour.
- The media has profound effects on the minds of individuals.
- Many are highly dissatisfied from the media.
- Dissatisfaction is due to the negativity represents by the media.
- The negativity is due to commercialism.

- Many, discontinue consuming the media due to the portrayal of negativity.

Conclusion:

As the result of the above study and the findings, the media are highly accountable and put-off many viewers of Quetta with its negligent display of the content, it can be safely concluded that media do have enormous potentiality and at the same time are misusing this potentiality by enhancing on the run-through practices which are mainly due to the commercialism and high profit yielding factors. Although the media should not be labelled as good, bad or indifferent. Just as it is unfair to label humans by such categories.

Yet the media must realize the responsibility to the masses and the Baluchistan's society in general. To counter this issue, the journalist must work with other partners to remote the necessary action to strengthen the media ethics. The media can play a vital role in fulfilling its social responsibilities and self-regulating itself and therefore, becoming a forerunner of major social change.

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