

**GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON MEDIA,
POLITICS, IMMIGRATION, ADVERTISING,
AND SOCIAL NETWORKING**

EDITED BY YAHYA R. KAMALIPOUR

Global Perspectives on Media, Politics, Immigration, Advertising, and Social Networking

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Yahya R. Kamalipour

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Dedicated to my family members for their unwavering support,
encouragement, and unconditional love!

● *On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by recognizing that “the inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” It declares that human rights are universal – to be enjoyed by all people, no matter who they are or where they live.*

<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights>

A good leader can engage in a debate frankly and thoroughly, knowing that at the end he and the other side must be closer, and thus emerge stronger. You don't have that idea when you are arrogant, superficial, and uninformed.

—Nelson Mandela

The interaction of disparate cultures, the vehemence of the ideals that led the immigrants here, the opportunity offered by a new life, all gave America a flavor and a character that make it as unmistakable and as remarkable to people today as it was to Alexis de Tocqueville in the early part of the nineteenth century.

—John F. Kennedy

The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.

—George Orwell

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INTRODUCTION

I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

Nelson Mandela

This book contains selected papers presented at the Thirteenth Global Communication Association (GCA) Conference in Madrid, Spain, and the Fourteenth Global Communication Association Conference in Jaipur, India. Hosted by the Rey Juan Carlos University and the Manipal University Jaipur respectively, the conferences brought together scholars and graduate students from throughout the United States and the world.

During the two conferences, nearly one hundred scholars and graduate students presented their original research results on various topics and panels. Most of these were closely related to the themes of the conferences: populism, media, politics, and immigration in a globalized world, and digital inbound: internet communications and beyond. Also, the venues provided a unique opportunity for over two dozen graduate students enrolled in regional universities to present the results of their research projects to an international audience and receive valuable feedback from experts in the field of communication.

This multifaceted and multicultural volume contains seventeen papers, authored or co-authored by twenty-five scholars and doctoral students representing countries, which are thematically divided into the following three sections:

- Part one: immigration, marginalization, and identity
- Part two: media, politics, social networking, and education
- Part three: digital media, advertising, and globalization

About the Global Communication Association

A not-for-profit academic organization, the Global Communication Association was inaugurated in 2007 at the Shanghai University, China, and

since then has organized conferences around the world. The GCA intends to:

- foster and promote academic research in global studies
- promote academic collaboration among major universities around the world
- facilitate joint projects and research opportunities among scholars, researchers, and graduate students
- facilitate faculty research and exchange programs
- facilitate joint programs, grant opportunities, symposiums, and timely initiatives among centres, institutes, and global organizations
- explore the myriad opportunities and challenges in the areas of teaching, learning, communication development, globalization, mass media, and international cooperation
- organize annual conferences throughout the world

More specifically, the GCA provides an eclectic international platform for corporate executives, communication specialists, policymakers, academicians, graduate students, bureaucrats, political leaders, public relations practitioners, journalists, and co-related industry professionals to meet, interact, and generate new knowledge that should contribute to a more harmonious, understanding, peaceful, and tolerant global environment.

In the past, GCA conferences have been successfully organized across the globe, including in China, Canada, Germany, India, Malaysia, Oman, Poland, Russia, Spain, Zambia, and the United States. For information about past and future GCA conferences, visit the website www.globalcomassociation.com.

Considering today's interconnected and interdependent digital or information age, in which communication, facilitated by the internet and social media, plays a highly influential role in people's daily lives, you should find the diverse, multifaceted, and well-researched papers in this volume engaging, through-provoking, and informative.

Collectively, a diverse group of international scholars from throughout the world discuss many timely issues, including populism, mass media, immigration, politics, journalism, information flow, and social media in our contemporary and uncertain times.

As is normally the case in any edited volume, the writing styles vary and, unlike single-authored or co-authored books, do not flow seamlessly in a coherent manner. Nonetheless, they stand on their own and enhance the overall discourse around the activities and interventions of groups of actors,

including political actors, journalists, educators, and the members of various cultural communities.

This collection is an excellent supplement to senior and graduate-level courses in international communication, cultural studies, mass media, journalism, political communication, intercultural communication, and related subjects.

Yahya R. Kamalipour
Founding President, Global Communication Association
Professor of Communication
North Carolina A&T State University
North Carolina
January 2019

PART ONE:

**IMMIGRATION, MARGINALIZATION,
AND IDENTITY**

IMMIGRATION ISSUES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

MARÍA FERNÁNDEZ DE CASADEVANTE
MAYORDOMO
REY JUAN CARLOS UNIVERSITY, SPAIN

Abstract

The multicultural nature of the continent we live in cannot be denied. Globalization and the problems sometimes associated with it (e.g. criminality, poverty, wars) have led to the intensification of the phenomenon of migration. Along the way, but also once they reach their final destination, many immigrants are affected by various external factors and difficulties, which cause them to experience a difficult process known as “migratory grief.” It can be said that translation and interpretation (T&I) in public services in general has become a key element for these people, without which their daily existence and eventual integration would be beset with obstacles. In this paper, we will first analyse the causes that motivate a person to emigrate and see whether this phenomenon has evolved throughout history or has remained unchanged. We will also see the process that migrants go through until they arrive in our country. Subsequently, we will focus on one of the areas in which T&I is present – that of health, and more specifically on problems that arise when the mediator is not a professional, in order to raise the reader’s awareness of the need for a legislation that includes translation and interpreting as part of the right to health for immigrants.

Introduction

Immigration is today a phenomenon that deserves special attention from the most advanced societies, although it has existed since the beginning of

history – the first migrants were Indo-Europeans, Greeks, and Latins around the year 2000 BC (Azcárate Luxán & Sánchez Sánchez, 2013, 98).

In this respect, one might ask what the causes are that lead a person to migrate; these are relevant because, according to Sancho, they are linked to how integration takes place as well as future expectations – something that will in turn determine their degree of integration. Apart from this, it is also important to consider the reasons that drive individuals to leave their country, because this will also have an impact in their relationship with the host community (Sancho Pascual, 2013, 102–3).

According to some authors, these reasons are varied. Several specialists point to work as the main reason, which leads to what is now colloquially known in Spain as “brain drain.” As Atienza Azcona (2007, 27–43) points out, their departure entails giving up their skills and qualifications, since they will normally not fill positions related to their training in the country of arrival. In this regard, some authors (Moreno Fernández, 2013, 134; De Santiago Hernando, 1993, 324) point out that wage differences between countries are the cause of migration flows, driving migrants to make this decision individually. However, without referring to all of them, other theories suggest that the cause is the incorrect functioning of markets in countries of origin, with the family of the immigrant taking the decision to migrate and benefiting directly from the positive aspects of migration (Moreno Fernández 2013, 134).

Family reunification is one of the main causes in northern countries such as France and Austria. Another cause referred to is migration by political refugees and asylum seekers, with Germany accounting for half of all applications between 1985 and 1992 until regulations there became more restrictive (Azcárate Luxán & Sánchez Sánchez, 2013, 165–6). As we have seen in countries such as Syria or Iraq, more and more people have been trying to get to Europe to seek asylum. Other authors (Blanco 2000, 7–9; Chueca Sancho 2010, 100) consider socioeconomic policies and measures, armed conflicts, natural disasters and adverse habitation situations, and humanitarian conflicts to be the main circumstances that force human beings to migrate.

Pugnaire Sáez (2015, 1) supports this theory and establishes, as motivations for migration, political and social instability, which usually results in conflicts and internal wars; a tough economic situation, which hinders financing and income; and unemployment, underemployment, or lack of job prospects for young people. Gil Arias (2015) from Frontex points out that, although they are referred to as immigrants, eighty percent of those who arrive in Europe are potential refugees.

The Decision to Migrate

Related to the reasons for migration is the decision to migrate. According to several authors (Cuadrado Roura, Iglesias Fernández, and Llorente Heras, 2007, 21), the decision criteria depend on different elements; thus, in the event that the destination country offers greater employment opportunities and higher wage incomes, the reason to emigrate to that country will be decisive. On the contrary, the opposite effect is more likely if wages and thus income are better in the country of origin. Furthermore, if the process of migration is costly, this would reduce the likelihood of migration.

In addition, there are also personal, family, and professional factors that influence the decision to migrate. The decision of an individual to migrate to another country will depend on the age, education, and gender of the person, and also on whether they have a family or job.

So, for example, the older the individual, the less likely they are to migrate. One has only to look at the numbers that on any day – since the phenomenon of immigration began to shake Europe – risk their lives trying to cross borders and reach the continent. Rarely do you see older people doing this; it is mostly young people and parents with young children who risk everything they have and migrate, perhaps because of the years ahead, their own energy, or their family.

This is confirmed by Cuadrado Roura, Iglesias Fernández, and Llorente Heras (2007), who highlight the time horizon that young people have to recover their investment. They disagree with us on the issue of family burdens, and point out its relevance because this would prevent older people from migrating; we believe, however, that elderly adults in particular do not have this burden, especially in some African countries where family attachment is less strong.

These same authors state the existence of a positive correlation between the degree of education and the possibilities of migrating, and the fact is that those who have a higher level of education will be more likely to find a job, as well as a better-paid job.

In terms of gender, women tend to have lower incomes than men, which means that the cost of migration will be lower if they are not faced with large losses. However, we believe that the migratory process entails great expenses, compared with the income of these individuals in disadvantaged countries. Therefore, stating that the migratory cost will be lower for those who have less does not seem to be completely correct.

The same can be said for the degree of responsibility that each individual has towards their family – the greater the responsibility, the more difficulties

they will encounter when undertaking the journey. However, here too, one might think that it is because of family responsibilities that many immigrants decide to seek a better future in another country, but it is not exactly for themselves, but those they leave behind. They would be very unlikely to achieve the incomes they seek in the new country if they were to remain in their country of origin.

The work situation of the potential migrant also influences their decision; as one might expect, the cost of migration is higher for those who have a job, whereas for the unemployed the decision to migrate is understandably easier. Likewise, geographical distance and the presence of family members in the country of destination, as well as its migration legislation and policy, are also determining factors when making such a decision.

Alonso (2010, 12) refers to two consecutive and complementary processes that lead to the decision to emigrate: after choosing between emigrating or staying in their country of origin, migrants have to decide which country they want to reach. And this is where language, to which we will refer later, is decisive, since the absence of a language barrier makes the country of arrival a very attractive destination.

Immigration Risks

Whatever the reason, and especially when migration takes place under forced conditions, their situation is today, according to some doctors (Espeso Montagud & Achótegui, 2011), worse than it was in the 1980s and 1990s, due, for example, to the conditions in which they travel, worse working conditions in the new country, and the fact that illegal immigrants are hindered from having a normal social life. In connection with this, psychiatrist Joseba Achótegui discovered the Ulysses Syndrome, which is the result of worsening stressors that usually afflict migrants, and which in turn is connected to another problem that will bring us to the issue of dealing with the problem of integration, and later that of translation.

We are talking about the so-called “migratory mourning,” which can be defined as the, in most cases difficult, process that the immigrant has to go through, and which, according to the same author (Achótegui, 2009, 164–5), is divided into seven “mourning.” Among these we want to highlight language mourning – when migrating, not only does the individual’s use of their mother tongue diminish or become lost, they also face the prospect of having to learn a new language. While this will provide the individual some satisfaction, it also involves dedication and requires great effort. The situation will of course be different in the case of a child, because it is well

known that children have no special difficulty learning a new language. However, it is also true that they will forget their native language easily if they are no longer exposed to it. This is what normally happens to any immigrant with normal capabilities in a facilitating context, who has to make an effort to learn a new language. Achotegui defines it as “simple mourning” (2010, 21–46).

Apart from immigration mourning, we consider it necessary to refer to a series of risks that immigrants face when they decide to enter Europe without permission (Pugnaire Sáez, 2015, 1). First, they can be intercepted, arrested, deported, or, even worse, “pushed overboard by whomever is in charge of the journey to prevent being captured.” Also, immigrants without legal documents run the risk of finding themselves outside the legal framework. Immigrants also face the very real possibility of physical harm, because many of them make the trip hiding in boats, planes, or trucks, which exposes them to hypothermia, extreme heat, and dehydration.

They also run the risk of being exploited by human trafficking by those who run the many criminal networks that profit from poverty, the lack of existing means to manage the external borders, and the fact that the services the immigrant expects from the traffickers are illegal. This makes them extremely vulnerable, and they often suffer abuse or can be abandoned, and this can result in death. Nair (2016, 113) refers to data from Frontex, according to which people smuggling is the most profitable business for mafias, which can earn twice what they make from the sale of drugs and weapons. A 2016 news article reported that, according to the German intelligence services, the over 150,000 sub-Saharan immigrants who arrived in Europe from Libya in 2015 earned mafias 3.6 billion euros (González, 2016).

In 2015, organized gangs made four billion euros from smuggling around one million immigrants fleeing to Greece and Italy, and we cannot forget the flow of immigrants from Africa illegally trying to reach Europe. Routes are controlled by different gangs; the smuggling business works not only in the countries of origin and during the journey, but also in the destination countries, where organized gangs charge migrants to provide them with information about the asylum process or sell them false documents. Immigrants are even offered discounts if they travel in adverse weather conditions. When you have forty to sixty immigrants crammed into an eight-metre inflatable boat, the possibility that it all ends in tragedy is incredibly high. This goes for those who cannot afford to travel on their own, usually in rubber boats, but also in fishing or recreational boats. This very profitable business has even resulted in smuggling networks competing with each other. There have reportedly been cases of immigrants being

forced at gunpoint to ride in a boat already full of people just because the smugglers could get a better economic return from each trip (Frontex, 2016).

According to Frontex, social networks play a very important role in the smuggling of migrants, because smuggling networks use them to advertise themselves, providing a service that resembles that of a travel agency, and with which they manage to deceive those who are interested. Immigrants, whose mobile phones are in most cases their most valuable asset, use these social networks to seek information about the journey, as well as to contact friends and family. The problem with these sites is that they appear quickly and disappear just as fast, making it impossible to track them.

Despite the self-serving assistance offered by smuggling networks, the percentage of migrants who find it increasingly difficult to enter the countries of destination is high. Many end up stranded in a transit country they actually wanted to cross. Many of those who make it to the destination country pay a high price, both on personal and financial levels. What usually happens is that, once in the new country, immigrants – especially the low-skilled ones – end up working for low wages with little or no legal protection. This is the best-case scenario. Because many of them are in the country illegally, they are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

Integration

All the obstacles that stand in the way of those who seek a better life, that make their arrival difficult and mark their lives, make us seriously consider the need for better integration in the receiving society as a means of helping them forget and overcome the traumatic experiences they suffer before their arrival in the country of destination. We are not going into what “integration” means; nevertheless, we should ask ourselves how we can help immigrants become integrated in society and how can we help them to adapt. We do not want this minority to have to give up their culture or ideology. We are referring to integration in its broadest sense – the possibility of them participating in the host society in the same capacity as locals.

Authors such as Gualda or Richmond (Gualda Caballero 2016, 97) point out that knowing the language of the receiving society facilitates social integration. Also, Mohamed El-Madkouri believes that in order for immigrants to discover and get to know the society in which they find themselves it is necessary to speak the language, which is also the most determining factor in their integration. In this regard, she points to

psychological data indicating that learning a language fosters self-esteem, which in turn fosters interaction with society.

Without going into what is understood by “integration,” it can be said that, until they learn the new language, translation and interpreting (TeI) in public services in general has become a key element for these people, without which their daily life would be much harder, and their integration would become too complicated a challenge, being full of obstacles (Bourgoin Vergondy, 2016, 65). This T&I service in public services or social interpreting, a little-recognized field of work in many countries, and of course with a lower reputation and recognition than the work of conference interpreters, is offered in different areas, among which we highlight healthcare.

The healthcare system

With regards to health, and taking into account the migratory factor, it is worth considering the high number of foreigners who visit health centres and hospitals. They do not bring their families with them and have difficulties with language, culture, and the social environment, to which we must add other barriers such as physical problems, anxiety, aggressiveness, personality issues, or the existence of a certain sociocultural distance.

Other additional difficulties in the healthcare process have to do with the healthcare system itself, such as difficulty in accessing the service, long waiting times, high demand, little time available for appointments, and bureaucracy. And regarding the medical professionals, they may be not very empathetic, may lack communication skills, or have problems in their personal life, among many other things (Valero Garcés, 2014, 7–8).

Del Pozo points to the absence in Spain of a law that explicitly includes the right to language interpreting in healthcare services, which explains the absence of mechanisms that the author calls “official” that would serve to hire interpreters in the health sector. This usually results in solutions that are well below par, such as volunteers, family members, or people close to the patient (Bourgoin Vergondy, 2016, 69). In some cases, it is the employees of the medical centre, such as nurses, administrative staff, or bilingual doctors, who carry out the task of linguistic mediation (Ridao Rodrigo, 2009).

Immigrants may need information in their language or the translation of specific documents, or a mediation service that guarantees quality and safe healthcare – something that highlights the need for an intercultural mediator. According to Campos (2005, 4), the need for mediation/interpreting in areas such as gynaecology, paediatrics, emergency medicine, and mental health

has been steadily growing, and continues to do so. Let us bear in mind that, in any conversation or relationship where the parties do not share a common language, there will be a language barrier. Numerous studies have shown that, no matter how much a doctor knows, this will be of little use if they are unable to communicate with the patient. If a patient comes to the healthcare centre or hospital and does not know the language, three parties will have to take part in a conversation: the medical professional, the patient themselves, and the interpreter.

However, we can say that intermediaries themselves can also be a problem, as it happens that they sometimes have difficulties in communicating. There are interpreters who have problems understanding the speakers, who lack the appropriate technique or the skill to perform their work, or who are not familiar with the technical medical vocabulary and cannot therefore translate it. In addition, some of them may perceive pressure or impatience on the part of the medical staff, have difficulties deciding how to best address the person, be unfamiliar with the situation, or suffer anxiety or distress. They may even be affected by the patient's own anxiety and distress (Campos, 2005, 33).

After all, these three people each understand and see health, pain, illness, and medical care in different ways, and from different points of view. In addition to this, in some settings or countries, linguistic minorities become vulnerable groups, which leads to power differences (Angelelli 2014, 573).

All of this will have an impact in one way or another on communication. Let us not forget that poor communication between an immigrant or foreign user and the healthcare staff can have serious consequences that will inevitably result in sub-optimal care, and could lead to a wrong or incomplete diagnosis, reduced productivity of the healthcare staff, loss of confidentiality of the medical consultation, resistance on the part of the immigrant to visiting the healthcare services, and the appearance of anxiety in the user (Recuerda Solana et al. 2012, 2). A paediatrician's experience shows the type of situations that health professionals frequently encounter, sometimes having to explain treatments using gestures or by drawing pictures. It is inevitable that confusion in patients may occur because the information has not been transmitted properly (Valero Garcés 2003, 182). The author adds other consequences, such as patients abandoning treatments, uncertainty, distrust, no medical check-ups, and even skipping medical appointments.

Borja Albí (2015, 122) presents this testimony from a forensic psychologist regarding interpretation by an ad hoc translator, according to whom:

The interpreter interpreted the victim's words, advised her or would even tell her off. He was a friend of the victim, so there were two main problems: language barriers, resulting from an insufficient knowledge of the interpreter's language; and additional information provided by the interpreter regarding the victim's own statements, because he knew what had happened to the victim and would therefore fill in silences and add information, interfering with the psychological assessment.

In this respect, there are authors (Alcaraz Quevedo 2014, 302) who advocate the standardization of training, functions, and tasks, as well as the professionalization of the medical interpreter, who, in addition to translating the messages between both parties, acts as a message clarifier, which implies obtaining more information from the speaker so as to explain the message or concept in a simpler way, to make communication easier. Another role is that of the cultural clarifier, which involves confirming and providing cultural information, especially that regarding health-related cultural beliefs. And finally, something that would be unthinkable in court is acting as an advocate for patients, supporting their wellbeing and contributing to their health. It is possible that the interpreter may witness examples of discrimination or differences in access to healthcare for patients who do not speak the language. If we bear in mind that patients are likely to be unfamiliar with the admission requirements, may not know how to register or make an appointment, or do not understand the procedures, which may make it more difficult to defend their interests, it becomes clear that the interpreter's work can be key (Angelelli 2014, 575).

They also assist professionals in providing advice, either through informative sessions on cultural matters, or through the adaptation of materials. They can translate the material in such a way that immigrants can understand it and attend talks and training courses (Antonín Martín, 2013, 149).

It should be stressed that the mediator has the privilege of being the only one who can understand the points of view and perceptions of both interlocutors in a context in which two cultures are involved and interact. For this reason, it is their job to construct meanings that go beyond the mere translation of words; by being able to recognize cultural references, in addition to linguistic ones, they can more easily resolve conflictive situations (Trovato 2012, 33).

The mediator in the field of healthcare is a professional figure with a very different role from that of the translator. Although they use translation in their work as a very useful tool, their functions go beyond that. Among other aspects, they explain how the host society and the social system work, which are very different from the one the immigrant knows, and although

their main task is related to the health context, they are sometimes asked to provide other services which can go from social roots to family reunification, school absenteeism to documentation for the tax authorities, and paperwork for the children's school to traffic fines (Ridao Rodrigo, 2009).

However, in 2012, a study was carried out to identify which resources were used in a medical consultation to enable communication between healthcare staff and non-Spanish-speaking patients. The survey revealed that the most used resource is that of the friend or family member as mediator (76%), followed by gestures (40%) as a means of understanding, while 18% have information leaflets, and only 9% use professional interpreters (Valero Garcés 2014, 53).

The culture of the person being interpreted is very important. The following is the case of an interpreter who had to intervene in the medical services of the Red Cross (Castillo García & Taibi, 2005, 110). An Iraqi couple went to the doctor with their two children, a girl and a boy. In the presence of all the family members, they were asked about their medical history. When the doctor asked the daughter about her menstruation, the interpreter could see that she was very nervous, probably because she was uncomfortable talking about it not only with him, but also in front of two other men – her father and brother. This led him to ask the two of them to leave the consultation, something that instead of improving the situation made it worse and caused confusion among those present, because the fact of making them leave made them think that the young woman had a disease or that she did not want to bring to light information about a possible pregnancy or her virginity.

Within the cultural context, like in other public services, another element that the interpreter faces in the health sector is the terminology that is most difficult to translate – swearwords, euphemisms, and jokes and words used as gestures of affection. Depending on the culture, these words will be used for one purpose or another; so, for example, the English use jokes and irony to play down situations that might scare or hurt them, or to avoid offending someone (Cambridge 2003, 63).

Cambridge gives us some examples of this; in a doctor-patient encounter, the following happens:

Doctor: Do you feel much pain, Mr. Jones?

Patient: I shouldn't complain; it's time to go to the vet.

In fact, what the patient is trying to say here is, firstly, that it does hurt, but that he does not want to be taken for a coward, while at the same time

he is trying to tell the doctor that if he were an animal, the doctor himself would allow him to be killed, a decision that he himself would support.

English is a language rich in euphemisms for speaking about certain subjects; examples are death, illness, and the actions of the human body (Morato Agrofojo 2014, 150). And so, to talk about death, one would say that “someone has passed away away/has departed,” rather than “has died.”

In view of this, it is worth asking why, in the health sector, people without the appropriate professional training are used as interpreters. Mediation by someone without specific training can have serious consequences that may compromise equal access to healthcare services (Morato Agrofojo 2014, 150). By lacking specific qualifications, they are not adhering to the code of ethics, and they also lack the interpretation techniques required to convey all the semantic elements such as content, intentionality, gestures, pauses, silences, or the tone of the message (Angelelli 2014, 573–4).

According to Cambridge (2003, 54), this is dangerous for both the medical professional and the patient, and this alone is sufficient reason for having only people with the appropriate training in this field performing the interpreting services. It may happen that the doctor themselves is the one who intends to provide the information; but how can they communicate complicated concepts or a distressing diagnosis in another language if they do not have a perfect command of the foreign language? According to the author, this would violate the duty to protect the patient. In view of this, the health professional may argue that using gestures is understandable; however, gestures are not international, and they can be confusing for an immigrant coming from a different culture. We would also be tempted to think that it is more cost effective for the hospital not to have to hire an interpreter and to simply have someone familiar with the language do their job. However, we should realize that the cost of hiring an interpreter is likely to be more worthwhile than having to face a medical malpractice lawsuit due to poor communication.

When the interpretation is provided by family members, because they know each other so well, there is information that could be of great value to the doctor, but which is overlooked because it is so obvious to the interpreter. Both people may come from the same culture, but if information of vital importance for a successful communication is omitted for cultural reasons or self-interest, it could constitute a problem.

Non-professional interpreters may also add information the speaker has not said, tend to simplify the information either because they have not understood everything or because they cannot remember all that was said, or even adopt the role of the doctor or the patient and take over the

interaction (Del Pozo Treviño 2013, 116–17). It would be much worse if a child's help were used to carry out the task of interpretation – would they be able to understand all the concepts?

And, as Borja Albí (2015, 122) points out, having a child perform the interpretation can cause them emotional disturbance when accessing certain stories or even psychotherapy sessions. In addition, we must not forget that children may unintentionally alter information or lack the sufficient vocabulary. In the case of victims of gender violence, the close bond between them and the victim sometimes leads them to respond without listening to their mother's response.

Conclusions

In the absence of legislation that includes the right to translation and interpreting in the field of healthcare, and that explains how foreign patients can have access to information and communicate with healthcare personnel, both patients and organizations must seek a solution that helps them to solve these communication problems, which undoubtedly places users who cannot speak our language at a clear disadvantage, as the language barrier contributes to quality healthcare not being guaranteed.

The fact that there is also no law establishing that, to offer a quality communication service in the field of medical health, it is necessary for those who provide this service to be professionals with specific training in medical-sanitary translation and interpreting means that people without the appropriate training end up performing this task, which may put the patient's life at risk.

Let us not forget that, although having qualified health interpreters may initially involve additional costs to the hospital or the ministry of health, in the long term it will mean shorter stays in hospital and will also safeguard the hospital from having to pay compensation to the patients.

The absence of qualified interpreters would lead to a lack of the necessary quality in the service, if we bear in mind that having a specific qualification in medical-sanitary interpreting is necessary for equal access to healthcare services. That is why we consider it necessary for specific medical linguistic mediation to be included in our healthcare regulations and the right to health.

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CROSSROADS OF IMMIGRATION AND JOURNALISM: PRESS COVERAGE AND OBJECT OF STUDY IN SPAIN

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Abstract

This article deals with news coverage of immigration in Spain and how the object of study has evolved in recent years. An analysis has been also carried out on practical guides with recommendations on the press coverage of immigration issues and how these guidelines have been applied to cases that have happened in recent years. Finally, although we noted ongoing positive changes on the way immigration is treated in Spanish journalism, it is clear from this research that stereotypes and wrong practices are still taking place, so efforts must continue to achieve a more ethical press coverage of immigration.

Introduction

In this article we will make an approximation about the news coverage of immigration in Spain and the object of study that it represents. In view of this purpose, we offer some data on the native and foreign populations to better contextualize the study.

The population of Spain in 2017 was just over 46.5 million people. Of these, almost 4.5 million were foreigners, according to the National Institute of Statistics. Table 2.1 below depicts the numbers of the main nationalities of foreign residents, according to the same official source, as on January 1, 2017.

Table 2.1. Foreign residents in Spain

Romania: 678,098
Morocco: 667,189
United Kingdom: 294,295
Italy: 203,118
China: 177,738
Ecuador: 145,879
Germany: 141,523
Colombia: 139,213
Bulgaria: 126,436
France: 103,062
Portugal: 100,822
Ukraine: 94,770
Bolivia: 76,060
Russia: 71,959
Argentina: 71,622

In 2016 Spain registered a positive migratory balance of 89,126 people. Immigration increased by 21.9%, while emigration fell by 4.6% in comparison to the previous year. Between 2012 and 2016, the number of foreigners fell by some seven hundred thousand individuals.

The migratory balance of foreigners was 112,666 people in 2016, positive for the second consecutive time since 2010, and 176.3% higher than the previous year. Around 241,795 people migrated and 354,461 immigrated, according to the National Institute of Statistics.

Research Objectives

- (1) Evaluate the role of the media regarding their narrative on social and cultural problems.
- (2) Analyse immigration as an object of study of communication as a field in Spain throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
- (3) Assess if the latter is an area of academic interest in light of the investigations carried out so far.
- (4) Study the approaches and main conclusions about the press coverage of immigration, especially in the case of the conventional media (i.e. printed newspapers).

Method

The topic of research, news coverage of immigration, is the subject of existing academic work (Torregrosa 2005; 2008; Sendín and Rubira 2011).

This is a relevant area of study, given the social and demographic reality of Spain and its global component, as well as the importance of the media construction of the agenda and the stories on social and cultural problems in general, and immigration in particular.

While the focus is on the press coverage of immigration, future analyses could address aspects related to it, such as intercultural communication (with relevant contributions over time, such as Rodrigo-Alsina [2011]), in order to develop a more complete and contextualized approach.

In this case, a literature and documentary review of the most relevant scientific literature on the subject has been carried out. Using tools such as Scholar Google, Research Gate, and Dialnet, a qualitative analysis of the specialized academic production has been made by the authors of reference in the matter in the Spanish case.

The materials used come from digital sources, those cited and others, as printed. Together with the texts reviewed and evaluated, the pertinent theoretical analysis is developed as a framework within which the documentary task unfolds and takes on meaning.

The Study of Media Attention to Immigration in the Context of Communication and Sociocultural Problems

Media attention to immigration is part of the scope of analysis of social and cultural problems from the communication and public sphere. In this case, we will be considering immigration from the main, if not exclusive, perspective of this problematic reality that constitutes a social problem in itself, as we will see later when analysing some linguistic and semantic aspects present in the daily press.

Immigration is one of the issues of greatest interest and concern in the general population, within the set of sociocultural realities (Torregrosa, 2008b).

Media attention, especially towards issues with human and conflicting dimensions, confronts us with the old question of the social construction of reality:

Our experience of society makes us live contemporarily in different worlds: in the microcosm of our direct experience with others and with others, made of personal relationships, but in a more or less significant, compact and constant way, and in a macrocosm composed of much broader structures, in

which relations with others are almost all abstract, anonymous, distant. (Wolf 2001, 114)

In this context, the media's role in the construction of social reality is still relevant, along the lines of Berger and Luckmann. It is also true that as a consequence of the current paradigm, there is a gradual displacement of the attention and influential areas from the printed media field (old culture of the physical archive) in favour of the digital one (the new phase of electronic dissemination). However, there are some hasty analyses that no longer include the influence of the traditional press of daily newspapers on paper. They are erroneous. The daily press continues to determine to a large extent the agenda of other media, such as radio and television.

In that sense, the press has been dealing with immigration issues in a regular manner, sustained in time and space. Now, according to the norms of the informative logic of the event, the focus has been placed closer when there have been major events.

One of the most intense ethnic conflicts in Spain occurred in the city of El Ejido (Almeria, Andalusia) during the months of January and February in 2000. Those known by many as the "El Ejido events" unleashed a wave of racism that had great international importance at the time.

The events were so serious that gangs were even organized to "hunt the Moor," after the double murder of two farmers and another native woman by immigrants, the main trigger of the fury on the part of the El Ejido neighbours. The media attention was wide. The press, taking the newspaper *El País* as a reference, reported that neighbours from El Ejido attacked immigrants and destroyed their premises.

Back in the Andalusian province of Almeria, the murder of the child Gabriel Cruz in February 2018, and the arrest of his confessed murderer, Ana Julia Quezada, of Dominican origin, led to unethical treatment by some media, with coverage in which it was unjustifiably noted that she is a foreigner – a black woman. In fact, the Federation of Press Associations of Spain (FAPE), together with the Press Association of Journalists of Almeria (AP-APAL) and the Association of Journalists of Andalusia in Almeria (CPPA-Almeria), issued a statement to insist that the Code of Ethics of the FAPE recommends that in the information that mediates elements of pain or distress in the affected people, the journalist should avoid gratuitous interference and unnecessary speculation about their feelings and circumstances.

The sensationalism, morbidity, and diffusion of images that contribute nothing to information can cause loss of credibility, which is the value that journalism brings to society, according to the organizations mentioned

above, as reflected in their petition of responsibility to the professionals of the information.

Some of these sensationalist treatments also match the characteristics and tendencies shown by the current television discourse in Spain (Torregrosa, 2010).

Television journalists have been the most questioned about this terrible event, along with their radio and newspaper colleagues. Although the role of the press is fundamental in society, the report of the police explained that media performance was also very worrisome in this case, because the press not only hindered investigation on many occasions but even had to be avoided, as it put at risk an arrest being made when a child's body was found in the trunk of a car after being moved from the rural site where it had been buried.

Immigration and Communication as an Object of Study in Spain

Analysing immigration as an object of study of communication in Spain throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is a quantitative and qualitative challenge. It seems more comprehensive in work of this nature to attend to case studies or concrete situations centred on the national attention of the media to foreign realities, whether endogenous or exogenous.

One of these representative cases is the one addressed by Bañón (2006) who, after reviewing thirty years of headlines about Mali and the Malian immigrants in *El País*, analysing the discursive strategy – at both the macrostructural and microstructural levels of discourse – concluded that the ideal reader “can hardly have a vision adjusted to the true situation of this country, its regional, cultural and intellectual wealth, as well as its historical journey.”

The author cites a series of transcendental aspects about the country that over three decades do not appear in anything more than anecdotal references, such as the immense diversity of languages. All this offers a portrait that is “general, limited and stereotyped.”

The documentary search in the sources mentioned at the beginning, along with the corresponding bibliographical revision, allows us to verify the main approaches to the press coverage of immigration, especially in the case of the conventional media (paper newspapers). This has focused on communication theories and approaches such as framing (framing or news framework), agenda setting (influence of the media agenda on the public), and critical discourse analysis. The Fauconnier and Turner theory of mental spaces has also been used in the research (Chacour & Portillo, 2018).

The contributions of Teun A. van Dijk are very valuable in relation, among other aspects, to the discourse of elites and institutional racism (2006) or the role of the press in the reproduction of racism (2008).

The wide range of specialized scientific literature that exists today also confirms that, indeed, the line of research of “media and immigration” is consolidated in Spain (Bañón, 2014).

In the case of Spanish scientific production, authors such as Miquel Rodrigo-Alsina (2011) have made novel contributions in the field of intercultural communication.

Also worthy of mention are the works of Manuel Lario-Bastida or Nicolás Lorite-García on the informative treatment of immigration. Other diverse aspects of immigration (women, minors, housing and spatial segregation, or immigrant entrepreneurs) have been addressed in the field of Social Anthropology by Francisco Checa, Juan Carlos Checa, and Ángeles Arjona.

Some writers, both academic and in the press, appeal to the identity of Spain as a country and the collective memory that draws its historical evolution by pointing out that this country grew from the 1960s thanks to the financial support of immigrants, which accounted for about seven thousand million dollars in money transfers until 1975 (Calleja 2006, 131).

The Press Coverage of Immigration in Spain

In the Spanish case, the media coverage of foreign immigration has not always corresponded to its socioeconomic significance. This reality, with respect to the space and time dedicated, has changed as the presence of workers of other nationalities increased, until penetrating the current news agenda with force (Torregrosa, 2005).

It is always interesting to evaluate the role of the media regarding its story about social and cultural problems, and even more so when it comes to immigration, one of the forms of alterity for excellence.

An element of analysis is, in the first place, the words under which the set of news on the issue is included. In fact, as noted in the previous work cited (Torregrosa, 2005), referring to “the problem of immigration” is very different from talking about “the problems of immigrants” – both options used by both newspapers almost fifteen years ago.

There is no doubt that ethics plays a fundamental role in any journalistic and media content. However, these deontological imperatives are greater when dealing with realities with intrinsically conflictive aspects, such as immigration and emigration.

We summarize the main ethical mandates Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2. Decalogue for the informative treatment of immigration

1. Do not exaggerate, use the background and the context in which the information is produced.
2. Do not use words and expressions that may induce a biased and negative view (avalanche, illegal).
3. Do not induce the reader to the association of ideas that make immigrants the scapegoat of the ills and problems of our society.
4. Do not make conjectures (refer to unwarranted speculations or interpretations).
5. Contrast the sources.
6. Do not use negative terms for the collective.
7. With crimes, do not provide information that is not relevant (such as nationality, if that information does not have an informative interest).
8. Do not use inappropriate language about the nationality or traits of immigrants.
9. Do not do free sociological analysis.
10. Contribute, as far as possible, to dignifying the image of the immigrant and highlighting the positive image of immigration so as not to “victimize.”

Source: Association of the Press of the Fields of Gibraltar (2004; authors' elaboration)

Part of the essential ethical commitment is also in highlighting the positive aspects of immigration, a dimension that tends to shine by its absence in the usual media accounts.

There are now guides for professionals in which fairer treatments are recommended and adjusted to the diversity and multiplicity of implications in the field of immigration.

This is the case of the work of Sendín and Izquierdo (2008), “A Practical Guide for Media Professionals: Media Treatment of Immigration,” or that of the Association of the Press of the Fields of Gibraltar (2004).

Conclusions

It is verified that the analysed area has academic interest in Spain in light of the numerous investigations carried out so far.

This academic interest has resulted in today being considered unanimously the line of work on “media and immigration,” a consolidated field of study and that has a broad theoretical and empirical corpus.

In conjunction with the critical analysis of discourse, the most commonly used theories of communication as a framework to study immigration from the media sphere have been agenda setting and framing.

The media treatment of immigration has improved in recent decades in Spain (as is reflected in the studies consulted and those carried out by the authors of this work), although it has not done so to the extent necessary. There is a margin of travel that must be exhausted.

The guides and recommendations for journalists and informants have, by following guidelines and advice, improved the treatment given to immigration from the press and other media. Despite this, the quality change has not occurred sufficiently, given that there are still stereotyped representations and inadequate approaches from the ethical and professional point of view. So much so that, in recent events related to immigrants, the main association of journalists in Spain had to issue in March 2018 a statement appealing to the responsibility and deontological values of the media.

In fact, some of those media were literally pointing out that the confessed murderer of a child is “black” or has, presumably, a certain ideology. They are aspects that do not present, in the concrete example analysed (the case of the Almerian boy Gabriel Cruz, of February and March 2018), an informative justification to be enunciated, much less highlighted. The situation was such that even the mother made a public call not to be carried away by anger and spread rage through social networks and other media channels and citizens.

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THE INCLUSION OF MARGINALIZED VOICES IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA DIALOGUE

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Abstract

Resulting from their co-edited work which delves into gender and sexuality, the authors discuss some of the articles included in their anthologies *Women and the Media: Diverse Perspectives* (2005), *Challenging Images of Women in the Media* (2012), *Queer Media Images* (2013), and *Locating Queerness in the Media* (2017). While sharing some of the global viewpoints presented in these articles, the authors call for a dialogue about marginalized media representations. This body of work has an activist component, inviting global media scholars to share their ideas and views to create a continued dialogue that will address how media representations affect marginalized communities.

Introduction

For more than ten years, we have given voice to two marginalized media communities: women and the LGBTQ community. Our efforts have resulted in the publication of four co-edited anthologies, which include *Women and the Media: Diverse Perspectives* (2005), *Challenging Images of Women in the Media* (2012), *Queer Media Images* (2013), and *Locating Queerness in the Media* (2017). Our commitment to creating a dialogue about marginalized groups has a global focus. Articles from these edited collections include authors from Pakistan, India, Brazil, Argentina, Italy, Poland, Australia, Turkey, Japan, China, Israel, and the United States. Global media representations of marginalized groups demonstrate some of the struggles in these communities. Media depictions can either challenge or reify a community's status. In this essay, we will discuss the value of this dialogue about global media representations of marginalized communities by describing some of the perspectives that have been presented in our

books. These perspectives provide an educational opportunity to scholars and students. By so doing, we hope to invite a more expansive dialogue about issues that are present in the media and that affect all of us.

We are strongly influenced by the work of Dr Yahya Kamalipour, particularly his pioneering book *The U.S. Media and the Middle East: Image and Perception* (1995). In this book, Kamalipour presents articles about media representations of individuals from the Middle East. In the introduction, Kamalipour writes:

The contemporary mass media—newspapers, magazines, books, music, motion pictures, radio, television—have undoubtedly affected almost every aspect of human life. They determine our perspective of the world, the way in which we make decisions, the way in which we spend our leisure time, the way in which we perceive others, and most important, the way in which we interact with one another. Thus, the media can be seen not only as a driving force behind cultural and social change but also as an index for political mobilization, both domestically and internationally. (1995, xix)

Kamalipour then addresses the dearth of scholarly research on the media and the Middle East. In 1995 this book was an act of bravery, given the ugly stereotyping and representations of individuals from the Middle East. Through this seminal work, Kamalipour lays the foundation for research and study on representations of marginalized groups in the media. This book invites future discussion about the role of the media as a “driving force behind cultural and social change.”

When we created a class called “Women and the Media” at our university, locating an appropriate book that addressed both issues of representation and women in the media who had made key historical contributions was very challenging. The seed had been planted to create books which address these issues in substantive and meaningful ways. This seed came to fruition in *Women and the Media: Diverse Perspectives* (2005) and *Challenging Images of Women in the Media* (2012). While working on these books, we recognized the absence of media representations of the LGBTQ community, and thus co-edited *Queer Media Images* (2013) and *Locating Queerness in the Media* (2017).

Women and media

With our first collaboration, *Women and the Media: Diverse Perspectives*, we published six articles that addressed women’s issues in the following countries: The United States, India, China, Japan, Poland, Israel, and Argentina. These articles provided both historical and critical information

about representations of women in the media. For example, in her article “The Israeli Womb: Images of Gendered Nationalism in the Israeli Press,” Orly Shachar argued that Israeli women’s reproductive capabilities have been seen as synonymous with their national loyalty. By analysing ways in which the womb has been built as an invaluable tool in the Israeli media consciousness through various public campaigns, Shachar makes the case that Israeli women function primarily as child bearers. Going against this function implies disloyalty to Israel. In her article “Hegemony and Sexual Commodification of Women in the Japanese Media,” Kimiko Akita explores the ways the Japanese media encourage women to subscribe to culturally-derived manners that ultimately demean and disempower them. Akita shares how many of her female students imitated animated figures like Sailor Moon or Hello Kitty so they would appear “cute.” Cuteness built a culture of voiceless women who functioned as cultural artifacts and objects.

In *Women and the Media: Diverse Perspectives*, we present four female pioneers: Joan Ganz Cooney, founder of the Children’s Television Workshop, which created the immortal *Sesame Street*; Frances Benjamin Johnston, photographer for President McKinley, known as the mother of photojournalism; Maria Kowalska, who published a Polish American newspaper in the early part of the twentieth century; and Cybil Shepherd, the first woman to address the menopause in her television sitcom. The contributions made by these women are often overlooked in discussions about media growth and proliferation. They are just a few of the unsung heroines we cover in our work.

In our second book, *Challenging Images of Women in the Media*, we present articles about media representations of women in the United States, Japan, Australia, Pakistan, India, China, Bulgaria, and Germany. For example, in “Who’s Afraid of the Pink Chaddi? New Media, Hindutva and Feminist Agency in India,” author Saayan Chattopadhyay introduces readers to a political movement created by a female journalist responding to a mob attack on a group of women at a pub in India. The journalist, Nisha Susan, created a Facebook group that attracted forty thousand members and became a political voice for women in India. Elza Ibroscheva’s piece “From Babushkas to Sexy Babes: the Sexing Up of Bulgarian Women in Advertising” explores how previous portrayals of Soviet women as matronly, shapeless, asexual, and unattractive have been replaced with the Westernized notion of the sexy woman. Meanwhile, Bulgarian women who once had maternity leave, state-sponsored childcare, and abortion are experiencing diminishing rights. In this book, we present articles on Angela

Merkel, Germany's prime minister, and more popular media figures like Queen Latifah and Hillary Clinton.

After studying the work in both of these books, we concluded that media representations of women have not changed very much. Women were and are still conspicuously absent from the media, and when they appear it as commodified objects or serving their male counterparts. The themes we discovered in these books seemed to indicate that women will be relegated to second class citizenry unless a revolution occurs where women's lives and experiences are valued.

LGBTQ media images

At the time we began studying LGBTQ representations, we observed that there were two key voices in this dialogue: Larry Gross's 2002 book *Up from Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men, and Media in America*, and Richard Russo's seminal 1987 book *The Celluloid Closet*, which was made into a 1995 movie. In *Up from Invisibility*, Cultural Studies theorist Gross writes: "Our vulnerability to media stereotyping and political attack derives in large part from our isolation and pervasive invisibility" (15). In other words, stereotyping is fed by the silence that many gay people learn for their own safety and protection. Throughout a major portion of the twentieth century, American gay bars, a primary social setting for community members, remained hidden from the straight community. Gay people learned about bars through word of mouth, and police interference could mean the bars were shut down due to sodomy laws. When the LGBTQ community issued notification of a queer presence, as in the 1969 Stonewall Uprising, the 1979 protests against the film *Cruising*, or the annual LGBTQ parades, news cameras would focus on the flamboyant displays of gayness, particularly drag queens and transgendered individuals. There was an overall sense that gayness meant effeminate men, masculine women, and individuals clothed in outrageous costumes. Because members of the LGBTQ community broke conventional rules of what it meant to be male or female in hetero culture, hetero culture did not look favourably upon the LGBTQ community.

Stereotyping, which pigeonholes all minority cultures, presents caricatures of cultural members. Film audience members are taught to locate those traits which are identifiable markers of gayness. Viewers are not encouraged to seek an understanding of the day-to-day lives of LGBTQ individuals and what it might mean to live as a gay person in a heterosexual world. In his book *Gays and Film* (1977), Richard Dyer explores what media stereotyping has meant to the gay community. Dyer eloquently

explains, “What we should be attacking in stereotypes is the attempt of heterosexual society to define us for ourselves, in terms that inevitably fall short of the ‘ideal’ of heterosexuality” (357). As is the case with any minority, audiences who are not members of the LGBTQ community must struggle to look past the caricatured images to witness authentic depictions. As long as there are few films about gayness, whether told from a mainstream or independent perspective, stereotypical characters will continue to shape heterosexual audiences’ perceptions about what it means to be queer.

While Gross expressed his concerns about stereotyping in *Up from Invisibility*, Russo’s focus was on gay visibility. In *the Celluloid Closet*, Russo concludes, “Gay visibility has never really been an issue in the movies. Gays have always been visible. It’s how they have been visible that has remained offensive for almost a century” (1995, 325). Russo explores images of the gay community, ranging from victims to victimizers. In the majority of films which focus on gay characters, the queer individual either dies tragically or commits a violent act on someone else. These “conventions” still exist, reflected by current popularized movies like *Monster*, where the main lesbian character becomes a serial killer as a means of coping with abuse, or *Brokeback Mountain* where one of the two main characters is killed in a gay-bashing incident. Very few movies that host a queer character end positively. Even the recent film *Call Me by Your Name*, which depicts a coming-of-age relationship between a young man and a graduate student, ends in heartbreak. Two movies that are exceptions to this include *Imagine Me and You* and *Saving Face*. Both movies demonstrate the coming-out process and the difficulties of managing familial relationships.

When we began our work examining media and the LGBTQ community, prior to the Supreme Court ruling that endorsed same-sex marriage in the United States in 2015, we sought articles from around the world that addressed gay media representations. In our 2013 book *Queer Media Images*, the only country represented besides the United States is Japan, while in our 2017 book *Locating Queerness in the Media*, articles about Turkish and Brazilian media and the LGBTQ community are included. The majority of the articles in *Queer Media Images* present a study of popular American media images which include, for example, Katy Perry’s song “I Kissed A Girl,” Lady Gaga’s song “Born this Way,” and television shows like *SpongeBob Squarepants*, *Will and Grace*, and *Glee*. While we were disappointed not to have more of an international presence, this book demonstrates how media images of the LGBTQ community are in their infancy.

With our 2017 book *Locating Queerness in the Media*, we turned our attention to how LGBT individuals study media representations of their community, recognizing that a queer aesthetic and a call to political action are embedded in media studies of the community. Researchers/scholars integrate their queer voice into their research. That queer voice has an aesthetic that includes colourful and engaging anecdotes, a particular sense of humour, and an appreciation for camp and kitsch. LGBT scholars recognize that writing about their community, while not a popular academic choice, is a political choice which encourages other scholars to take note.

Conclusion

With these four books, we have attempted to give voice to a global dialogue about representations of women in the media and the LGBT community.

Through an analysis of these perspectives from our books, we hope to encourage individuals to create continued scholarly dialogue about marginalized voices. Through such dialogue, the media can be held accountable for depictions that are skewed representations of particular groups. As scholars, we have become activists for reshaping a meaningful dialogue about media representations. For us, this work combines scholarship with activism. As second-wave feminists who still believe that “the personal is political,” we see tremendous value in attempting to build and sustain dialogue. While the vast majority of media scholarship occurs through a patriarchal lens that focuses on systems and processes, our goal is to encourage media study of underrepresented identities. When focusing on media hegemony, we must, as a community of scholars, note who has been eliminated or falsely represented. While representations of marginalized individuals might be available, there are not enough representations that give a well-rounded picture and create a universal understanding of that identity.

In our formative years, we never dreamed of speaking about women’s lives or gay lives in relation to the media. We were taught that these identities were meaningless and worthless. Now, as we are on the brink of a changing society, marked by the women’s marches, the Black Lives Matter movement, the #MeToo movement, and the #Time’sUp movement, we can see a time when we will recognize that all individuals must be fairly represented and included in media dialogues.

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**VIRTUAL IDENTITIES:
CONSTRUCTING AND CONTESTING IDENTITIES
– A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE SOCIAL
MEDIA USERS OF INDIA**

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Abstract

The concepts of self and identity have long been at the centre of sociological, psychological, and philosophical deliberations of human history. The concept of Atman from Eastern philosophy or the concept of the id, ego, and superego of Western psychology came a long way before the formulation of the concept of virtual identity. When the compression of time and space revolutionized the human understanding of being, the concept of identity itself transcended the ever-growing dubious realm of reality of the postmodern era. This, however, remains an impalpable area to explore regarding how the virtual nature of being is constructed, practiced, and maintained. In search of this, the researchers conducted interviews with thirty-one young Indian social media users to understand how they are constructing, developing, practising, and sustaining their online identities, and the dynamic interaction between the online and offline identities. The study explores the relation between users' concept of self-identity and represented identity and describes how the virtual identity has shaped individual personalities, at times becoming the dominant identity changing and challenging the offline identity of individuals. Considering the compound nature of virtual identity, the study treats it as a mixed-media action, and thus delves deeper into the managerial psyche for maintaining online identity simultaneously over different platforms.

Introduction

Oscar Wilde (2007) once said, “Most people are other people. Their thoughts belong to someone else’s opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions are a quotation.” The basic perception of an individual’s identity is the concept that one develops about oneself based on what others think about them. However, that does not end the journey for self-discovery. Since time immemorial, one’s search for oneself has been an integral manifestation of universal knowledge development, raising ontological queries that have never reached a conclusion. From the Hindu philosophy of Atman to the Freudian concepts of the id, ego, and superego, to the rising concept of a bodiless, faceless virtual identity, the concept of human identity has long paved the way.

The theory of identity construction (Vignoles et al., 2006; Vignoles et al., 2008) posits that individuals mainly associate or identify themselves with certain groups to fulfil one of the six elementary motives: a sense of distinctiveness, meaning, continuity, belonging, self-esteem, and efficacy. People tend to drift towards groups which bring a sense of meaning to their existence, being unique compared to the others and accepted among the people who matter, inculcating a positive feeling about themselves or adding to their competency level and capability.

On a similar path the looking-glass self theory of Charles Holton Cooley (1902; 1998), which provided a foundation for symbolic interactionism (Mead 2015), presented the concept of identity construction based on social feedback and social interaction. Shaffer summarized the concept of the looking-glass self in three components: the imagination of the self-appearance in social situations, the imagination and reaction based on the understanding of others’ judgement of that appearance, and the resulting sense of self based on which one responds in reference to a perceived concept of another’s judgement.

Interestingly, with the rise of social media emerged what was named the cyber self by cyberpsychologist Mary Aiken (2015). A series of work has emerged on how social media is affecting human identity. For example, Julie Jones (2015) extended the concept of the looking-glass self by applying it to the background of social-media development. All these developments also agreed with what is known as “technological determinism.” From Veblen (Papageorgiou & Michaelides 2016) to McLuhan (1997), a series of theoreticians and researchers have explained how technology in any given society defines its nature. Just like how the medium used to communicate often creates a strong influence over the mind of the receiver, the development of print news, television, and internet has

examples of how technological advances have an impact on the society and the human mind. New media are not only an addition to existing media but are also the result of modern technologies having a deterministic influence.

However, it remains a debatable question as to how much the virtual identity of an individual plays a pivotal role in influencing the offline identity of the person – the varied nature of an individual’s characteristics reflects the level of impact of the virtual identity. In this study, the researchers aim to seek whether the offline identities of individuals are influenced by their online identities, whether the individuals yearn to achieve some freedoms in the virtual world which they might have lost in the real world, what the level of impact created in the offline identities of individuals through their online identities is, whether there is a collision between the virtual worlds and the real world, and whether the online interactions transcend into fruitful offline exchanges.

Review of the literature

There has recently been an increasing amount of research focusing on the behavior mechanism of individuals, the presentation of personalities on the online world, the technological revolution of human identities, the concentration of social media, online identity crises, the effects of the virtual personalities on real-life identities, and other related evolving content.

Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) studied the maintenance of online identities in the interaction styles of ten different cases of bloggers and second-life participants as an extension of Goffman’s work. A crucial part of their work was to analyse how the users were presenting themselves online regarding “expressions given; embellishment as a trivial form of persona adoption; dividing the self; conforming and ‘fitting in’; and masking, anonymity and pseudonymity” (Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2013). Nagy and Koles (2014) attempted to discover the “patterns of identity development in virtual worlds, with the aim of introducing a conceptual model of virtual identity.” Their usage of structural elements serves the purpose of identifying several dimensions, including personal, social, relational, and materialistic approaches of identity. Koles and Nagy (2012) investigated whether the virtual identities of individuals are highly influential on their offline identities, and whether this impact has any kind of effect on the environment or others. The researchers explored the internalized elements of identity as well as the external elements and formulation of a composite identity with these elements.

Patient Rambe (2013), in an exploration of Facebook and students’ life, analysed the influence of converged social media, particularly of Facebook,

on students' lives. This research is mainly based on postgraduate students who used the Facebook mobile app for academic purposes. The study also points out that "social integration is manifested in human movements for self-expression through networked connectivity and virtual communities" (Kleinberg 2008). Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin's (2008) study on Facebook and identity construction compares it with other online portals like dating sites. According to this study, there is a striking difference of the identities across different platforms. As the researchers point out, "Facebook users predominantly claim their identities implicitly rather than explicitly; they 'show rather than tell' and stress group and consumer identities over personally narrated ones" (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin 2008).

McLeod, Liu, and Axline's work (2014) on the comparison between online and offline identities includes a survey of individuals who are participating members of Second Life. They analysed how the offline lives or relationships of the participants are affected by their experiences in virtual world. In the research, the findings depict a directly proportionate feature with a positive effect on the offline personality when there is a positive impact on the online identity or the virtual identity is experiencing a strong positive relation. Valentine and Holloway (2002) studied children in the age group of eleven to sixteen – predominantly the teenagers – to investigate whether their online and offline identities collide with each other, and how the teenagers make use of the virtual worlds in respect to their activities in the offline world.

In their article "Virtual Worlds and Identity," Peachey and Childs (2011) discuss the various elements associated with the virtual worlds and how an avatar plays a significant role in defining the identity of an individual. According to the researchers, the word avatar means "a graphical representation of a user within the environment which is under his or her direct control" (Albeck & Badler 2002). This research primarily focuses on the online gaming worlds and how individuals impersonate themselves while being active players in their gaming zones. In her work of identity and virtual community, Judith S. Donath (1999) analyses how identity is established in an online community. In an analysis of the Usenetnewsgroup, she explores the effects of identity deception and the conditions that give rise to it. Exploring the communication mediums in virtual reality, Biocca and Levy (1995) present opinions from engineers, social scientists, and cultural theorists to learn more about how interaction in online portals will affect the individuals, how virtual reality influences perceptions of reality, the legality of defining communication in virtual reality, and the resulting varying cultural trends.

In all of the aforementioned works, it is interesting to note that there has been a continuous effort to identify the relation, impact, and interaction between the online and offline identities of the social-media users. There has been a lot of work on Facebook, Second Life, and dating sites. However, the online identity of an individual is constructed, and not based on a single platform. Online identity is a compound identity stretched over multi-platform practices. The present study addresses this compound nature of online identity in an attempt to understand the attitudes, behaviors, and actions of the social-media users on multiple online platforms. In an attempt to understand it, the researchers established specific action and choice-based variables, based on which the expression of identities can be measured. Further with its study sample taken from a metropolitan city of a developing nation – India – the study stands as distinct in its exploration of construction and the impact of virtual identity.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore the construction of virtual identity and its impact on one's offline identity. Based on this, the following research questions have been developed:

R₁: How is a virtual identity constructed by social media users?

R₂: Does a virtual identity influence the offline identity of an individual?

As the research questions demand an in-depth explorative analysis, semi-structured informal in-depth interviews were conducted for data collection. The sample size for the interview was kept at thirty, which is considerably high for the in-depth interview sample requirement (Kvale 2008). The data was collected between March 2017 and August 2018. As the prominent users of social media are young, so the age group of the sample was kept from sixteen to thirty-five. All the participants were based in Kolkata, West Bengal, India. The sample chosen is thus mainly based on purposive availability sampling. Due to the nature of conversation, the identities of the participants have been kept anonymous. The data collected from the interviews was recorded, coded, and analysed based on a thematic pattern.

Findings

The interviews explored the behavioral pattern, preference, decision-making process, range of actions, and dimensions of thought pattern in constructing the virtual identities of the social media users while contesting with their offline identity. Following this, a thematic analysis of the interview data following major themes with repetitive patterns was established.

Demography

With thirty participants for the interview, the number of college and school students was around twenty, while there were ten working professionals. The working interviewees range from two freelancers to two entrepreneurs, five information technology professionals, and one schoolteacher. The majority of the interviewees said that they spend almost all of their time online and on social media. Five participants said that they check the internet for less than two to three hours a day. Most of the participants, that is twenty-six, use social media for entertainment, getting the latest news, staying updated about their friends, and checking new content. Four participants also mentioned that they use social media for promoting themselves and their business and getting new business and job opportunities, along with staying updated about the latest news.

Deliberation for using social media

The main reasons for using social media as stated by the interviewees are communication and keeping in touch with others. While peer pressure, especially among the participants aged between sixteen and twenty, played a significant factor, staying updated was another common reason among all the participants. An interviewee who runs his own business, considering networking as a major reason for using social media, claimed that “being a part of social media enhances my business and reaches a lot of people, which isn’t possible offline” (Personal communication, September 9, 2018).

All the interviewees operate more than one social-media account. Their main reason is to stay connected with their friends and family members, and also to make new connections. According to many participants, social-media connections are easier and more user friendly than connections through other means. As one of the participants explained, it is not always feasible for someone to make phone calls, but on social media one can see when the person is available, or even respond in one’s free time.

Furthermore, a few interviewees stated that they enjoyed making new friends via social-media platforms. However, some interviewees use the medium strictly for professional reasons. An interviewee stated that “I use social media platforms solely for business purpose and networking, to improve my own business” (Personal communication, 2018). Thus, the reasons for using social media range from the personal to professional, with multiple common factors like keeping in touch with others.

Social-media status updates

Social-media users provide status updates for their accounts at various intervals. However, more than the frequency of the updates, what becomes intriguing in understanding one’s online behavior is the nature of the content chosen for the status updates. This provides an understanding into the projection of the self as the users selectively decide and construct.

The most repetitive factors that are dominant reasons for status updates are expressing oneself, informing others about new things, quoting inspiring or motivational thoughts, and celebrating special occasions. For example, a young interviewee said, “I like to let my friends know about new restaurants, new places when I visit them, since I’m a foodie” (Personal communication, June 26, 2017). Another interviewee talked about how he wanted to express himself on social media, but at times was hesitant about posting anything opinionated as it might draw criticism. This points out that not only there is a drive for self-projection, but an apprehension of possible reaction to refining the content for status updates. However, this still shows how the social-media users in many cases try to portray a less controversial, amiable, and likeable character to all, rather than speaking as they perhaps would have done spontaneously. There were several participants who rarely updated their status on their social media platforms, as they mentioned they did not have time to do so and did not feel like posting anything, and some regarded themselves as private persons, not wanting to disclose anything on social-media platforms.

Pattern of sharing photos and videos

Inquiring into the content of photos or videos shared by social-media users, it is found that the most common response was uploading photos with friends and family members and of oneself. Among other responses, scenery pictures and pictures with pet animals were common. There were a few who stated that they rarely uploaded photos or videos.

Most of the participants uploaded pictures regularly, while a few uploaded a few times a month, and others who uploaded a few times a year. There were still fewer users who did not want to upload their pictures. For example, one interviewee said that she was a “private person” (Personal communication, April 26, 2017). Another interviewee said, “I don’t like putting my own pictures on social-media platforms regularly as my pictures did not acquire much likes or comments and as a result, I would remove the pictures” (Personal communication, June 6, 2017). Here again, it becomes evident that reactions from others shape the self-projection of the users over social media.

Few participants confessed that their main aim to upload pictures on social media was “to get more likes and appreciation” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018). As one interviewee pointed out, “Who doesn’t enjoy getting some appreciation?” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018). This shows the intention of social-media users to fish for appreciation, social recognition, and popularity through self-projection in social media. Social media becomes a platform where, through calculated portrayal, they can create a more popular image of themselves for others. However, many of the participants said that they did not upload any videos on social media, except one interviewee who mentioned that, “being a photographer, I regularly upload videos on Facebook and Instagram so that my clients with whom I’m connected online can know about my expertise” (Personal communication, April 26, 2017).

Pattern of selection of photos or videos

Not only sharing a particular type of photos or videos over social media but also the decision-making process behind such selection are important aspects of developing one’s online identity. From the analysis, it is clear that majority of the participants select their pictures based on “how appealing or beautiful they are looking” (Personal communication, April 6, 2017), while some said that the pictures “should be recognizable” (Personal communication, September 28, 2017), “clear” (Personal communication, June 6, 2017), “a proper angle is maintained” (Personal communication, April 26, 2017), and “the moment is ideal” (Personal communication, April 26, 2017). There were also a few interviewees who stated that they rarely uploaded their photos. The participants mostly focused on pictures that made them look “better and presentable online” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018). According to several interviewees, they felt that their pictures should be “appealing” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018) or “beautiful enough” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018) to be

uploaded on social media so that they received appreciation from others. While one interviewee went on to say, “I make sure that in a group picture which I’m uploading, I have to look better than the others” (Personal communication, June 19, 2018). Another interviewee said, “The selection process is important, in order not to invite any judgmental comments from others” (Personal communication, June 6, 2017). There were other kinds of responses as well. A twenty-one-year-old interviewee stated that “I don’t mind putting up a picture of mine with friends where I may not look good ... as long as the picture is momentous, I would upload it on social media” (Personal communication, January 23, 2018). There were two participants in particular who did not upload any pictures, and hence did not have the need to go through a selection process. The reasons behind this were their “being a private person” (Personal communication, September 9, 2018) and “having no time” (Personal communication, September 9, 2018).

Checking for responses

After one carefully selects and edits one’s photos or video and uploads them to their social-media account, the next step is checking the responses and reacting accordingly. It has become repeatedly clear that the response to any post is an important denominator in deciding how one is going to project oneself. In this regard, a look into one’s actions in checking for responses and reacting becomes an important element in understanding to what extent another’s reaction controls one’s online self-projection and online identity. The analysis revealed that several participants kept a tab on the kind of responses received, while some check only when they received notifications from the respective social-media accounts. There were only a few participants who did not check for notifications at all or checked only when they had time to do so.

As a majority of the participants confessed that they regularly check for comments, some also stated that, after uploading their photos or profile pictures, they continuously checked for any kind of response. According to an eighteen-year-old interviewee, “After uploading any picture, the time from that is a crucial period. I constantly check for all kinds of responses – be it from friends or relatives” (Personal communication, March 16, 2017). There are also a few interviewees who were extremely annoyed and apprehensive of comments, and so did not upload any pictures. Many interviewees claimed that they checked “solely due to the constructive criticism” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018) or “appreciation” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018), which might act as moral boost.

Participation in online discussions

Not only updating statuses or posting photos and videos, but in the range of activities one can practice in social media, commenting and participating in discussions are an integral expression of one's identity. From all the interviews conducted, it can be observed that many of the participants mentioned that they would participate in online discussions, but would later leave if the discussions went in a different direction. Some never felt like participating as they did not have enough time for it, while others simply did not want to engage in a kind of situation where arguments can get out of control.

Twenty-six participants felt that being "too opinionated" (Personal communication, January 19, 2018) might harm them in some way, and hence they did not want to engage in online debates or discussions. There were some who felt that "I would only participate in healthy discussions where there won't be any mudslinging" (Personal communication, March 16, 2017), while some mentioned that "engaging in such public discussions would lead to nowhere and hence it was better not to participate" (Personal communication, August 6, 2018). There were also some contrasting responses. While some interviewees stated that "I would go till the end of the discussion to prove my point" (Personal communication, August 6, 2018), a few participants also stated that "I'm very scared of others' harsh opinions, and that's why I like to stay away from such discussions" (Personal communication, January 19, 2018) and "I don't have the time to entertain others' thoughts" (Personal Communication, April 26, 2017).

This provides a range of personalities on social media – from the ones being argumentative, opinionated, and expressive to those being less expressive, less participatory, and less engaged. However, the traits of these personalities are well-thought decisions with certain objectives, which might not be true to the offline personalities of the social-media users. For example, an expressive, engaged, argumentative person might choose to stay away from online discussion for certain reasons. This shows that there might be differences between the online and offline identities of an individual.

Patterns of likes and comments

Apart from updating status, photos, videos, or commenting, the users can also react to others' posts in different ways. This then becomes another significant dimension of identity construction according to what they choose to react to and how they react. The analysis revealed that most of the

interviewees would regularly hit the “like” button for others even, if they like it only a little or do not pay much attention to it. There were some interviewees who opened up, saying that “I only liked or commented for those who did the same for me” (Personal communication, January 19, 2018), and very few interviewees stated that they neither get time to engage nor feel it necessary to like or comment.

The responses from the participants vary from liking everyone’s pictures and statuses to not liking anyone’s updated posts. While several participants specifically mentioned their choice for liking and commenting as “I like my friends’ posts on social medias, ones who are close to me and family members” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018), there were a few interviewees who neither had time to browse their newsfeed and respond to others’ posts nor wanted to show their interest. A twenty-two-year-old interviewee stated, “I don’t like to or comment on others’ posts as I don’t want the others to know that I’m interested in their posts” (Personal communication, April 26, 2017). Some other interviewees stated that “if the posts are good enough, informative enough or maybe require some urgent help, then I would definitely like it or comment on it” (Personal communication, January 19, 2018).

Most of the interviewees stated that their higher number of likes and comments on social media posts usually goes to viral content, humorous videos, content on recent news, social issues, and friends’ posts.

Framing of textual response

The language with which one expresses oneself is an organic part of one’s identity. This language of expression becomes an important element over social media, as the personality of the user is constructed largely on the language one uses in the absence of other physical references. The analysis showed that the majority of the interviewees carefully construct the response as well as their status updates.

While constructing a response to a post on social media, sixteen participants confessed that they think a lot before typing, and this is primarily because they don’t want to be incorrect or get trolled by others. As per an eighteen-year-old interviewee, “I edit almost ten times before posting the comment on Facebook as I don’t want to look like a fool or I don’t want to give out half-hearted information” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018). A twenty-seven-year-old interviewee stated, “I make sure that the comment is relevant to the topic. I was once trolled for posting wrong information ... so nowadays if I have to comment, I do check the facts before commenting” (Personal communication, January 19, 2018).

There were a few interviewees who avoided posting or commenting on social-media platforms to keep away from any kind of judgement or argument. In some cases, however, there were interviewees who stated that they did not think before commenting on the posts of their nearest and dearest as they were not bothered about being judged in such cases. Thus, it becomes an interesting revelation that the spontaneity of action and reactions are seen less on social-media platforms, thus developing the identities of individuals who are much refined, thought through, and careful. However, simultaneously, this carefully crafted personality is presented only in cases where the fear of being judged exists. Online personalities, like the offline personalities of individuals, are multi-faceted and full of role-playing instances.

Experiences on social media

One's identity is a composite whole of one's experiences. One's actions and reactions are largely the result of one's experiences. Thus, another significant issue is one's experience online in knowing how one's online personality is constructed. The analysis disclosed that there is a certain section of the interviewees – nineteen participants out of thirty – who did not face any kind of negative experience on social-media platforms, while ten participants did not face anything major, but certainly had thought-provoking experiences. There was, however, one interviewee who was terribly harassed on social media, which made him take serious actions against it.

The interviews conducted for this research paper were based on teenagers and young adults. As a result, those who had not experienced any negative or positive experiences were generally between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. Some of the participants stated that they had not faced anything serious, but showed enough anger towards online trolling which, according to them, has become quite rampant in the last few years. According to a nineteen-year-old interviewee, "There are some forwarded messages which if you don't forward further, then you might get bad luck ... I don't believe in this kind of thing and surely seeing them on my newsfeed is just not the right thing" (Personal communication, September 6, 2018). A twenty-five-year-old interviewee exclaimed, "My social media account was hacked, and I was scared that my pictures might have been misused ... but luckily, I was able to report the fake profile and Facebook looked after the rest" (Personal communication, November 11, 2017). There was another interviewee who said, "After I was trolled online for being too fat, I was so depressed that I had to do something, and I decided to join a

gym. Now the same people text me asking about my secret to fitness” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018).

According to few interviewees, there have been many positive experiences for them, for example, getting information on recent news, job openings, making new connections, learning more about a particular subject, and being entertained. Echoing the opinions of many others, an interviewee told that “social media platforms act as the perfect entertainment spot as I can select my preference and not rely on what the television or radio is providing me” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018). The experiences on social media have certainly created an impact on the minds of the participants, as they specifically stated that “I am more careful on social-media platforms and make sure that I don’t let others judge me with their remarks” (Personal communication, March 16, 2017), “I have realized the importance of self-defence” (Personal communication, January 19, 2018), “I have learned a lot from social-media platforms and that helps me to stay updated” (Personal communication, April 26, 2017), “My pictures on social media get appreciated and that matters a lot to me” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018).

Connecting online versus connecting offline

As it is evident that there are many instances where the online persona of a social-media user differs from one’s offline persona, it becomes an intriguing question as whether these two identities are strictly compartmentalized or whether there are spill overs or negotiation between them. The analysis has shown a mixed response from the interviewees in this regard.

Around twenty-one participants out of thirty stated that they would prefer meeting friends and familiar individuals with whom they had already been connected before having a social-media connection. In the interview with an entrepreneur, the thirty-year-old stated that, “Most of my friends are met online and then offline ... I meet online people for business purpose, collaborations and other activities, so my connections rely solely on online portals” (Personal communication, April 26, 2017). Few interviewees said that they met the people who were their social-media connections only and shared a good bond with them. For them, social media is just a new way to make friends, and they become part of their life just like friends they have offline. There are also a few participants who do not prefer meeting social-media connections in the offline spaces as they are not sure of what the outcome might be, and prefer to keep them as social-media contacts only. Many of the interviewees also stated that they would be very careful with

how they look when they are meeting the social-media contacts for the first time.

These apprehensions of meeting people with whom one is connected over social media only stem on one level from a general reaction to meeting any new person, but also one another level from the pressure to keep up the personality that has been developed. The apprehension also comes from finding a different personality from the one online, and thus the resulting discomfort amid the war of identities – online and offline.

Preferred ways of communication

With increasing mediated communication and intense social-media usage, as the identities of individuals become diversified, it is significant to explore which identity for connecting with others is generally preferred by the social-media users. In the analysis it is observed that there is a mixed reaction towards the preference of communication method. There were thirteen interviewees who preferred face-to-face communication, while fourteen preferred online communication, and three interviewees preferred both.

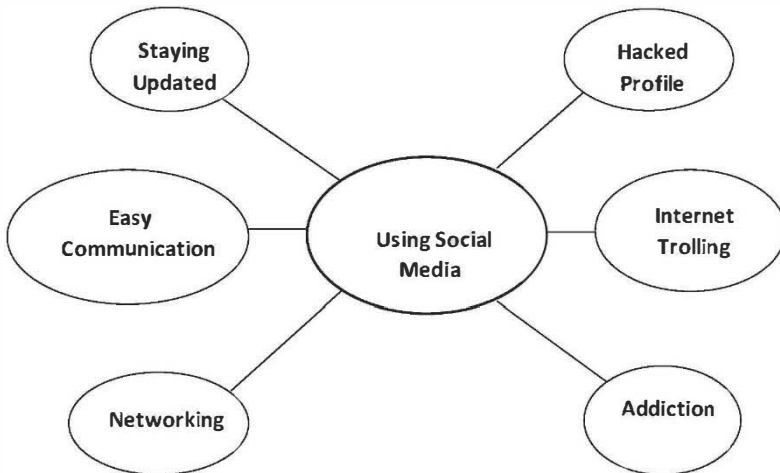
The participants felt that the internet certainly eases up the process of communication with speedy connections at affordable rates. However, some interviewees preferred maintaining communication face-to-face as it gave more credibility to the conversation and was what many claimed as being more real. Some of the participants solely relied on online communication. For example, a twenty-nine-year-old interviewee said, “In order to have a face-to-face communication, I must go out from home, and I don’t prefer that ... I would rather talk to the person over WhatsApp or Facebook and know” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018). There was also a section of participants who preferred both, as they enjoyed communicating both ways equally.

An interesting aspect is that the sample is almost equally divided between those who prefer online communication and those who prefer offline communication. One half feels that the offline communication is much more real, thus questioning the realism of the virtual world, and thus the virtual identity. This perspective at once questions the authenticity of online identity, making the online existence an elusive practice. On the other hand, another group of users prefers online communication. This group defies the realism otherwise associated with direct communication, finding comfort in the bodiless and faceless identity that interacts online.

Balancing the advantages and disadvantages

As much as the users spend time online and over social media, sometimes loving it and other times loathing it, it is intriguing to find out why they choose to be online and what benefits they are getting out of it. The concept map below depicts some of the benefits and issues of using social media as per the interviewees.

Fig. 4.1. Using social media: a balancing act



The interviewees put equal weight on the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining social-media accounts. Some of the major benefits include staying updated, “feeling empowered by watching positive videos and contents” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018), “easy and affordable communication” (Personal communication, January 19, 2018), “expressing oneself” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018), and “networking and helping in professional growth” (Personal communication, April 26, 2017). Some interviewees even stated that social-media usage helped them in their academic work. One of them said, “With WhatsApp, I can share all kind of pictures or notes of study material with my friends and also get updated about class lectures ... this is really helpful” (Personal communication, March 19, 2017).

For the disadvantages of social media, twenty-four interviewees out of thirty stated that addiction was one of the worst outcomes of heavy use. A few of the interviewees also faced the issues of profile hacking, online

trolling, time wasting, privacy breaching, online stalking, fake accounts, and “procrastinating which doesn’t allow any productive result to develop” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018). All these explain that, even with such severe drawbacks, people chose to use social media, at times for all the benefits it provides, and at others for the sheer joy of exercising freedom from physical limitations, developing an identity that becomes addictive.

Online identity versus offline identity

In the end, it was inevitable that the interviewees would express opinions on the similarities and differences of their online and offline identities, and whether they are same or different. In the analysis it is found that there exists a variation of responses among the interviewees in this regard. Several participants stated that there certainly is a difference, while some stated that there is no difference.

Several interviewees revealed that their online personas are better versions of themselves, although they are not very different from their offline personalities. One interviewee said that “there is no difference between the online and offline identities” (Personal communication, April 26, 2017). An eighteen-year-old interviewee said, “What I’m not able to impersonate in real life, I might do that in the virtual world” (Personal communication, October 20, 2017). Twenty-three out of thirty interviewees stated that their online identities are different from their offline identities, except two interviewees who were not sure whether there is any difference between the two identities, and five interviewees who felt that there is no difference.

The participants who felt that they have a different identity in the virtual world from that of the world outside the internet had diverse reasons for stating this. According to them, the identities are different as they are able to be “bold and stylish” (Personal communication, August 6, 2018), “much more opinionated” (Personal communication, June 4, 2017), and “can portray themselves in a much better way of their choice” (Personal communication, January 19, 2018), which is not always possible in the offline world.

A twenty-five-year-old interviewee said, “Social media plays a crucial role in teenagers’ lives, and I feel there is a lot of peer pressure for them to look good, be ahead of the crowd and have more likes and comments for their posts on social media ... I think they should focus more on their offline identities” (Personal communication, May 30, 2017). An entrepreneur opined, “In the next few years, social media will converge with our lifestyles completely and the automatic versions or the bots will play a crucial role”

(Personal communication, April 26, 2017). These two interesting opinions from the interviewees sum up how the online and offline identities are different, how there is a continuous struggle between the two, and how in future the struggle will further develop.

Conclusion

The two research questions of this study were how the virtual identity is constructed by social-media users and whether virtual identity influences the offline identity of an individual. In answer to the first question, the researchers have taken a few actions and preference-based variables and tried to measure them as constructional elements for online identity. As it is found that the social media users in many cases carefully construct their online identities which at many times are different from their offline identities. By carefully selecting which photos and videos are shared, by editing the photos before posting, by framing textual posts with carefully chosen words, by responding to certain types of message and certain types of people, and even at times by choosing not to respond at all, the social-media users leave a mark of their own personality. Interestingly, the personalities are as diverse as offline ones. There are extroverts and introverts of the virtual world. However, on the one hand the extroverts often claim to be so because they enjoy the freedom of online communication which is otherwise lacking elsewhere, while on the other the introverts are often this way because they prefer to stay away from all the judgements, arguments, and trolling that dampen the nature of online communication. So, it is evident that online personalities and virtual identities are developed very specifically to online environments, and through various actions and choices made by the social-media users online.

As an answer to the second question, it can be said that the online identities influence the offline identities of the social-media users as well, but only to a certain extent. In exploring whether the social-media users prefer to meet their online acquaintances in an offline environment, many have suggested that they would not want to. This is preferred as they don't want to find a different personality than the established online personality of the same individual. Many have confessed that they would take special care over how they look and speak when they meet the online acquaintances for the first time, to keep up with their online presentation of themselves. This shows how, through actions and choices, the online identity is influencing the offline identities.

However, an interesting finding from the study is how overpowering the judgemental gaze is even in the online environment. Many social-media

users develop an online identity that is adjusted according to the judgemental nature of their online peers. For very few users, the online platform provides an opportunity to practice a free persona, though even issues like trolling and sharp reactions have left an impact for them. More studies into this conservative attitude of the online communication environment can explore the role of the online community in developing a virtual identity.

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PART TWO:
MEDIA, POLITICS, SOCIAL NETWORKING,
AND EDUCATION

GLOBALIZATION PROCESSES IN THE RUSSIAN MASS MEDIA: PROSPECTS AND CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract

This article deals with the problems of the world trend of globalization and its influence on the Russian mass media. The social and cultural aspects of globalization in the Russian mass media are considered, from both conceptual and pragmatic points of view. The transmission of ideas, meanings, and values is associated with the cultural components of globalization process, whereas social aspects are treated as the consequences of the abovementioned processes. Various approaches (those of Hirsch, Sahin, and Aksoy; Stevenson, Monge, Petit, and Soete; Chen and Starosta; Massey, Kamalipour, and Rampal; Smith; and Tomlinson) are analysed. The term “globalization” is reconsidered in the paper. The specific functions of mass media in the conditions of globalization in the framework of the Russian society are treated through a pragmatic approach. As a result, the correlation principle between information systems and social systems has been worked out. The complex of prospects and consequences of different directions is represented in the paper. The perspectives of homogenization or the hybridization vectors of the globalization process development are some of these, based on the functional aspect the Russian mass media play in the globalization process.

Introduction

Globalization is the trend of increasing interaction between people or companies on a worldwide scale due to advances in transportation and communication technology, nominally beginning with the steamship and the telegraph in the early to mid-nineteenth century. With increased interactions between nation states and individuals came the growth of

international trade, ideas, and culture. Globalization is primarily an economic process of integration that has social and cultural aspects.

Cultural globalization refers to the transmission of ideas, meanings, and values around the world in such a way as to extend and intensify social relations.

McLuhan (1960) started a serious discussion about the process of globalization and turning the world into a global village. But the preconditions for all those changes took place much earlier. As a result, many nations began their incorporation into one integral world that was more interconnected than ever.

Various approaches (Chen and Starosta 2000; Hirsch 1992; Kamalipour and Rampal 2001; Monge 1998; Petit and Soete 1999; Sahin and Aksoy 1993; Smith 2017; Stevenson 1997; Tomlinson 2018) point to the complexity of globalization.

Globalization and the Russian media

Globalization has impacted tremendously on the media in general, and on Russian media in particular.

Within the cultural analysis of globalization, the media is considered to be the main force for the current reconstruction of the cultural environment. The electronic media cover an intensifying interconnectedness across distance and time on the cultural level. In this sense, globalization helps not only interpret but also change the world. Globalization discourse highlights prospects and consequences of the phenomenon. Some researchers like Massey (2002) talk about the “power geometry” of globalization in terms of the form and nature of the interconnectedness of the world, but not the idea of world interconnectedness.

In another book by Massey (2016), he refers to some people who “are more in charge of than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it and there is going to be an imbalance of power when dealing with two nations.”

The high speeds of globalization have their roots in technological progress and international economy. On the one hand, one can see the propensity towards synthesis and planetarity. On the other hand, there is a propensity for multiplicity and singularity. These vectors are intricately bound and represent one and the same picture.

A Reconsideration of globalization

The term “globalization” is used to specify that it is not a uniform process, but can be understood differently in various contexts, and has different effects on people.

I see globalization as the spread of influences (such as ideas, concepts, knowledge, ethics, and technology, as well as behaviors) across obstacles (linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic, ethic, political, social, or environmental). It should be underlined that globalization is not merely a homogenizing and integrating power but the basis for the problems of whole nations and certain individuals.

It is evident that an efficient system of mass communication is the ground for the development of modern society. In its turn, mass communication reflects the process of delivering messages to the public. It could be explained as a socially determined phenomenon with the main role of influencing an audience by means of the information in the transmitted contents.

On a comparative basis with mass communication, mass media should be determined as that representing various technological means used to deliver messages to the public, and is interpreted as containing periodical issues of printed, radio, tele, and video origin that distribute mass information.

In modern Russian society, the mass media system performs a range of important functions:

- an informative function that means providing people with topical information about the events and processes of social and political life, which is the basis for formation of the individual’s picture of the world and orientation in the complex system of social reality
- a socialization function (including a political one) that is the formation and maintenance of cultural and political stereotypes, and norms of behavior
- a public opinion mobilization function that attracts attention to a certain social and political problem of social feedback and the potential serious consequences
- a society and power structures feedback function playing the role of means of a public opinion expression and pressure instrument for power institutions, motivating them to take adequate measures
- a recreation and entertaining function that meets people’s cultural demands, hence maintaining social stability by streaming the interest and leisure time of people

The mass-media regulations are based on the dependency model that was introduced by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur (1976). These principles demonstrate the relationship among the media, audience, and social system. This means that there is a certain correlation between information system and social system.

The roots of this can be found in the encoding and decoding model of communication proposed by Hall (1976). Within this theory, the audience can be characterized by three different kinds of feedback to the message perceived:

- (a) the dominant, or preferred, reading (which is perception, in our interpretation) – the meaning created by the author of the media text for its further perception of the audience
- (b) the opposition reading (perception in general) – the meaning created by the audience as a refusal of the suggested one by the creator
- (c) the negotiated reading (perception in general) – the compromise of dominant and opposition meanings when the audience partially perceives the creator's thoughts and expresses their own views on the media text

The modern realities constructed by the mass media form people's feelings of misunderstanding of the events which have taken place.

The Russian media market

Political and economic factors have a decisive effect on the current state of the Russian media market. Economic difficulties, scarce investments in the media industry, and a lack of uniformity cannot be considered positive factors which develop the media market. The uneven economic growth of the capital and the regions impacts media activities.

The political leverage is implemented by legislation amendments that play controlling functions. The most illustrative examples of recent times are the amendments which limit the share of foreign companies in Russian media down to 20%, and Roskomnadzor (the Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecoms, Information Technologies, and Mass Communications) tightened the control of the breaches in statutory regulations that limited the extremist and terrorist activities.

Another consequence of globalization influencing the media of Russia is adaptation to the new legislative requirements. This issue had to be addressed mainly by media enterprises with a foreign capital share of more than 20%, which was prohibited by legislation amendments. Some of these

media ceased their activities in Russia. Those that wished to continue their work in the country had to introduce changes in their ownership and correct their management systems. For example, the owners of the RBK corporate group removed some divisions from their immediate subordination, i.e. the RBK-TV channel and Business Press publishing house (in a reverse situation, they would continue to be controlled by Pragma Ltd, a Cyprus company, which is now prohibited by law). These efforts proved to be sufficient to retain their positions on the market. The *Vedomosti* newspaper had to change owner when they redeemed the shares which were previously owned by different foreign companies: Finnish Sanoma, American Dow Jones & Co, and the British FT Group. This resulted in a formal transfer of Russian holdings to Russian owners. As an outcome of such transformations, new conditions on the media market reflect the interests of national business and political elites. On the television market, the Russian legislature mitigated the restrictions for subscription channels, mostly cable and satellite, that were not allowed to place advertisements in 2014. In February 2015 they got this permission back on the condition that they distribute at least 75% of their national production.

The necessity of new Russian media models is another consequence of media globalization. The precondition is changing the situation in political and economic spheres of the country. One should pay attention to the culture of distribution of the Russian media – alongside the traditional printed versions there is the electronic format. This causes changes in the media perception culture. At this stage, the brand, contents, and staff dominate the distribution type and other features that were of importance not so long ago.

Every media outlet of Russia would determine its audience and specific inner regulations. For example, there is a universal tendency, according to George Gerbner (2003), for television media to make programs for the international market, rather than the national one, and in this context, Russia is no exception. At present, stage one can observe the situation when Russian television-program content is determined by the issue of marketability. Based on this principle, television programs containing violent scenes “travel well” (Gerbner 2004). In comparison, comedy shows that are popular in one country are not successful in another country. Things that seem to be funny in one national and ethnic context are considered to be offensive in another. This phenomenon can be explained by the dependence between the comical nature of the material and the cultural and ethnic specificity. That allows an understanding of why comedy is culturally determined. In this connection, it should be mentioned that violent material is treated universally and is culturally transparent.

Aspects of Russian Media

The Russian media system as a part of the global media system is the means of the dissemination of homogenization, and hybridization does not lead to the preservation of traditional cultures.

Cultural media consequences are of ambivalent character. On the one hand, cultural dissemination is reflected in the forms of information spreading, and cultural exchange should be considered a positive feature, while the Americanization of the Russian culture is sometimes called “McDonaldization” or “Disneyfication,” and is treated in a negative way. Many public places resemble an American theme park, and the goods produced are similar to the American ones – everything looks the same as in the United States.

It is relevant to mention the causes of this “Disneyfication.” The research conducted gives me the grounds to distinguish some features of the phenomenon. First is the rapid speed of the American popular cultural diffusion; second are the stereotyping and similarity processes; third is the commercialization leading to media adjustment to the expectations of the consumers (or audience) and the advertisers. Commercialization is aimed at absorbing a large audience by producing successful (justifying the expectations of the readers and the viewers) content. The financial volume of advertising in the Russian media sphere at the stage of the globalization process is very high (up to five hundred billion dollars) and is controlled by a few agency-owning companies.

The financial aspect of the Russian media being a part of the world-media globalization process is the reduction of advertising budgets. According to the data of the Russian Association of Communication Agencies (RACA), in 2017 the media advertising market lost about 16% as compared to the previous year; its volume was over 480 billion rubles. During this year, the advertising budget decreased by 26% in printed media, 11% in radio, and up to 9% on television. The internet segment demonstrated no decline, instead growing to win positions.

The content aspect of the Russian media within the globalization era covers the text producing robots. Yandex, a corporation specializing in internet-related services and products, started using these technologies. Within the campaign organized by the company, an information agency was set up to replace journalists with robots. The programs introduced by the company accumulate monitoring and analysis data.

The functional aspect of the Russian media is characterized by the expansion of the electronic source’s users. For example, in 2018 the number of users of the Russian segment of the internet reached 89.6 million. The

increase in the number of users is caused by a low cost (mobile internet is about 480 rubles per month). The mobile internet audience is increasing rapidly; the growth here amounted to 16.8%. The social layer of the mobile internet audience is young people aged eleven to twenty-six, while stationary computers are used by older people.

The expansion of the electronic sources leads to the development of corresponding domains. The .ru domain includes 6.08 million names and is considered to be one of the world's five largest domains. The .рФ domain has more than a thousand names and is considered to be a leader among those that use national alphabet symbols. Online government and state services provided by the internet also reflect the functional aspect of the Russian media. The potential users of the internet services should register in the UIAS (Unified Identification and Authentication System). Its number is more than 26.8 million people at present. The departments of the government are also users of the internet when placing information openly.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that, regardless of researchers' understanding and attitudes to the globalization process, it does take place. The researchers are to analyse it and interpret its prospects and consequences. The role of the media in the globalization process can hardly be overestimated. The evident thing is there is no globalization process without media involvement, which is not only a starting point but a stimulating aspect. On the one hand, the role of the Russian media is reduced to technological advancement or increasing popularization, while the aims, strategies, and development vectors remain out of the qualitative analysis. On the other hand, the media (like any other institution) that fail to meet the challenges of globalization will remain irrelevant. The perspectives of the globalization process deal with the homogenization or hybridization vectors of its development. The consequence of this process deals with the traditional culture consumption, which is fading. These perspectives and consequences are not yet facts, only hypotheses based on research.

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THE CONDITION OF THE PAKISTANI MEDIA TODAY: IMPACT ON THE CHINA–PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

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Abstract

This article argues that the Pakistani media is infiltrated by foreign elements which are spreading misperceptions. The media in Pakistan cannot be conceived as free media as it is controlled by foreign elements. The Western corporate media backed by the Western financial elites is supported by India in controlling the channels of information in Pakistan. The most important channel of information through which the masses gain access to information is television. The narrative in the electronic media strengthens the Western strategic interests at the cost of Pakistani and Chinese strategic interests in the region. The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the chief instrument of security of Pakistani and Chinese strategic interest. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) powers and India are actively working to undermine the Pak-China strategy in the region. The private corporate media's chief mouthpiece is GEO television. Most coverage by the Western-backed media in Pakistan wants to malign the Pakistani military, Islamic values, the two-nation theory, and Iqbal as a founding father of Pakistan, and force the dominance of a secular reading of Jinnah. Successive Pakistani governments and the Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) have not addressed this problem, but rather aggravated it. Media Challenges to the CPEC are addressed as a rebuttal to ill-founded notions such as impending Chinese colonialism as being baseless propaganda.

Introduction

Regarding its policy of managing information, Pakistan has two models today. One is the Western model and the second is the Chinese model. Up until the rise of China, there was either the Western model or the Soviet model for managing information. Before the information revolution changed how we manage the flow of information, the Soviet model ceased to exist. The Western propaganda labelled the Chinese political model as that of an autocratic communist dictatorship that gave no freedom of speech to its citizens. This left the whole world to emulate only one model, i.e. the Western model. This model is based on an ideological presupposition that absolute freedom of speech is a good thing. Desecrating other people's paragons of perfection is wholeheartedly supported. To desecrate the foundational ideology of the state, religion and family values are permitted. Since attacking the primordality of a society was deemed perfectly legal, it was gradually accepted by the Western populations over several generations, despite the ethical side effects it posed to state and society. And now the non-West is also threatened by this menace, except for contemporary Russia, China, Cuba, North Korea, and Iran, who manage their information differently from the subtle and subliminal propaganda model of the West. In reality, the Western model preaches freedom of speech, but in practice this is hardly the case. The Zionist money elite set the agenda as to *what* will be covered by the media, as well as *how* it will be covered and *who* will cover it. Like the notion of human rights, freedom of speech from the West became nothing more than an instrument to slap all those who did not follow the agenda of the empire. Noam Chomsky wrote about this in his *Manufacturing Consent* many decades ago. Before we go on to further discussion of the media in Pakistan, it is important to understand the forces that are at play within the global context.

The Global Context

The external forces that are out to disrupt the CPEC are the following: in its invisible form, it is the Zionist elite based in North America, Europe, and Israel; in its visible form, it is the NATO club of destruction whose states, governments, and military are heavily influenced by the Zionist elite. These elites have historically wielded control of the NATO countries by taking them hostage through a monopoly on finance, real estate, media, universities, and, most importantly, on paradigms of knowledge, arts, and culture. Their unfortunate and unenlightened junior partners are India and Japan, and many other countries whose finance and foreign policy they

control. Pakistan and China are not immune from their control either, but if the CPEC and OBOR (One Belt One Road) are built, then Russia, China, and Pakistan are likely to get away from the Zionist grip. To a large extent, China has already managed to get out of its economic grip, but Chinese independence from this financial elite is far from final and complete until its currency, backed by precious metals, goes global. This process of Chinese and other developing nations' independence cannot be complete until China has amassed enough gold and, in consortium with Russia and key countries of the Muslim world, floats a new global currency backed by the gold standard. If the Chinese did that successfully, there is a great likelihood that it could lead to a military backlash by the Zionist elite using their Western proxies. Full independence of China also requires a complete exodus of American forces from the region.

As far as Pakistan is concerned, their control runs deeper. They have certainly "owned" the last two civil governments, and since the post-Zia era they have partially wielded influence on the Pakistani military as well. While the Pakistani public is partially asleep, the civil governments are designed to deep sleep, but the Pakistani military is partially awake. Most educated Pakistanis are Westernized and still colonized in their mind. The habitual subservience to entities in power has in their minds routinized the awe and fear of the white man. The military is undoubtedly the most patriotic core of the Pakistani society, but due to the colonial legacy and excessive reliance on the English by the military leadership, a Westernized orientation for progress prevents them from imagining a civilizational transition to the East. In addition, the military cannot risk taking such economic decisions that would tarnish its respect in the masses. The military is awake enough to repel their attacks and not comply with the demands of this destructive elite in three important areas: denying access to nuclear weapons; not turning their backs on the Kashmir issue; and a judicious Afghanistan policy of de-marginalization of the majority Pashtun ethnic group from the process of state making. The Pakistani military therefore may not have the luxury of remaining politically aloof anymore. At some point very soon in the future a discussion must begin on the possibility of a new political system. A vast majority of Pakistanis remain ambivalent about Western-style democracy because it facilitates intrusion by outsiders.

But the elected governments of Pakistan have looted the country with both hands, while the foreign infiltrators have been given a free rein in manipulating the channels of information. The two most important channels of information that deal with public consciousness are the media and academia. The Pakistani media was brought under control via foreign money, but academia has been brought under control using taxpayer's

money, which is run by culturally lobbied bureaucrats sitting in the Higher Education Commission (HEC). Both the media and academia are infiltrated with ideas whose implication the military may have just begun to understand.

Briefly, this is the political environment in which the Pakistani media and academia were infiltrated by the outside powers. Now let us take a look at the China model in comparison. Unlike the Western model of managing information, the theory of the China model is more or less the same as it appears in practice. In China, there is an overt strict control of the flow of information, with relative freedoms to express citizens' concerns. This has produced a social and political stability unknown to the crime-ridden capitals of the West. This is due to the fact that the Chinese government does not allow people from inside to cut the branch they are sitting on, i.e. openly allowing foreign-funded groups to question the legitimacy of the system, Chinese values, and territory. This is why the Chinese system has worked and proved to be superior to the fake Western one, which does not practice what it preaches, and is built on deception and lies. The Chinese state is perhaps the only non-Western one that was competent enough to wean itself off Western dependency in a way that many other large states could not. Brazil, India, and post-Soviet Russia are good examples. While Russia, under the sagacious leadership of Vladimir Putin, has made enormous progress to pull itself out of the mess of the Yeltsin years, it still has a long way to go to catch up with the Chinese economic muscle. China could not have done this using the Western model, because the entire model is rigged.

The Private Media's Monopoly on Pakistan's media landscape

Since 9/11, Pakistan has been subject to fourth and fifth-generation warfare. The adversaries of Pakistan understand that Pakistan is a nuclear state, and hence cannot be attacked by NATO or India from outside, as was the case for Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Lebanon. Therefore, there has to be a long-term strategy for Pakistan in the form of a "soft invasion." The media in Pakistan became "free" in 2002, which was a great victory for the enemies of Pakistan. This is a type of information warfare that uses Pakistan's own channels of information (such as the media and academia) to build false narratives against the state, the military, and peoples' (Islamic) beliefs and values. The heart of Pakistan's state is the military, and the heart of the military is its intelligence agencies. Hence, the military and the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) are permanent bogeymen of the Western and Indian media. Most importantly, the entertainment

media and advertisements shape people's view of themselves from the white person's eyes using the outmoded and backward "enlightenment values" of historical Europe from centuries ago. The entertainment media shapes a new reality non-politically, to which political attitudes are ultimately attached. India has a large entertainment industry which takes an interest in shaping Pakistani consciousness to undercut Islam, and promote nationalist/fascist liberalism, anti-spiritual attitudes, and feminism to disrupt the institution of the family. All of these ideological viewpoints are tested methods that have brought about the social and ethical dissolution of the Western societies. Pakistan's population, which is comprised of overwhelmingly young people, is particularly vulnerable to such shifting attitudes in the name of progress and modernism.

In order to achieve all this, the United States and India have invested large sums of money to buy out individual media houses and their anchors and producers. In my opinion, as well as that of those media professionals I interviewed, about 90% of all media in Pakistan has received some funding from abroad.¹ When we talk to the journalists, they do talk about this. But since this is rarely documented, this information does not exist "officially." The most important media house is the Jang Group of Publications, whose television channel is called GE●. This media group is owned by Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman, who resides abroad and is widely known as being pro-India and only nominally a Pakistani, and just about every critic of GE● knows him as a traitor. Most recently, when the pro-American puppet government of Nawaz Sharif was booted out by the Supreme Court on corruption charges, GE● tried to defend him. Currently, there have been countrywide protest against GE● and public demands to shut down this media house for being anti-Pakistani and loyal to India. GE● became the most viewed channel because of its sophisticated operation, which was enabled by the Americans. Hamid Mir, who is the most well-known GE● anchor, was attacked by unknown assailants for being anti-Pakistan. Also, he is possibly one of the most despised anchors in the Pakistani media.

Different media organizations followed the GE● model with hidden American and Indian money furthered their agenda between 2001 to 2014. After 2014, many journalists thought that American money is now shrinking because of their military pull out, trying to jump ship and assuming a pro-state stance in their analysis, blowing the whistle on the mainstream corporate media of Pakistan. Currently, the BOL and ARY television media corporations have openly assumed a critical stance against the "sold out" corporate media and furthered a pro-state and pro-China discourse. This

¹ Conversations with Dr. Moeed Peerzada

trend is likely to strengthen in the near future. This type of media is patriotic, critical of puppet governments (Zardari and Nawaz Sharif in Pakistan, and Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani in Afghanistan), and openly supports the anti-terrorism efforts of the Pakistan military.

Has the Pakistani Government and State Addressed this Problem?

Since the last decade, the Zardari and Nawaz Sharif governments have been compliant with India and NATO forces, and one can say that they were a part of the false narratives spewed out by the Western-backed corporate media. The Pakistan Television (PTV) is state media, but is under the civil government's control. PTV was used to adopt a similar line of reasoning as the "boss media" of the West; therefore, it too could not bring the true narrative to the people, and only marginal lip service to Pakistani nationalism was paid. The entertainment side of PTV was culturally less inappropriate than that of the corporate media.

Therefore, one can safely say that so-called democratic civilian governments promoted and supported the false media, rather than doing something against it. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), also under the civil government's control, is a regulatory authority of the media which should ensure that the content of the media is in accordance with the values and predicament of the Pakistani people, was actually a toothless tiger that seldom took action against the complaints that were continuously launched against many media companies. So, these two governments did nothing to control a poisonous media, but rather enabled its continuity. The main problem is that of American and Indian infiltration in the country. This infiltration is not only in the government but also in many state offices. It took them fifteen years to establish this network of infiltration, and it may be difficult to rout this force out unless it is done from the very top, and forcefully. If the military takes the initiative to call for a new political system, a vast majority of the public are likely to support them.

The Media Challenge to the CPEC

The reason Pakistan is not becoming "liberal or modern" is not because of traditional Pakistanis, but because of "liberal Pakistanis" and "fundamentalists." Both these groups are funded by world Zionism. The idea is that if you deepen this polarity of two seemingly extreme positions, and if, in another generation, this polarity starts reflecting within the

military, then there may be a fertile ground for a civil war. Both these extremes are well funded by the same entities. Fundamentalist thinking primarily comes from US-supported Saudi Arabia and its influence, and the fanatically secular thinking comes from the USAID and South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA), funded by India and facilitated by RAW and the Indian Intelligence – supported stooges through Indians via those Pakistani liberals who are willing to carry out the Indian agenda. The liberals are comprised of liberal-seculars and Marxist-seculars, whereas the fundamentalists are comprised of Wahabi and Salafi orientations. The liberals are against the CPEC because they are habitually subservient to the West and consider the white person superior to the East Asian. The fundamentalists are against the CPEC because, according to them, China is an atheist country that treats Uyghur minority Muslims very brutally. The same fundamentalists are fine with women in Kashmir being raped or Muslims being butchered by the millions in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Libya. Sometimes, these fundamentalists even lead the Western military campaigns against their fellow Muslims, as in the case of Yemen. They are a truly shameless lot. In the contemporary media discourse, most of the anti-CPEC arguments come from the fundamentalists and liberal extremists.

The outside-funded groups are by and large pro-American, pro-India, anti-China, and vehemently anti-CPEC. They follow the SAFMA agenda, or their own variant of it. Their numbers are very few, but they are supported by the mainstream media channels, and their visibility is much larger in proportion to their numbers. This group furthers the most ridiculous argument that China will be like the East India Company of the United Kingdom and will come in the name of trade to usurp the national sovereignty of Pakistan. The United Kingdom, which actually did that and continues to do so as a part of NATO, is never criticized by them. The United States, which is actively undermining Pakistani sovereignty, is also never criticized by them. But China, which has never invaded any country, is in their opinion *likely* to do that in some imaginary moment in the future. Either these liberals have a crystal ball in which they can see the future, or they are stupid, or they have sold out to the West. Only the latter explanation is plausible. Most Pakistanis know that China is a time-tested friend. It is part of the political belief system in Pakistan that the Chinese have always helped Pakistan, and have never done anything to harm the country.² These liberals have talked nonsense on the corporate media platform for the last

² The China-Pakistan relationship is arguably the closest bilateral relationship in the world today. For a longer discussion on this topic see the *Pakistan-China Axis* by Andrew Small.

fifteen years, but I think that an overwhelming majority of Pakistanis do not buy this nonsense anymore.

The Pakistani media is not free – arguably, it is the most suppressed media in the world. In 2011, the *siasat.pk* forum published a list of those journalists who belong to SAFMA and who are considered by Pakistanis to be working against the national interest, with connections to the Indian Intelligence Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).³ According to the critics of SAFMA, the Pakistani journalists who are working at the behest of India, there seems to be a four-point agenda besides the general psychological warfare against the morale of Pakistani people. This agenda includes: disputing the notion that Allama Mohammad Iqbal was the founding figure of Pakistan; painting Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah as a whisky-guzzling Kemalist-style secular who had nothing to do with Islam; permanently burying the Kashmiri cause and struggle; defaming the Pakistan Army and the ISI; supporting the Indian national interest; and scuttling the possibility of close cooperation with China, Iran, and Russia.

³ I A Rehman, Senior Journalist and Director HRCP; M. Ziauddin, Executive Editor Express Tribune; Zahid Hussain, Senior Editor Newsline; Nazir Leghari, Editor Awam; Hussain Naqvi, Senior Journalist; Sadaf Arshad, Executive Editor Media Monitor; Atta-ul-Musawar, City Editor, Express Tribune; Amir Mehmood, General Secretary, CPNE; Siddique Baloch, Editor, Balochistan Times; Tariq Chaudry, Vice President of PFUJ; Tahir Rathore, President, Rawalpindi-Islamabad Union of Journalists (RIUJ); Khalid Farooqi, Editor, Daily Awaz; Ayaz Khan, Editor Editorial, Daily Express; Raza Rumi, The Friday Times; Shahzada Zulfiqar, Senior Journalist, Quetta; Nusrat Javeed, Anchorperson Aaj TV; Sirred Manzoor, General Secretary SAFMA, Pakistan; Agha Nasir, Director Geo News; Iftikhar Ahmed, Anchorperson Geo News; Babar Ayaz, Columnist; Saleem Shahid, President Quetta Press Club; Dr. Jabbar Khattak, Editor Awami Awaz; Ghazi Salahuddin, Columnist; Mujahid Barelvi, Anchorperson CNBC; Irfana Mallah, Columnist; Jehangeer Aslam, President Turbat Press Club; GN Mughal, Senior Sindhi Journalist; Ghulam Nabi Chandio, Editor; Syed Mumtaz Shah, Editor Mashriq Quetta and Lahore; Lala Asad, President Sukkar Press Club; Khalid Khokar, Editor; Fayyaz Naich, Anchorperson Sindh TV; Amer Sindhu, Columnist; Anjum Rasheed, Senior Journalist Jang Group; Khalid Chaudhry, Former Editor Aaj Kal; Shoab Adil, Editor Naya Zamana; Saida Fazal, Resident Editor Business Recorder; Munno Bhai, Columnist; Ibrahim Shirwani, Senior Journalist; Asma Shirazi, Anchor SAMAA TV; Afzal Khan, Columnist; Mustansar Javed, Editor Date Line; Rana Qaisar, Resident Editor Pakistan Today, Islamabad; Shamsul Islam Naz, Former Sec-Gen PFUJ; Khushnood Ali Khan, Editor Jinnah; Mehmal Sarfaraz, Editor Open Daily Times; Khaled Ahmed, Editor and Columnist; Allama Sadiq Azhar, Columnist Waqt; Imtiaz Alam, Editor South Asian Journal; Shamim Shahid, President Peshawar Press Club.

Dr Shahid Masud and Mubashar Lucman, who are prominent TV journalists, revealed that a memo was revealed in the ministry of information that there are journalists on their list who enable this type of agenda. They said that:

there are journalists on their payroll who write one column with five different names and get their propaganda published in different newspapers. Many of these people are on the payrolls of political parties, media and foreign embassies. But when you make the allegation that Mr so and so is receiving funds to do this, and now we want to bring evidence against such person, then immediately there is backlash by the sold-out journalists that our democratic freedom of speech rights are in danger. People have PR companies in this country who are doing this.⁴

According to Dr Shahid Masud:

In 2001, a very famous [unnamed] journalist came and told me that, Dr Masud, if you want to have a successful journalism career in Pakistan, you need to do three things; First, you must be critically abusive about Pakistan because a Pakistani nationalist has no future in the country. Second, you must scold the military every now and then, and third, you must denigrate Islam. He said if you want to be favored by the foreigners, you must do that ... And amongst us there are so many who do that.⁵

Similarly, Zaid Hamid, a prominent defence analyst and a media figure, argued:

SAFMA's agenda is to confuse the new generations of Pakistani people as to why Pakistan was created ... [and] to prove that the two-nation theory was wrong. If you can successfully do that, then there is no reason for Pakistan to exist. Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah said very clearly in his speeches that the guiding ideology of Pakistan will be Islamic socialism.⁶

Fake News, and the Confluence of Social and Mass Media

Fake News is a major issue in the politics of the media in today's world. The Western corporate media is a pioneer in this field, as they still undisputedly remain the masters of disinformation and propaganda. Since social media on the internet is unchecked by any external agency, it can

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMq-8Rk4sZg>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-VnNa8xGYs>

produce blogged texts that can be hosted or cited by other websites, and then the electronic media can cite those websites, producing a chain of information that is used without verification, having an effect on the public mind which is unaware of such technicalities. Recently, a Chinese couple working for a possibly US-supported Korean agency were killed. Based on rumour, Dunya news in Pakistan reproduced unverifiable news. This is nothing new because the American corporate media is a pioneer in fabricating fake news. The entire tabloid industry has thrived on such fabricated information for decades. Many of these tabloids are owned and operated by the same Zionist elite. In a world driven by information, it must be remembered that the other side of the coin is disinformation. It is very easy to start up some home-launched website that is based nowhere, citing websites from a credible source, and becoming news. Such fake information is often released by Indian agents in Pakistan – multiple channels on YouTube are full of them. This is the problem with the Western model of information management. The Western governments are not in control of their own channels of information. Anyone who uses such a model is bound to run into similar problems. This purposefully irresponsible and reckless management of information would be unthinkable in the Chinese model, where most of the media is state controlled and hence accountable to the authorities. It is about time that Pakistan learned from Russia and China about how to manage its private organizations engaged in mass media.

The Next Election and the Mass Media in Pakistan

The role of the media as well as money is decisive in the so-called democracies of the Western model. Heaven forbid there is another election with the same type of “pseudo-democratic” system based on a parliamentary form of government, in the UK and India style, where the media can decisively determine the public perception and hence the outcome of the election. Keeping in mind that the owners of financial capital in the West who buy out our governments are the same people who fund the media in our country. So, who are they going to support? They will support their favourite puppets, once again. That is why, in my opinion, Pakistan cannot afford to go into the next election without considering the possibility of an alternative political system as well as a new structure of dealing with information that is conducive to our values and history. The success of the CPEC is crucial to the economic security and survival of China and Pakistan. One of the main obstacles to the presentation of the CPEC to the Pakistani public is the negative publicity it gets from the Western-controlled

private media. The smooth functioning of the CPEC depends on how quickly the state can reclaim the media space from the foreign agents.

This is a good moment to learn from the Chinese experience. India has followed the Western model for seven decades. How far has it got? Not too far, in my opinion. Its people are one of the poorest on the planet with about fifty active insurgencies around the country, with severely lopsided development and little stability. How can it be a model? It is surely a model to be avoided as a disaster in the field of development. The India infiltrated media in Pakistan is likely to label the Western puppets as democrats, and all those who do not support them as supporters of autocratic and military rule. In the light of a recent speech by President Trump, the United States almost declared a new war against Pakistan, saying that India is a friend while Pakistan (which allegedly harbours terrorists) is an adversary. Most of this war is likely to be information warfare. The days of diplomacy are now over, and very soon the quadrilateral relationship between the United States, India, China, and Pakistan is going to come down to straight power concepts. The time is ripe to pull the plug on the Pakistan–US pseudo-alliance. The army chief of Pakistan told the Americans off by saying “we don’t want your money.” This was a step in the right direction. The next step should be the reclamation of the channels of information from them.

How Can the Chinese Government Help?

In the world today there are several centres of power. The USA-NATO-Israel-India is one cluster, a strategic bloc. China and Pakistan form a proto bloc in which Russia and Iran have to be integrated. The first bloc has occupied Afghanistan and wants to subvert the rise of China using its Western borders. This bloc’s ruling elite and central banks are one, but the latter bloc’s ruling elite is diversified and remains on life support on the former bloc’s central banks. A Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) level integration of finance of the Eastern bloc is necessary before this bloc is functionally integrated with BRICS. Eventually, Turkey and Central Asian Islamic countries will see their economic and energy interest in joining BRICS and the CPEC. If they surmount the Western challenge, they are also likely to join this bloc. This is the geostrategic environment in which help from the Chinese government can be solicited by Pakistan.

Here is a brief assessment of regional media in the CPEC region. Iran has an independent media. In Russia, Russia Today (RT) has emerged as a serious rival to Western propaganda. China’s English China Global Television Network (CGTN) service is sophisticated albeit very careful and cautious media while criticizing the West. It will need to engage in more

discursive defiance against the lies and propaganda of the West and partner with regional countries to open the Urdu/Hindi service of the CGTN. And as stated above, the Pakistani media and universities were taken hostage after 9/11. Pakistan has its own media pointing its guns at its own public. The Pakistani media may need Chinese help in operation clean up. But this help can be solicited from the Chinese Communist Party by the Pakistani military. The survival of Pakistan through the long trial of the post-9/11 battleground is to a large extent attributable to its military. The military's re-establishment of writ in the fields of security and foreign policy has been received ever positively by an overwhelming majority of Pakistani people. The United States and US-supported civilian governments have minimal trust and extremely low ratings. Pew Global also notes that an overwhelming majority of Pakistanis do not trust or like the US/NATO policy in the region.⁷

The Pakistani military should enable the big Chinese companies to buy out the existing media companies and change the content of the media gradually. This would reduce the damage done to the public mind, but would still not build the alternative narratives. In order to build the public consciousness, the CGTN should expedite opening its Urdu/Hindi Service in South Asia by satellite TV systems and replace the Zionist/Anglo-Saxon/Hindu news and entertainment media with Chinese and traditional Muslim cultural movies and dramas. The resuscitation of traditional music and liturgy should be a recurrent theme in the media so that old art forms create a modern market and produce livelihoods. This model has helped Japan, South Korea, and China. RT should also be encouraged to have a Urdu/Hindi Service. The Russian RT is already operating in several languages such as Arabic, Spanish, English, and now Chinese. The Urdu/Hindi-speaking market is almost 1.75 billion people in the world, if India, Pakistan, and parts of Bangladesh, Nepal, the Middle East, and the South Asian diaspora are considered. The West is fast losing or has already lost the economic war with China and East Asia. It has not won any wars recently. It only destroys countries. Militarily, if the Zionist elite pushes the Western nations into a nuclear war, the entire planet risks destruction. Short of that, the West is not likely to attack Russia or China, but because of the internationalization of the English language, the West is doing major damage to the world's civilizations through its media propaganda. The only way for smaller nations to subvert this process is to consider the management of their information channels in light of the Russian and Chinese experiences. Russia and China have experience in the politics of

⁷ <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/05/10/what-pakistan-thinks>.

defiance against mighty adversaries. Perhaps Pakistan has a lot to gain from experimenting with its own variant of the Chinese/Russian/Asian model.

Conclusion

The media in Pakistan has been gradually taken over by foreign groups since 9/11. Whereas the Obama Administration openly sanctioned, by an act of Congress, some fifty million US dollars as hard money for the sake of “perception management,” soft money in form of hundreds of millions of dollars are not even accounted for. While the media strategy of the West has overall failed in its grand plan of soft invasion, it has succeeded in producing a small liberal class of journalists and pseudo-intellectuals who are busy spreading sedition in Pakistani society because of their lopsided quasi-monopoly of the channels of information, such as the media and academia. This class of Pakistanis is busy safeguarding India’s strategic interests, and many of them are allegedly on the payroll of Indian intelligence agencies, USAID, and the Central Intelligence Agency. Since the main concern of the West and the United States is to subvert the rise of China, they feel it necessary to destabilize Pakistan. By doing so, the process of the CPEC would come to a screeching halt, leaving China’s trade and energy supplies vulnerable to the US warships in the Strait of Malacca. However, with the current renewed force and vigour with which the Pakistani military has disbanded the NATO-India supported and Ghani government incubated terrorist groups in Pakistan, the Pakistani nation and military has won the hard war. However, as far as the soft war of information and state organs implosion (fifth generation warfare) is concerned, Pakistan and China have multiple challenges to surmount.

A STUDY OF THE CAPABILITY OF GOOGLE TRENDS AS AN ELECTORAL RESULTS PREDICTOR

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Abstract

In the following article, the panel data method used in Gómez and Prado (2014) is set to be verified. In that article, it was demonstrated that it is useful to use Google search statistics to predict the electoral election results in Spain between the years 2004 and 2014. In the article, it was tested if, in the last elections called in Spain since the article was published, the political party which won the elections was the most searched for during the month before the scrutiny. Besides this, it is checked whether the votes obtained by a party can be predicted thanks to the Google searches around its name. The results of that study are that this model is a solid electoral indicator during economic stability and the two-party system. Nevertheless, it makes systematic errors in the prediction because new political parties generated more curiosity rather than real vote intentions. This conclusion expands new lines of investigation relative to the treatment of information and its interpretation.

Introduction

The analysis of the information provided by a popular source such as Google and its relationship with the volume of searches done about specific terms might allow for the early detection of tendencies in many different areas. In this report, the prediction capability of the Google searches of the

electoral terms is analysed. In addition, in this report the panel data method created by Gómez and Prado (2014) will be tested to verify if, in the Spanish elections called since the article was published, the party which was the most searched for in the previous month was also the one which won the elections. Furthermore, whether the vote prediction calculated by the Gómez and Prado (2014) model matches the real results of each party is tested. The model is based on the idea that, during the pre-election period, the voters of each party search on Google for information about its own party using related terms. It is evident that, on several occasions, there is a strong correlation between the web activity of the users and the final voting activity. Such a strong correlation might conduct to the prediction of the real electoral percentage. Naturally, the relation between the popularity of a certain search term and the final electoral results might differ for several reasons. Therefore, the main objective of this report is to find out whether it is possible in the current political Spanish atmosphere (in which there are four different political sources) to predict electoral results by using Google search statistics.

In the following report, the prediction capability of Google Trends to predict the percentage of votes obtained by each party in the elections is studied. In a bipartisanship scenario such as the one that Spain had in 2014, Gómez and Prado (2014) proved that the prediction capability of the statistics provided by Google Trends was excellent. As a result, it was proved that it had 99% efficiency. Nevertheless, this political scenario has changed in Spain due to the incursion of two new political forces. Those new parties have removed the two-party system, and as a result our method is no longer able to predict the results or the vote percentage. One of the reasons that might explain this case might be the curiosity that those new parties create. To solve that curiosity, several Google searches have been done around them but, on many occasions, this does not lead to a vote.

The structure of this report is firstly the theoretical frame derived from the literature, making references to other articles based on other web predictions, then the hypothesis is exposed and the methodology explained, following which the information used will be realized, and finally the conclusions of the study will be discussed.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis of a great volume of statistics generated by the search engines of the internet provide investigators with the possibility to examine the relationship between the users' self-preferences and future facts to come (wired.co.uk 2012). Google Trends is a tool that provides information about

a certain term in a specific period. In addition, this tool allows the identification of search variations in relative values based on a scale between 0 and 100, where 100 represents the highest level of searches done about a certain term. The Google tendencies for electoral predictions are useful, as claimed by Mavragani and Tsagarakis (2016). In that report, it was proved that those who used Google Trends to predict the results of the Greek referendum in 2015 obtained a close prediction compared with the real results. Gómez and Prado (2014) confirmed the utility of the Google Trends service as well for the prediction of the Spanish elections.

Nevertheless, the prediction based on the internet is an area of investigation that comprehends a lot of different interests. Consequently, several investigators have tried to make predictions using the popularity of a search term in different areas. Choi and Varian (2012) used the data of the search engine to predict economic value indicators in the short term. Among them they included automobile sales, unemployment claims, planned trips, and consumer confidence. Ginsberg et al. (2009) presented a method to analyse a great quantity of searches through Google around diseases and flu epidemics in a specific population. Ettredge, Gerdes, and Karuga (2005) predicted the unemployment rate in the United States with a study of common terms used on the web. Preis, Moat, and Stanley (2013) found that changes in the Google searches volume might be used in stock-market predictions. Asur and Huberman (2010) confirmed that a Twitter mention of a film could reflect the amount of income it generates. Along the same lines, Gómez, Rodríguez, and Pérez-Bustamante (2016) proved the predictive capability of Google Trends to obtain the affluence of visitors to the museums, and even more to predict the affluence of visitors to wineries to expand wine tourism. Kulkarni, Kannan, and Moe (2012) argued that data about search terms used by consumers might provide indicators and measures for managers to evaluate the possible interest in products after being released, or interest around the use of that product. Gómez, Prado, and Mercado (2015) used Google Trends to build a valid method for the investment mood. Bollen, Mao, and Zeng (2011) studied the state of mind of the society through tweets, checking that the state of mind of the individual is useful to predict their behavior in many different areas.

It must be kept in mind that the prediction based on web searches is a relatively new source of information. As a result, it is often criticized by the old school method supporters. Lui, Metaxas, and Mustafaraj (2011) argued that there are strong limitations in the predictability tendencies of Google due to the difficulty determined by the circumstances in which the search is done. As a result, they concluded that Google Trends is not a good electoral predictor. Jin et al. (2011) questioned the reliability of the predictions based

on Twitter. Gayo-Avello, Metaxas, and Mustafaraj (2011) discussed similar results where no correlation was found between the current analysis techniques used on Twitter and the electoral results. Furthermore, Giglietto's (2012) results illustrated a non-significant correlation between "likes" obtained by the candidates on Facebook and the percentage obtained in the elections. A marketing consultant's office even suggested that 40% of the tweets are "non-sense stuttering" (Pearanalytics 2009).

Despite this information, there exists an emergent tendency which presents the extracted social-network information as a great source for predicting future tendencies. Based on the idea that the user's individual actions on the internet might be assembled to indicate tendencies, there are several documents that discuss electoral predictions, such as Pion and Hamel (2007) who used mining text on the web to predict the elections in the United States using algorithms. That study confirmed the hypothesis that it is possible to predict future tendencies and events through certain internet data extracts. In addition, Asur and Huberman (2010) used Twitter to predict the elections in that country. Tumasjan et al. (2010) used Twitter for political deliberation and found that the quantity of messages posted reflects the electoral results. Xie et al. (2016) combined information obtained from social networks with information from the internet, for example through surveys. The result was the accurate prediction of the electoral elections in Taiwan for 2016. Polykalas, Prezerakos, and Konidaris (2013) applied algorithms to the information provided by Google, focusing their analysis on the appropriate search terms to obtain the precise estimation of the electoral results in Germany. Making sure that the algorithm results pointed with precision, in every scenario they predicted the winner of the election before it even happened. Sang and Bos (2012) contend that the predictions based on the scrutiny of tweets might be as precise as the traditional surveys. These authors predicted the electoral results in the Netherlands. O'Connor et al. (2010) realized the strong relation between the common feeling expressed on Twitter and the consumer confidence results. Park (2014) compiled data obtained from Google, Twitter, and Facebook index-linked during four different periods of time. In those four periods, these things measured the bilateral, trilateral, and quadruple relationship between the number of mentions on the web and social networks and the candidate's name. Lee (2008) used a regression analysis to predict the United States House of Representatives election results. Chen, Gallagher, and Girod (2012) created a frame with which it was proved that social networks and terms searched for on Google are representative of crowd agreement and public opinion tendencies, presidential elections included. You et al. (2016) presented an automatic regression model of vectors to create a trustworthy

prognosis for the presidential elections in the United States. This model allowed the correlation analysis between social networks focused on the image and the phenomenon in the real world. Ensuring that the system might predict the electoral result, Polykalas et al. (2013) used Google Trends to predict the result of six electoral campaigns in two different countries – Spain and Greece. The results of the model confirmed the hypothesis which claimed that the popularity of the terms searched for on the internet are directly related to the voter's decisions in each country. Consequently, it could be used to predict the result with accuracy. Gómez and Prado (2014) proposed an econometric panel data model which proved that the Google search statistics have an explanatory and predictive capacity about the evolution of the vote intention in the Spanish elections.

The influence of the internet allows us to expect that a high percentage of citizens in a society are active users. On the other hand, the increment of searches on words related to a certain political party during periods before elections shows that potential voters used online searching as a tool to guide them during the electoral process. Considering the high volume of searches on the internet and the elevated used of the search engines, it could be argued that those factors are a representative tool of potential voters. Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel (2006) suggest that individuals take logical decisions with reference to the facts previously established. As substantiated, the model comprises five stages: recognize the need; search for information; evaluate the alternatives; make a decision; and behave accordingly after the decision has been taken. If we compare this with the method of Gómez and Prado (2014), the voting decision is compared to the buying decision. As a result, this model might be applied for an election, which means that the individual search information on the internet is related with the party which might be voted for.

Hypothesis

In this article, the effectiveness of the model developed by Gómez and Prado (2014) will be tested. In the new political environment, the bipartisan model has been removed due to the emergence of two new political parties. As a result, the current political system in Spain is dominated by four political forces: The Popular Party (PP), the Socialist Party (PSOE), Podemos, and Ciudadanos (C's).

To study the effectiveness of that model, the hypotheses to verify it are the following:

H1: the party which won the elections is the one which had the highest number of searches in the month before the elections.

With this hypothesis, we try to demonstrate if the number of searches done around the name of a party corresponds to the votes for that party. To do that, the consumer decision model will be used (Blackwell et al. 2006).

H1 will be proved if the party with more searches is the one which obtained the most votes. On the other hand, H1 will be rejected if the opposite case is proved.

H2: the votes percentage obtained by a party can be predicted thanks to the Google searches on their acronym and complete name.

With this hypothesis, the accuracy of the model is demonstrated by comparing the votes obtained by each party in relation to the number of searches around this specific party, and in comparison with the other parties.

H2 will be verified if the difference between the votes obtained and the votes estimation by the model is near 0. H2 will be rejected if the difference between the real number of votes and the votes expected is not even close to 0.

Methodology

In this study, the effectiveness of the model created by Gómez and Prado (2014) to predict the vote decision related with the Google searches on each party is evaluated.

Gómez and Prado proposed an econometric data panel model in which different parties and different moments were included. The model consists of:

$$Y_{it} = -0,63 + 1,13X_{it} + u_{it}$$

Y_{it} : percentage of votes obtained by party i in the period of time t

X_{it} : percentage of Google searches about party i in the period of time t

U_{it} : error.

To check the results obtained in the anterior report, the Model of Ordinary Squared Minimums is taken. Therefore, to evaluate the effectiveness of that model the exogenous variable will be introduced (X_{it}) and will be used to compare the estimations obtained and the real votes results.

Data

The information about the electoral results has been extracted from the Interior Ministry for:

- The European Parliament elections of May 25, 2014
- The municipal elections of May 24, 2015
- Autonomous elections of Andalucía, March 22, 2015
- Autonomous elections on May 24, 2015 in which thirteen out of seventeen communities participated
- The Catalonia autonomous elections September 27, 2015
- General Congress elections on December 20, 2015 and June 26, 2016
- Authonomical elections in Catalonia on December 21, 2017

Among all the data on voting information, we have taken the vote percentage register in the census to each party. This percentage is the one taken in the model created by Gómez and Prado (2014).

For the exogenous variable, Google Trends statistics have been taken. These statistics show the searches made to obtain information about each party. The research was done in the month before the elections, and for each of the elections the busiest geographical area has been registered.

To obtain the percentage of the Google searches about each political party, we have extracted the total amount of searches about the most powerful parties one month before the elections.

Results

To prove the first hypothesis, it has been checked if the most voted for party was the one with the most Google searches around its name. Here are the results in every election group.

- **Elections to the European Parliament in May 2014**

In this election, the party which obtained the highest amount of Google searches was Progress Union and Democracy (UPyD), with a percentage of 36.67%, whereas the most voted for party was the Spanish Popular Party, with a 11.22% of the total votes. Therefore, H1 is rejected in this case.

- **Municipal elections on May 24, 2015**

In the municipal elections, the most searched for political force and the most voted for was the Popular Party. The statistics show that the Popular Party obtained 12.26% of the votes, and the search percentage was around 38.13%.

Therefore, H1 is accepted in this case.

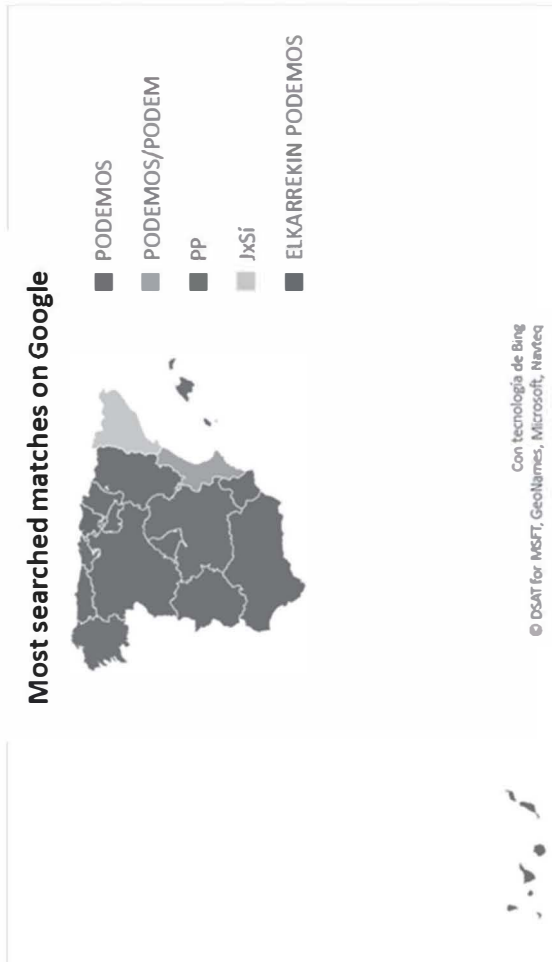
- **Autonomous elections 2015–16**

Figs 3.1 and 3.2 below show the most voted for and most searched for parties in each authonomical region.

Fig. 3.1. Map of Spain showing the most voted for parties in each Autonomous Community



Fig. 3.2. Map of Spain showing the most searched for parties in each Autonomous Community



The most voted for party in the different elections was the Popular Party (Galicia, Castilla y León, Community of Madrid, Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha, La Rioja, Aragón, Valencià Community, and Balears y Murcia). The party in second place in most autonomous communities was PSOE (the Spanish socialist party) (Asturias, Extremadura, Andalucía, and Canarias). In the communities where local parties have more power, such as Cataluña,

the Junts pel Sí was the one most voted for. In Euskadi the Nationalist Basque Party won, and in Navarra the party which was elected was Unión del Pueblo Navarro. On the other hand, if we study the most searched for party it is shown that Podemos is in the majority of the communities (Asturias, Basque Country, Navarra, Aragón, Castilla y León, Community of Madrid, La Rioja, Extremadura, Andalucía, Valencia Community, Murcia, Balears, and Canarias). In Galicia, Cantabria, and Castilla-La Mancha the most searched for party was the Popular Party, and in Cataluña it was Junts pel Sí.

As a result, H1 is rejected because only in Castilla-La Mancha, Galicia, and Cantabria y Cataluña did the model have any success.

- **Autonomous elections in Cataluña, December 21, 2017**

In these elections, the most voted for and the most searched for was Ciudadanos. This party obtained the 25.35% of the vote and 31.90% of Google searches. Therefore, H1 is accepted in this case.

- **General Congress elections December 20, 2015**

In the general election of 2015, the party with the highest percentage of votes was the Popular Party with 14.28%. The most searched for was Podemos with 40.70%. In conclusion, H1 is rejected in this case.

- **General Congress elections June 26, 2016**

In the already-mentioned elections, the most voted for party, just like in the others, was the Popular Party (PP) with 21.74% of the vote. On the other hand, the most searched for was Unidos Podemos with 51.63%. As a result, H1 is rejected in the case of the General Congress elections of June 2016.

With these results it is determined that in the current political atmosphere the Google searches are not a reliable method for electoral prediction in Spain.

In pursuit of verifying H2, we introduced the search percentage (exogenous variable) in the MC model of Gómez and Prado (2014) for all the elections in which the most distinguished political forces were the Popular Party, the Socialist Party, Ciudadanos, and Podemos. With that method, the model estimations and real results will be compared.

In Table 1, the real votes percentage, estimated votes percentage, and the differences between those variables in each party are shown.

The party which the model estimated would obtain the highest number of votes related to the interest generated was Podemos (35.29%). In second place was the Popular Party (24.55%), followed by Ciudadanos (19.82%), and the Socialist Party (16.75%). In the majority of cases, the vote estimation based on the interest generated by each party overcomes the real vote intention (the difference between the real result and the estimation).

Focusing our attention on each party, we can see that the real vote intention only overcame the estimated vote intention in the cases of the Popular Party and the Spanish Socialist Party. In the Socialist Party, the difference was positive. Nevertheless, it is remarkable how in the two new parties (Podemos and Ciudadanos) the interest estimation generated overcame the vote intention in all occasions. The biggest differences are found for Podemos.

If we look closely at the differences average, it is observed that the model has a more valuable predictive capability in the votes that the Popular Party might obtain (2.56%), whereas in the case of Podemos the success percentage is -21.87%.

In terms of the interest generated, the Socialist Party is the political force that obtained the fewest searches on Google. It was calculated that the average was 16.75%, but in the meantime the votes obtained were 22.24%. On the other hand, the party which generated the most interest regarding the votes obtained was Podemos – the interest percentage was 35.29% and the percentage of votes obtained was 13.42%.

To verify H2, it is convenient to look at the cases in which the estimation was close to predicting the real results.

In brief, H2 will only be accepted when the difference between the values calculated and the real results is almost 0. In the cases where the difference is less than 1% – only the Popular Party (-0.63%) in the General Congress elections of 2015 and the Socialist Party in June 2016 (0.43%) – H2 might be accepted. Therefore, H2 is rejected.

This led us to question the interpretation of the interest generated regarding to the number of votes obtained. Through this analysis, we observed how new political parties had generated greater curiosity. This curiosity had nothing to do with the vote or the acquisition of the “product.”

With the results obtained in this interpretation, it is determined that this model is not suitable for predicting the electoral results when new parties are introduced in the main political forces.

Table 1: Real results and percentage estimation for each candidate

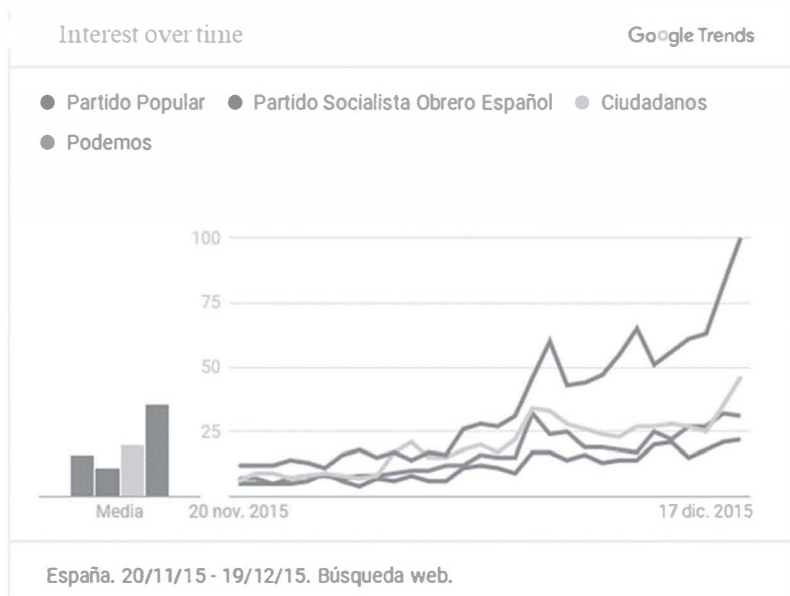
ELECTIONS	PP			PSOE			PODEMOS			C's		
	%Real	%Est.	Dif.	%Real	%Est.	Dif.	%Real	%Est.	Dif.	%Real	%Est.	Dif.
C. de Madrid (May 2015)	33.10%	27.46%	5.64%	25.44%	19.71%	5.73%	18.59%	34.24%	-15.65%	12.14%	22.62%	-10.48%
C. Valenciana (May 2015)	26.25%	22.82%	3.43%	20.30%	16.95%	3.35%	11.23%	30.63%	-19.40%	12.31%	16.95%	-4.64%
Aragón (May 2015)	27.50%	20.27%	7.23%	21.41%	13.67%	7.74%	20.51%	41.18%	-20.67%	9.41%	20.27%	-10.86%
C. la Mancha (May 2015)	37.51%	32.54%	4.97%	36.11%	25.17%	10.94%	9.73%	27.01%	-17.28%	8.64%	18.72%	-10.08%
Murcia (May 2015)	37.39%	26.39%	11.00%	23.96%	16.80%	7.16%	13.15%	31.62%	-18.47%	12.50%	26.39%	-13.89%
Extremadura (May 2015)	37.02%	31.64%	5.38%	41.50%	24.14%	17.36%	7.99%	32.39%	-24.40%	4.37%	15.88%	-11.51%
Castilla y León (May 2015)	37.77%	28.93%	8.84%	25.95%	19.90%	6.05%	12.10%	32.22%	-20.12%	10.27%	24.01%	-13.74%
Asturias (May 2015)	21.58%	23.31%	-1.73%	26.45%	16.93%	9.52%	19.02%	36.88%	-17.86%	7.11%	20.92%	-13.81%
Cantabria (May 2015)	32.61%	31.31%	1.30%	14.01%	22.04%	-8.03%	8.83%	26.16%	-17.33%	6.92%	16.88%	-9.96%
La Rioja (May 2015)	38.49%	17.00%	21.49%	26.70%	19.52%	7.18%	11.22%	49.74%	-38.52%	10.51%	22.04%	-11.53%
Baleares (May 2015)	28.50%	24.81%	3.69%	18.94%	12.09%	6.85%	14.69%	42.16%	-27.47%	5.92%	20.18%	-14.26%
Canarias (May 2015)	18.59%	26.88%	-8.29%	19.86%	21.37%	-1.51%	14.53%	37.88%	-23.35%	5.93%	14.77%	-8.84%
Cataluña (December 2017)	4.24%	19.89%	-15.65%	13.86%	4.25%	9.61%	7.46%	18.91%	-11.45%	25.35%	35.52%	-10.17%
Cataluña (September 2016)	8.50%	13.36%	-4.86%	12.74%	3.57%	9.17%	8.94%	11.96%	-3.02%	17.93%	18.96%	-1.03%

P. Vasco (September 2016)	10.16%	23.91%	-13.75%	11.94%	10.92%	1.02%	14.83%	27.52%	-12.69%	2.02%	6.59%	-4.57%
Andalucía (March 2015)	26.76%	15.15%	11.61%	35.43%	15.15%	20.28%	14.84%	53.88%	-39.04%	9.28%	23.76%	-14.48%
Galicia (September 2016)	47.53%	36.10%	11.43%	17.88%	27.70%	-9.82%	19.07%	32.95%	-13.88%	3.38%	14.06%	-10.68%
Congreso (December 2015)	19.82%	20.45%	-0.63%	15.19%	13.86%	1.32%	14.28%	45.49%	-31.22%	9.63%	25.72%	-16.10%
Congreso (June 2016)	21.74%	24.19%	-2.45%	14.91%	14.48%	0.43%	13.93%	57.65%	-43.72%	8.60%	12.32%	-3.72%
PROMEDIO	27.11%	24.55%	2.56%	22.24%	16.75%	5.49%	13.42%	35.29%	-21.87%	9.59%	19.82%	-10.23%

If we focus our report under a commercial point of view, following the work done by Gómez and Prado (2014) in their adaptation of the consumer decision model of Blackwell et al. (2006), we might be able to determine that the party whose campaign was most successful was Podemos. This success was based on the ability of their communication strategy which led voters to be curious about their program. On the other hand, the less successful campaign was that of the Socialist Party.

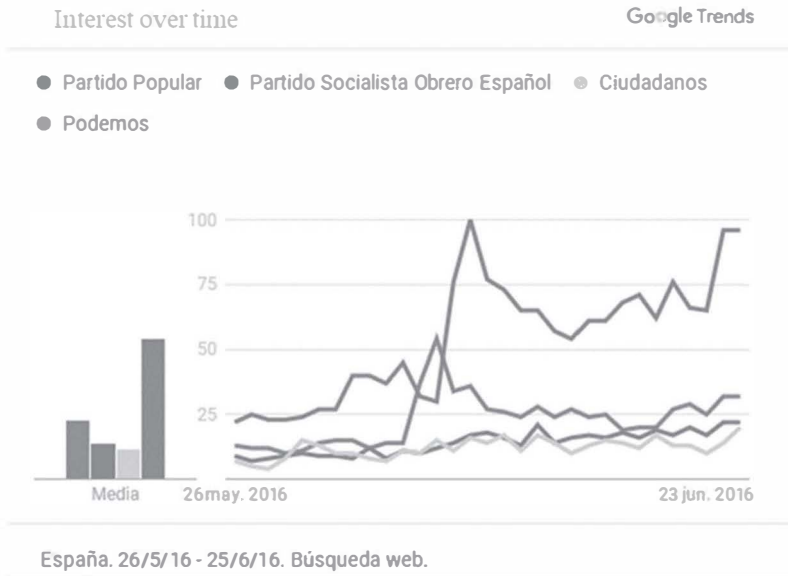
It's interesting to evaluate the interest caused in a certain time by the different parties during the elaboration of this report. Specifically, due to its significant repercussion, we will study the variations produced in the searches for the most powerful parties for the Congress elections of December 20, 2015 (see Fig. 3.3 below) and the General Congress elections of June 2016 (see Fig. 3.4 below).

Fig. 3.3. Evolution of Google searches for the main political forces in Spain between November 20 and December 19, 2015



It is clear to see that the party which created more interest from the beginning of the campaign was Podemos. It is remarkable how this party suffered an incensement since the television debate between the Popular Party, the Socialist Party, Podemos, and Ciudadanos on December 7.

Fig. 3.4. Evolution of Google searches between May 26 and June 25, 2016



In this election, Podemos had an advantage over the other parties in terms of the interest generated. This interest increased most on June 10, the day the electoral campaign officially started.

Conclusions

In this report, we have tried to verify the model proposed by Gómez and Prado (2014) for the new political context in which Spain has moved from bipartisan to having four main political forces.

In the model, the prediction capability of the vote percentage is questioned and is predicted with the exogenous variable of the Google searches registered for each party. In the bipartisan scenario, with the parties firmly established, Gómez and Prado (2014) proved that the capability of Google searches for deriving predictions had around 99% effectiveness. However, in this work, due to the irruption of two new parties that established themselves as powerful political forces, we have noted that the model is not able to predict with accuracy.

Recognizably, as has been shown, the interest generated by the new parties overcame the real vote intention around them. As a result, the vote

percentage obtained has always been higher than that calculated by the interest generated.

These results prove that the interest generated by each party does not specifically mean electoral success, at least not in the political context in which new political forces have been created recently. This might suggest that Google searches represent in a significant way how good the communication campaign has been for each party, and how their campaigning increased the curiosity around their “product” (political agenda).

This led us to confirm the studies by Lui et al. (2011) in which the predictable capability of Google searches was questioned. In that report it was proved that there were various reasons behind the searches by the users.

One possible explanation about the failure of the model can be found in the work by Gómez and Prado (2014) in their model about the voter behavior based on the ideas of Blackwell et al. (2006). It might be that the Google searches prove the success in the communication campaign of the party. It is understood that this success has the capability to increase voter curiosity about its program and party, just like a consumer feels curiosity about a certain product. Nevertheless, the information search for about the program might not persuade the voter, which means that this party is not going to be voted for.

Somehow, we have found a significant difference in the interpretation of the Google searches on the electoral world. Nevertheless, this difference can be found in a lot of different investigation areas. Consequently, a future line of investigation might be in the comprehension of the reasons that lead internet users to explore certain terms. This understanding of the users might lead us to the creation of models which would be able to predict different events.

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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL-NETWORKING SITES ON ELECTORAL POLITICS IN INDIA

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Abstract

Social networking platforms have played a considerable role after the development of Web 2.0 and enhanced the overall forms of interaction within society. India, being a democratic nation, has witnessed generations of change in terms of the political participation of its citizens throughout the time. However, it has been observed that people's engagement within the political sphere remains concentrated due to limited access to social and economic resources. Social networking platforms have been seen as spaces which possess the capabilities to leapfrog social hurdles and provide the scope for interaction which can boost the nature of democratic participation within society. This paper focuses on analysing the nature of change that has emerged from social-networking platforms and the kind of democratic participation being shaped in India.

Introduction

Human beings have always been understood as social animals that exist as part of a larger social network. Families, friends, and neighbourhoods are all part of the social network. Social networking can be understood as a phenomenon which has existed since society was inception.¹ However, in contemporary times, the phenomenon called traditional networking has undergone different degrees of change due the emergence of technology called the "internet." The internet-based social networking has taken over

¹ A. L. Barabasi (2002), "Linked: The New Science of Networks." <http://www.danah.org>.

much of the space on the worldwide web. The process of networking here can be done with people sharing the common interests, ideas, and goals. Social networking through the internet has become an important aspect not only for social interactions within the developed nations but also within the developing nations.

It allows individuals to get in touch with others by breaking the boundaries of time and space and allowing the individuals to be constantly in touch with others in terms of their respective professional and personal lives.² They provide the space for the creation of virtual profiles on such platforms which enable the users to communicate and share information which is either common to others or something which is unique and can attract the attention of others.³

These platforms are highly dynamic and can be classified as forums, weblogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures, and video-based online archives. Social-media applications such as Google Groups (reference, social networking), Wikipedia (reference), MySpace (social networking), Facebook (social networking), Youmeo (social network aggregation), YouTube (social networking and video sharing), Second Life (virtual reality), Flickr (photo sharing), and Twitter (social networking and microblogging) can be seen as some of the popular online platforms which are playing an effective role in terms of boosting social interaction among users.⁴

India is the second largest market for online commerce, and has more than 460 million internet users, rising every year. It is only behind China, and with the coming years is expected to exceed it. In 2017 India had 331.77 million internet users. By 2021 it is expected that there will be about 635.8 million.⁵ However, the use of social media is inherently complex, as media scholars have been vocal about the nature of the risks involved in terms of the participation of people on digital platforms due to risks of privacy, cyber-bullying, propaganda, and others.

² Retrieved from <https://journals.lww.com/plasreconsurg/p>.

³ Boyd and Ellison (2008), "Social Network Sites: Definition, History & Scholarship," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13: 210-30.

⁴ A. Patwa, "Marketing Survey about Social Media Sites," <https://www.scribd.com/document/13494333/Marketing-survey-about-social-media-sites>.

⁵ Retrieved from <https://inc42.com/features/moneyball-karan-mohla-of-idg-wants-to-reach-next-300-mm-indian-consumers>.

Social Networking Sites and Political Mobilization

Social networking sites have been seen to impact the social, political, and cultural engagement of people in many ways. Social-media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have been the primary sources from which political capital can be generated through the nature of political information being shared in terms of elections and electoral campaigns. These processes are argued to be pivotal for the smooth functioning of the democratic machinery through the mass circulation of information on social-networking sites.

Mass communication can be viewed as one of the inevitable allies of political parties as it provides the scope for transmitting uniform information across diverse communities and bringing them together to participate politically. It has also been seen that different political parties and their respective leaders have begun to emphasise various social-media tools for the mass communication of different political messages in a strategic manner. For instance, the political campaigning in India in 2014 utilized social-networking platforms extensively to mobilize the public. There has been a shift in the medium and tools for communication from time to time based on political objectives, availability of the medium, convenience, and its reach.

The contemporary scenario indicates how political campaigners are now looking towards newer technologies as means of expanding their vote banks and boosting people's participation during the elections. They realize the importance of the newer technological innovations that are available today, and most of the political campaigners are aiming to fully utilize and monopolize these tools to attract the maximum amount of people towards their political ideals. This in turn also helps them to attract the public to electoral participation. Many political parties have created their own websites, blogs, and Facebook or Twitter accounts. They are regularly watching, reading, and updating their media content in order to constantly attract the attention of people towards their political goals. Some of the political leaders have even started to respond to the queries of the public and cadres through their social-media accounts. This trend has enabled them to reach the masses in a more personal way. There is a process of personalization of politics that has emerged through social-networking platforms as different political leaders are easily able to reach their supporters and the public, and are able to mobilize them to support their respective political objectives. Now, most election-campaign promotions are done through the electronic and digital media tools like online

advertisements, social media ads, and SMS due to their ability to communicate with a larger public across the globe.

These online platforms allow the public to both produce and consume content at the same time and engage in interpersonal communication to promote the political ideas of their respective parties. In recent years, there has been an exponential growth of social media across the world. Today, social-media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are shaping new forms of social interaction, dialogue, exchange, and collaboration. Social media has enabled the users to swap ideas, post updates and comment, or participate in activities and political events, while sharing their common interests.⁶ Social media is allowing the users to approach the political objectives in a manner which are both work and leisure oriented. For instance, social-media platforms are not only providing space for information dissemination but also creating political gossip. In addition, the people are also being exposed to the very nature of information which they want to know in a consistent manner. As a result, this is creating a growing dependence on such platforms to easily access a wide array of political information.

The most important aspect of social-networking sites is the utilization of hypertexts. Hypertexts allow the users to access both audio-visual and print content at the same time. This aspect from the political engagement point of view is pivotal as the users are not limited due to the need for literacy in decoding information. Individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds can access information due to such convergence. As a result, the only limiting factor here is the tool for accessibility.

Apart from that, the social-media outlets prove essential to the politicians and political parties as they enable them to engage in continuous dialogue and activities through various ways, making the overall process dynamic in nature. Politicians are now using social media and the internet and are able to now reach even the grassroot political activists who were previously difficult to address due to various structural limitations. Even the voters are no longer making decisions solely on the basis of the information available through traditional media. Rather, they are seeking out additional knowledge for activism through the use of computers and mobile devices at any point of time. Studies have also indicated that mass-media and social-media use is positively correlated to an individual's voting behavior in the society.⁷ Essentially, the more citizens look to mass media and social media for information, the more likely they are to vote.

⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.itu.int/net/itunews/issues/2010/06/35.aspx>.

⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/academics/communications/research/vol2no1/03Hellweg.pdf>.

Studies have also indicated that internet users are more politically interested and active than average individuals due to their access to information and the kind of emotional response it is able to generate within the political sphere. Facts have indicated that the internet users report high levels of political efficacy, more political knowledge, and a greater desire to engage within the political space in comparison with non-users.

Politicians and political parties are even utilizing different social-media platforms for various political disclosures. They post photographs and personal information and leave public messages for the public in cyberspace. This has been a process for breaking down the existing barriers to the strengthened relationships between the voters and the advocates and politicians who utilize social media to create a larger voter base.⁸

However, the emergence and popularity of social media does not come without a price. Such platforms have been seen as easy targets for disseminating incorrect or propaganda-based information which can limit people's participation or channel their engagement in a particular direction. In addition, there are other risks such as maligning a political leader without any valid facts and many more, which raises questions about the authenticity of such forms of participation.

The important and unique aspect of the social-media platforms is that it has integrated several different modes of traditional mass media use and interpersonal communication. Scholars of media studies have debated that cyberspace can be conceptualized as a space which is democratic in terms of raising opinions. However, at the same time, it also raises questions in terms of control over such platforms and as to whether they actually allow the freedom for all information to be disseminated in order to politically mobilize the public.

Social-networking Platforms and Political Engagement in India

India is one of the largest democratic countries in the world. It is a country where elections are given a lot of importance in terms of their socio-political impact within society. During the 2014 general election there were around 0.9 million polling stations across the country. There was a total of 543 parliamentary constituencies in India, and this huge event was held in nine different phases. The first phase was held on April 7, 2014 and the last one on May 12, 2014.⁹

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Retrieved from <http://ijarcet.org/wp-content/uploads/IJ>.

The number of parties registered with the Election Commission of India was 1,616. This consisted of six national parties, forty-seven state parties, and others registered as unrecognized parties. The elections of 2014 were seen as a battle between the major national parties, namely the Indian National Congress (INC), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), and some other national parties like the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), forming the third front.¹⁰ The amount of money spent by the parties in these elections was around Rs. 30,500 crores, which was the second highest in the world after the US presidential elections for 2012.¹¹

The 2014 general election was also important because of their extensive use of social media platforms such as Facebook. The increase in politically relevant information on Facebook during this time was because the political candidates felt that such platforms offer immense scope to connect with the public in an effective and inexpensive way. In addition, Facebook allows the public to share their opinions and participate in the political process freely. The leaders can easily understand the emerging trends within the society by observing the nature of discussion being shaped by such platforms and strategize their campaigns in such a manner to attract the maximum voters towards their political objectives.

The increase in the number of supporters and voters using Facebook to get political information has led to an increasing number of politicians using such social-networking platforms during the 2014 election. As per the KPMG report, at the end of 2004, Facebook had one million registered users in India, which rose to twelve million by the end of 2006 and one hundred million by 2008, and this jumped to one billion in September 2012. Other resources show that Twitter had a similar surge in the number of users, which increased from around one million in 2008 to five hundred million in 2012.¹² These statistics can be considered as evidence of the increasing awareness and knowledge of people about the changing political scenario around them.¹³

In the history of Indian elections, the 2014 generation elections can be considered as remarkable. This was the first election campaigned for on the internet, and it provided an alternative form of political campaign for India.

¹⁰ Retrieved from <http://ijarcet.org/wp-content/uploads/IJAR CET-VOL-4-ISSUE-6-2659-2662.pdf>.

¹¹ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/data-crunched-digital-driven-a-watershed-election-in-more-ways-than-one>.

¹² Retrieved from <http://ijarcet.org/wp-content/uploads/IJAR CET-VOL-4-ISSUE-6-2659-2662.pdf>.

¹³ Retrieved from <http://www.ijcsit.com/docs/Volhune%205/vol>.

Five years back this was not considered as a way of campaigning and a place to discuss the movements and developments of the agendas of the Lok Sabha. The massive victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the recent Indian elections has been attributed to factors ranging from the slowing economic growth to high levels of corruption in which social media played an important role in highlighting in a cyclical manner to the masses, which led to the creation of a political attitude which was highly anti the INC.

With the general election, Narendra Modi had already garnered more than sixteen million likes on Facebook, the second most for any politician in the world, and he was the sixth most followed world leader on Twitter. Social-media popularity, in addition to other factors, carried the BJP to victory with 282 seats out of the 543 seats in parliament, which was viewed as the biggest win by any political party in India in the past forty years. The youth of the country took up social media as their primary tool when they began using the internet.¹⁴ The BJP was able to understand this trend and made full use of the social-networking sites for communicating with the youth who were seen as one of the primary targets for the vote bank.

Almost all the leaders were active on social media, ranging from likes of Rahul Gandhi to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal. A recent study by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) stated that the political parties spent around Rs. 300–400 crore for their publicity and campaigns on social and digital media. The overall expenditure on digital media reached such a height that the Election Commission of India had to force the political parties to reveal their budgets for social and digital media to the public. The BJP's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi also made his presence felt on Android-based smartphones through a mobile game called Modi Run on the Google Play store.¹⁵

During the 2014 election, more than 814 million voters, including over twenty-three million between the ages of eighteen and nineteen, participated in the general election by casting their votes. It was also observed that during the 2014 election social-media campaigning reached various distant places and cities which were not targeted before.¹⁶ Before the general election in 2014, ASSOCHAM published a report on the expected expenses for advertisement and publicity on social media by the political campaigners. Approximately Rs. 4,000–5,000 crore of the total advertisement and publicity revenue were spent on developing campaigns on the digital platforms, which in turn garnered at least Rs 400–500 crore as revenue through further

¹⁴ Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/a/social-media-e>.

¹⁵ Retrieved from https://www.slideshare.net/slideshare_ac.

¹⁶ Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topi>.

advertising.¹⁷ According to ASSOCHAM, political parties typically spent around 30% of their poll expenditure (estimated at Rs. 15,000 crore) on advertising and publicity. Of this amount, 15–20% was spent on the emerging digital marketing for the political campaigns.¹⁸

The 2014 Indian general election was the country's first experiment with using social media for political campaigning. It witnessed a maximum of 98,363 political tweets posted by eleven political parties during the two-month run up during the elections.¹⁹ Prime Minister Modi was one of the most popular political personalities on Twitter, with more than thirty-six million followers. Research by Stanford University on the Twitter war of Indian political parties during the 2014 general election reflected that, throughout the election season, the NDA maintained a better Twitter presence than both the UPA and the AAP.²⁰ The results of this report showed that NDA outnumbered other political parties and alliances like AAP and UPA during the 2014 election.²¹

The majority of Indians, when utilizing social-networking sites, try to keep in touch with their families and friends. In addition, they also use such platforms to discuss movies and music (approximately 87%). Very few utilize such platforms to engage in political discussions (approximately 35%). Even mobile-phone owners use the device to access social-networking sites (approximately 9%) or get news and information (approximately 8%). However, during the 2014 general election, the share of political information witnessed an increase due to the campaign being extensively marketed on the digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.²²

With time, it is expected that these digital technological platforms will become more responsive and be utilized for various democratic processes within society.

As per the Live Real Time Election Tracker, there are over ten thousand mentions of various political parties on Twitter.²³ Out of the total mentions, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led by more than four thousand mentions on Twitter. On the other hand, on the worldwide web there are more than ten thousand mentions about different political parties, out of which the BJP

¹⁷ Retrieved from https://www.slideshare.net/slideshare_ac.

¹⁸ Retrieved from <http://assochem.org/newsdetail.php?id=4474>, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/news>.

¹⁹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0736585315300708>.

²⁰ <http://snap.stanford.edu/class/cs224w-2014/projects2014/cs224w-24-final.pdf>.

²¹ Retrieved from <https://www.politics.in/article/247/why->.

²² Retrieved from https://www.slideshare.net/slideshare_ac.

²³ Retrieved from https://www.slideshare.net/slideshare_ac.

leads with over five thousand mentions.²⁴ It has been observed that on both Facebook and Twitter the public has been actively socializing and communicating about the political scenario of India and the scope for participation.

A study was conducted by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) (2013) and the Mumbai-based market research company MRB International in October 2013, which stated that out of the various political parties, Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) invested more than 5% of their total election budget on social-media campaigns. These statistics indicate that social-media platforms play an important role in terms of promotion of the political parties. As a result, most of the political parties in the contemporary scenario have begun investing in social media campaigns.

Conclusion

The 2014 general election was seen as a strong reference point in India where social networking and social-media platforms were used extensively to complement the voting process and promote the political leaders. What is interesting here is how a close connection was formulated between the public and the political leaders via social-media platforms, and how the whole process was personalized in a manner that the public began to be highly vocal about its expectations, and ensuring that these expectations were a part of the larger political objectives of these political leaders.

Another aspect worth contemplating is that social-networking sites do hold the potential to change the tides of elections; however, there are certain risks which can raise questions on the authenticity of the campaigns. Yet, for a country like India, which has an immense population that can be effectively utilized for political engagement, social-networking platforms can play effective role in not just the dissemination of the information but also allowing the individuals to actively engage in the political process at any point of time.

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²⁴ Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/indi>.

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GLOBAL MEDIA AND PRE-ELECTION POLLS IN SPAIN: HOW THE REGULATIONS OBSTRUCT THE FREE FORMATION OF PUBLIC OPINION

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Abstract

Since George Gallup, Elmo Roper, and Archibald Crossley correctly predicted the results of the 1936 US presidential elections, there has been no democratic state in which all the elections have been not preceded by the running and publishing of pre-election polls. However, the risk of these polls being manipulated and/or used for partisan purposes has led to the need to establish legal regulations. The question is how much power should the state have to condition an activity that, for obvious reasons, is so closely linked to the free formation of public opinion? In the case of Spain, according to the Spanish General Electoral System Organic Law, the restriction consists of a ban on the publication, circulation, or reproduction of pre-election polls for five days prior to the date of the elections. However, electoral legislation does not prevent political parties – and anyone that is able to fund them – from engaging companies to carry out surveys during the same period for their own use, a practice that questions the guarantee to all citizens to exercise their right to information based on equality. These and other issues are analysed in this paper.

1. Introduction

Understood as social-research techniques that provide information on opinions and attitudes using questionnaires that are completed by a limited and representative number of people called a sample, pre-election polls

occupy an important position in electoral campaigns, especially because of the prophetic features they have been attributed. This belief dates back a long time, specifically to 1936 when George Gallup, Elmo Roper, and Archibald Crossley predicted the results of the US presidential election between Roosevelt and Landon, which was won by Roosevelt. Since then, the use of pre-election polls as a basic tool for electoral information has constantly increased, a situation that has opened up a debate on whether or not this type of study should be regulated, especially when we consider the possibility of them being manipulated and/or used for partisan purposes.

After a description of the potential effects that the knowledge of the results of a pre-electoral poll can have on voters before voting day, we analyse the different regulatory alternatives in comparative law. Finally, we critically analyse the current regulations in Spain since the 1978 Constitution.

2. Polls and their Potential Effects on Voters

When the legal system of a state requires a series of technical requirements to be met in order to carry out pre-election polls and/or establishes certain time limits on their publication, it appears reasonable to consider that it does so in pursuit of two main objectives: to ensure that pre-election polls have the highest standards of quality and objectivity, and prevent the results of the poll from conditioning the final vote.

Leaving aside our study of the technical requirements intended to ensure objectivity for the moment, we will look in more detail at the debate on the potential effects of pre-election polls on voters.

Firstly, we come across the well-known reaction to the trend – the drag along or bandwagon effect (Callander 2007, 653–84; Rothschild & Malhotra 2014, 1–10), which takes place when a voter decides to support the political formation that leads the polls, perhaps with the intention of “sharing in the success ... enjoying the pleasure of forming part of the strongest team that is coming into power” (Brusati 1995, 15). The polls would therefore constitute an unfulfilled prophecy (Gálvez Muñoz 1997a, 807), the results of which being vital for the electoral process outcome.

The antithesis of the above is the counter reaction to the trend or the underdog effect (McAllister & Donley 1991, 720–41; Arnesen & Dahlberg 2015, 1–21), which consists of punishing the formation that leads the polls, either to balance the majority support or simply as an act of deference to the underdog.

The third effect is the snowball or momentum effect (Callander 2007, 653–84; Denter & Sisak 2015, 1–14), which occurs when a political party

is voted for as a result of the growing support gradually provided by the different polls published, thus generating an inertia that favours its interests.

Also common is the “spiral of silence,” an expression coined by professor Noelle-Neumann (1980) after observing that the majority of people, for fear of isolation, attempt to identify with the ideas and subsequently join the leading opinion according to the polls.

In fifth and final place is the strategic vote effect. As the “least debated of all” (Gálvez Muñoz 1997a, 809), it is the result of the calculation made by a sector of voters who change their vote based on the results of the polls in order to make it as useful as possible. It would not appear too far-fetched to claim that many people believe that voting for a minority party is a waste of their vote (Caminal Badia 2008). Therefore, a pre-electoral poll indicating a trend that is unfavourable to the interests of a minority party could lead its potential voters to reconsider their vote and its use. Similarly, when pre-election polls show results that suggest a certain degree of success for a smaller political party, the use factor could produce the opposite effect.

In short, we see that there are a number of effects that pre-election polls are capable of generating, according to the experts. Until now, however, it has been impossible to predict their effects at a particular point in time, with the possibility of the influence also acting in different directions at the same time, and therefore producing a certain neutralization by offsetting the phenomenon.

In the specific case of Spain, different post-election polls carried out by the Sociological Research Centre (CIS)¹ show that the influence of the results of the polls on voters is still relatively low. Of the 59.2% of voters that stated being aware of the results of the polls prior to the 2016 general elections, only 17.8% admitted that the polls had influenced their vote. If we look at what occurred in previous general elections, we see that in 2015, 2011, 2008, 2004, and 2000 the influence of the pre-election polls never exceeded a proportion of 25%.

In any case, the truth is that pre-election polls do influence voters, although in a very limited way. And, as mentioned, if the present techniques do not allow us to predict the extent and direction of this influence more accurately, this predicting difficulty – which was already observed in times of clear two-party systems – becomes even worse due to the parliamentary fragmentation that exists in our country, especially after the appearance of Podemos and Ciudadanos on the national political scene.

¹ In Spanish, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.

3. Regulation in Comparative Law

After establishing the ability of pre-election polls to influence voters, even if limited, it is time to make a general analysis of how comparative law regulates the publication of this type of study.

The possibilities that exist consist in not establishing any type of restriction on circulation, even on voting day. Defended by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, this system is predominant not only in the Anglo-Saxon world – for example in the United States and the United Kingdom – where it has been considered for some time that there is no better way to protect voters than to provide them with adequate information, but also in countries such as Germany, Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Holland, and Sweden, among others (Estrada Staffron 2017, 343–4).

A second option is to establish the exact opposite – in other words, to ban the publication of pre-election polls, either during the entire electoral period or for an extended part thereof. A country that represents the first type is Montenegro, in which the state-owned media is not only banned from publishing polls or any kind of forecast results, but also publishing the results of previous elections on election days. Examples of the second type are Luxembourg (one month), Chile, Greece, and Italy (fifteen days), Slovenia (seven days), and Spain (five days), among others (Council of State 2009, 294–5; Estrada Staffron 2017, 342–4). Also worthy of mention is Australia, where the law establishes what is called a “blackout” of electoral advertising on all electronic media from midnight on the Wednesday prior to election day until the end of voting on Saturday.

Finally, and as an intermediate possibility, we find legal systems that only prohibit the publication of polls on election day and, at most, the day before, which is the case of Portugal and France. Especially relevant was the reform in France, which is an example of protectionism on the subject from 1977 to 2001, when the Constitutional Court declared that the prohibition of publishing, circulating, or commenting on polls during the week prior to elections was a breach of the freedom to receive and provide information.

4. Legal Regime Governing Pre-Election Polls in Spain

4.1. Technical requirements

Article 69 of Organic Law 5/1985 of June 5, 1985 on the general electoral regime – hereafter, LOREG – begins by stating that “from the date

on which elections are called until they are held, the following regime governing the publication of electoral polls shall apply.”

Section one requires all publishers of surveys of polls to include, at their own liability, a series of technical specifications in all such publications. These specifications are the name and address of the public or private body, entity, or person performing the survey, and also of the entity that engages it; the technical features of the survey, necessarily including data such as the sample, size of the sample, the margin of error, the degree of representativeness, the selection procedure of the participants, and the date of the fieldwork; as well as the complete wording of the survey questions and the number of people that did not answer each question. The purpose of these requirements is none other than to provide voters with the necessary information to be able to decide for themselves on how to judge the survey published, as well as preserve the right to information and the freedom of choice (Gálvez Muñoz 2002, 135).

Article 69.2 of LOREG entrusts the Central Electoral Board, the highest electoral administration body,² with the mission of ensuring that the data and information contained in published surveys does not contain false, hidden, or intentionally amended data; correct compliance with the specifications set forth in article 69.1; and with the timing of the ban established in article 69.7, to which we refer below.

It is strange to see how something as basic and important as falsifying the data of a survey is mentioned “almost by the way” (Gálvez Muñoz 2002, 165), with a reference to the Central Electoral Board as the governing body of pre-election polls, when all the other technical requirements are dealt with independently throughout article 69.

Another power granted to the highest electoral administration appears in article 69.3 and consists of the possibility of “identifying the supplementary technical information deemed necessary on who engaged the poll or survey, with the aim of making the necessary verifications,” and also recalling that such information “cannot extend to the content of the information on issues that, according to the regulations in force, are of private use by the company or its client.”

The LOREG then goes on to regulate the right to rectification in the electoral poll process. Article 69.4 requires any media source that has published or circulated a survey in breach of the provisions of the LOREG is to publish and circulate the rectifications ordered by the Central Electoral Board within three days. Rectifications must indicate the source and the

² Which we had the opportunity to study in Fernández de Casadevante Mayordomo (2014).

reason why they are made, must be programmed or published in the same spaces as the relevant information.

In an attempt to ensure the effectiveness of this mandate in all cases, article 69.5 of LOREG states that when the poll or survey to be rectified has been included in a publication whose intervals do not allow rectification within three days after receipt, the editor of the media concerned shall be liable for the cost of publishing it and stating the fact in a different media in the same area and with a similar circulation. With respect to whether the regulations concerning rectification apply to the media that publish and circulate the survey and to those that reproduce it – which is the case of the time ban regulated in article 69.7 of LOREG – the LOREG clearly states that, as there is no reference in article 69.4 to reproduction, it should be understood that no other media shall be obliged to rectify a previously published or circulated survey that was published or circulated in an irregular manner by another media source.

The provisions of article 69.6 of LOREG require notification of the interested parties and the publication of the resolutions issued by the Central Electoral Board in relation to surveys and polls, such resolutions being subject to appeal with the Judicial Review Chamber of the Supreme Court, pursuant to article 12.3 (a) of the Judicial Review Jurisdiction Act 28/1998, of July 13, 1998.

4.2. Time ban on the publishing and circulation or reproduction of pre-election polls

4.2.1. Article 69.7 of LOREG

In Spain, the regulations governing polls did not materialize until after the end of the Franco regime. And even then, the legislators did not opt for establishing restrictions on their publication from the beginning. Furthermore, neither Decree 2951/1975 of October 31, 1975 regulating opinion poll companies, nor Royal Decree Law 20/1977 of March 18, 1977 on electoral rules; nor Law 39/1978 of July 18, on local elections; or any other law passed before the entry into force of the constitution containing any provisions whatsoever in relation to the publication of polls during elections.

It was with the passing of Law 14/1980 of April 18, 1980 on the electoral poll regime when the ban was reduced to five days, a restriction that was subsequently adopted by the LOREG, article 69 of which is extremely similar.

A factor that undoubtedly and decisively influenced this political consensus was the fact that, prior to the passing of Law 14/1980, the Parliament had unanimously passed Organic Law 2/1980 of January 18, on the regulation of the different forms of referendums. Specifically, article 15.2 of the law banned the publishing of electoral polls during the five days prior to voting day, although the restriction was only applicable to referendums. Nevertheless, it was enough to condition the regulation of future Law 14/1980 and the LÖREG, as it would have been pointless and inconsistent for these laws to establish a different term to that applicable to referendums.

According to article 69.7 LÖREG, “the publication, circulation or reproduction of electoral polls in any media is prohibited for five days before voting day,” the ban being applicable to all forms of publication.³

What should firstly be highlighted in relation to the most controversial of the typical measures established in protective legal systems (Sánchez Muñoz 2007, 318) is the amendment via article 26 of Organic Law 2/2011 of the LÖREG. In particular, the reproduction of pre-election polls was added to publication and circulation, in what meant a continuation in the opposite direction of the current trend of eliminating time limits. Even in the worst case, the reform of the LÖREG could have been the perfect time to put an end to a practice that is only in reach of a privileged few – the possibility of political parties contracting pre-election polls for their own use. The fact is, according to the provisions of article 69.7 of LÖREG, that the ban is only applicable when the publication, circulation, or reproduction takes place in the media. In all other cases, the mere performing of polls during this time is still permitted, as pointed out by the Central Electoral Board in a Resolution dated May 12, 1993 (Arnaldo Alcubilla & Delgado Iribarren 2011, 448).

As far as the material scope of the ban is concerned, the LÖREG does not specify what polls are subject to article 69.7 and it had to be the Central Electoral Board that shed some light on the matter. In reply to an enquiry on the possibility of publishing the results of a debate in the media, the Central Electoral Board stated that “the possibility would not be in breach of the LÖREG, provided the topics discussed by television spectators did not include any of the questions that either directly or indirectly attempt to determine their intention to vote or use the results to make forecasts of the election results on the day the General Elections are held or evaluate such results.”⁴ Along the same lines, it declared that the ban established in article

³ Central Electoral Board Resolution dated June 8, 2001.

⁴ AJEC, February 25, 2008.

69.7 of LOREG applies to the publication and circulation of pre-election polls and not to opinion polls dealing with current political issues.⁵

It is therefore obvious that the polls subject to these provisions are those carried out during an election period,⁶ provided they refer to electoral issues and do not attempt to determine the intention to vote or make estimates or evaluate the results.

4.2.2. Main criticism of the current time ban

(a) Purpose pursued

The ban on the publishing and circulating or reproducing electoral polls for five days before the voting pursues at least three different objectives: firstly, to reduce the influence of pre-election polls; secondly, to ensure the enforcement of the rules intended to guarantee the objective nature of the polls, enabling them to be corrected before the elections are held; and thirdly, to prevent such studies from distracting voters from the political debate during the most important days in which they form their voting intentions (Gálvez Muñoz 1997b, 54–78).

The first objective is based on the belief that the polls have an influence on voters that is detrimental and capable of conditioning the formation of their intention to vote, thus affecting the rationality of voting and the level of participation in the elections. However, in light of the proven fact that the polls have a limited effect on the electorate, we believe the role of polls as an additional reference at the service of citizens exercising their right to vote is more important (Wert 1996a, 149), which precisely involves the strengthening of such freedom to vote for the political option chosen.

On the other hand, we do not believe in the absolute contrast between rational votes and tactical or useful votes, as we consider that the strategic use of the right to vote is often the result of an exercise of rationality intended to support specific political ideas. In other words, “a rational vote does not always have to be an expression of personal political identity. A rational vote is rather a vote that corresponds to efficient electoral conduct in defending such political identity. Therefore, the information supplied by electoral polls does not necessarily prevent rational voting” (Council of State 2009, 297).

Finally, we have serious doubts as to whether the knowledge of the poll results prior to the elections negatively affects voters when they show an overwhelming result in favour of a certain candidate or against another. In

⁵ AJEC, February 9, 2000.

⁶ The election period is understood as going from the date the elections are called to the actual voting day.

fact, the pre-election polls carried out by CIS after the general elections of 2016⁷ showed that of all those that acknowledged having been influenced by the pre-election polls, 31.7% claimed that they had encouraged them to vote, whereas in the case of abstention the figure was 6.2%. The same trend has been observed in each of the post-election polls carried out by CIS since the 1996 elections.

With regards to the second objective – to ensure the enforcement of the rules that guarantee the objective nature of the polls – we have already seen how article 69 of LOREG establishes a series of provisions aimed at regulating the publication of electoral polls from the time the elections are called until they are held. It has also been said that one of the objectives of the ban set forth in section seven is to provide the Central Electoral Board and the Supreme Court with the necessary time to exercise their powers of control in the event an appeal is filed and, if required, allow for the necessary rectifications and ensure they are published.

However, in practice, this is not always possible, which does not necessarily constitute a serious problem for several reasons: firstly, we consider that, thanks to the penalty regime provided for in article 145 of LOREG, a subsequent rectification can also serve as punishment of the conduct carried out through the media, especially due to the loss of credibility of future polls and, in general, the detriment caused to the entity's reputation. Secondly, although the detrimental effects resulting from a breach of the regulations applicable to polls should be prevented, they may be lost in all the polls that appear during an electoral process. If such a breach of the regulations is widespread, the result would be no different due to the general loss of trust in the polls in question.

With respect to the third objective highlighted at the beginning of this section, there is a belief that the publication of pre-election polls leads voters to become disinterested in the political debate taking place during the elections. In other words, “the polls are accused of trivializing the political issues and generating a lack of interest in what is at stake. Indeed, regular repetition of the classification of the main participants or the barometers of the intention to vote focuses all public attention on a limited number of participants, political leaders and parties. The polls therefore contribute to the establishing of a kind of minimum, very poor and almost caricature political culture” (Lazareff, 1983, 19). In contrast, we believe that the polls contribute to promoting expectations among voters, who pay more attention to the ideological battle between the different candidates with even more

⁷ Study No. 3145, 2016 post-electoral general elections.

interest after becoming aware of the intention to vote at a particular time (Council of State 2009, 301; Gálvez Muñoz 1997b, 78).

(b) Collision with different constitutional provisions

(i) The principle of equality

According to article 14 of the Spanish Constitution – hereafter, SC- “all Spanish people are equal before the law and may not in any way be discriminated against on account of birth, race, sex, religion, opinion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance.” Article 23.2 of the SC also establishes the right of citizens to “equal conditions in public functions and office, pursuant to the requirements established by law.”

Accordingly, as mentioned above, the ban on the publishing and circulating or reproducing pre-election polls, but not performing them, enables those that are able to pay for such studies access to more information than other citizens who, “when it is used to form public opinion, do not participate in the results of the poll” (Corzo Sosa 2007, 79), thus breaching the principle of equality.

Current legislation therefore gives rise to two types of groups: firstly, a minority group comprised of people with more financial resources that enable them to engage in the preparation of privileged information in the form of private pre-election polls and thus be aware of the intention to vote; and secondly, the group of all other citizens who do not have access to the results of the studies (Gálvez Muñoz 2002, 238).

(ii) Right to information

In relation to the above, the prohibition set forth in article 69.7 of LOREG directly collides with the provisions of article 20.1 (d) of the SC, which establishes the right to “provide and receive truthful information by any means.” Accordingly, when an electoral poll is carried out but not published, there is a breach of the right to information. In the same way, the impossibility of publishing and circulating or reproducing the results of such polls constitutes a breach of the media’s right to inform (Michalos 2017, 169).

In this regard, it could be claimed that there exists a “right to polls” based on the right established in article 23.1 of the SC to participate in public matters, in this case by voting, from the very moment it is carried out (Corzo Sosa 2007, 79).

(iii) The principle of freedom to vote

The ban on citizens receiving the results of electoral polls during the five days prior to voting conditions the freedom to decide on who to vote for, a

right that is acknowledged in article 23.1 of the SC, as well as in articles 68.1 and 69.2. We should not overlook the fact the polls are merely an estimate of the intention to vote in one way or another at a particular time and place, and that it is important to “highlight the fact that opinions change up until the very last moment and only a system that does not establish restrictions on the publication – *of polls* –, such as that of the United States, enables voters to receive as much updated information as possible” (Wert 1996b).

An example of how this is not possible in Spain can be found in what occurred during the days leading up to the election campaigns prior to the general election held on March 14, 2004. With only one week to go before voting day, the different pre-election polls predicted a more-or-less comfortable win for Partido Popular. However, the terrorist attacks in Madrid on March 11 –during the ban on publishing polls – and the discontent of a large sector of society on how the government informed the public of the event were very likely the causes of the radical change that took place three days later in the ballots. It is therefore likely that if the prohibition had not existed, the hypothetical pre-election polls following the attacks would have been much closer to the final results. Neither would citizens have been deprived of the polls as an additional reference, as mentioned above, in order for them to freely determine who to vote for in the elections. An electoral decision will “always be better, more informed and well-based if it has all the information on voting preference at a particular time than one that is clouded and based on rumor and intoxication of the issue” (Wert 1993).

(c) New technology as the main obstacle to the effectiveness of the ban

Apart from the LÖREG-Spanish Constitution conflict, which we understand is caused by the current ban, we also consider worth highlighting the enormous obstacle of the present-day society of information – without overlooking misinformation – to its practical effectiveness. Indeed, the hyper-connectivity in which we are currently immersed facilitates avoiding the restriction. If, in the past, the recourse to foreign-media opinion polls prior to elections was already an option, the practice is now extremely simple thanks to the internet, a practice that has been carried for many years by the *Periòdic d'Andorra*, which belongs to a Spanish publishing group.

Another major obstacle concerns social networks, one of whose basic functions is the incessant reproduction of content by users. In light of all this, if we consider that article 69.7 of LÖREG is equally applicable to foreign media – an issue not exempt from debate – the question is whether all practices consisting of sharing the data of polls published in foreign

media should also be prohibited? Thanks to the fact that this would be like putting doors in an open country, it appears to us to be a highly paternalist approach that is inappropriate for a democracy considered as consolidated, even if it is still young.

Whatever the case, the truth is that the current regulations are presently being targeted by internet users that elude the ban and provide data on foreign polls by pretending, for example, to refer to a price of fruit in the country in which it is carried out. The type of fruit refers to a particular candidate, whereas the price represents the forecasted electoral support for and against such a candidate. Not only does this occur in Spain, but also in Italy, where horse races are sometimes used with fictitious data on the main stables and jockeys competing.

5. Other regulatory aspects

We should finally refer to article 69.8 of LÖREG, which was added to the original wording by article único.21 of Organic Law 8/1991. The objective was to resolve an issue that for some time had been raised in relation to the fact that when a public body carries out a poll, given that it ultimately reports to the government, this places it at an advantage with respect to access to the information.

In 1989, the Central Electoral Board agreed that when the government possesses data provided by the CIS resulting from a survey of the intention to vote during an electoral period, it must share the information with the other competing political forces that request it, under the principle of equality. This would also be extendable to the surveys carried out by regional bodies.⁸

An example of how the Central Electoral Board's criteria influence the subsequent work of legislators, article 69.8 LÖREG states that "should a body belonging to a Public Administration perform a survey during the electoral period on the intention to vote, the results of the survey shall be provided to the political entities taking part in the elections being held in the territorial area of the survey, whenever so requested, within forty-eight hours of the request."

In addition, and "in order to clarify the manner in which candidates can become aware that a body belonging to a Public Administration, be it a state, regional or local body, has carried out a survey on the intention to vote during an electoral period," the Central Electoral Board issued an

⁸ AJEC dated October 17, 1989.

instruction⁹ making it mandatory for such a body to immediately notify “the general representatives of the political entities taking part in the elections, in order for them to request it.” In any case, the Central Electoral Board dealt with the issue in a Resolution dated April 29, 1991 when it pointed out that the surveys carried out during an electoral period must be provided by the relevant public body and not by the Central Electoral Board, within the prescribed term.

6. Conclusions

- I. Pre-election polls constitute a mere estimate of whether people will vote in a particular political direction or another, at a certain time and place.
- II. Considered by many to have prophesizing qualities, this type of poll may influence voters in different ways, which are impossible to anticipate at a specific point in time.
- III. In order to prevent this influence, we observe in comparative law that there are countries that have opted for strictly prohibiting the publication of electoral polls during the electoral period or, at least during an extended part thereof.
- IV. Another intermediary option is observed by states in which the ban only applies to voting day or, at the most, the day before.
- V. Finally, we find systems in which the publication of pre-election polls is completely free, thus fulfilling the right to information and to be informed during elections.
- VI. In addition to establishing certain technical requirements, the Spanish legal system prohibits the media to publish, circulate, or reproduce electoral polls during the five days before voting day. This does not prevent such polls from being carried out by those that can pay for them – normally political parties – which collides head-on with the principle of equality, in article 14 of the SC, the right to information, in article 20.1 (d) of the SC, and the principle of freedom of public opinion, in article 23.1 of the SC.
- VII. The attempt to prevent pre-election polls from influencing voters – by means of a ban – is seen as a paternalist measure for a consolidated democracy like Spain. Furthermore, technological development is leading to the obsolescence of the current regulation, as many Spanish opinion-poll companies are using foreign media to

⁹ Instruction dated April 26, 1993 by the Central Electoral Board, referring to article 69.8 of LOREG.

publish the information, especially on the internet. Taking all this into account, a review of the current legislation is the required to adapt to the current political and social reality in Spain.

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FROM “HER” TO “OUR” TRAUMA: NARRATIVE IN SHAPING THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF “COMFORT WOMEN”

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Abstract

The “comfort women” were sex slaves of the Japanese Army during the Second World War. The topic of “comfort women” is important because women are victims and witnesses of double violence: the war and sexual abuse. Therefore, this research focuses on how the nationalism and gender narratives interplay in storytelling and sense-making. The nationalist narrative contributes to turning a tragedy into a cultural trauma and to recreating its meaning. The “comfort women” are hurt not only by violence in the past, but also by the unified nationalist narrative in the present day. These women are neglected and aphasiac, described as silent witness and symbols of traumatic social memory. Media technology provides a context in which we can recall cultural memory; however, the narrative could be nationalist, which might conceal an individual narrative. Anatomy on this issue is crucial to envisaging women’s subjectivity while building up a collective memory and identity.

Introduction

Before and during the Second World War, women from China, Korea, the Philippines, Japan, the Netherlands, and other countries were deceived and kidnapped to be sex slaves of the Japanese military. These were the so-called “comfort women,” an institutional and collective system of sexual slavery established by the Imperial Japanese Army during the war. Above all, to clarify a basic fact, “comfort women” is a translation from 慰安婦 (いあんふ in Japanese hiragana), and “comfort” indicates that these women

were voluntary military prostitutes, which is misleading and contradictory to the historical facts. Chen estimates that the total number of “comfort women” from countries and regions occupied or annexed by Japan was 360,000 to 410,000, and most were Chinese and Korean (Huang 2012, 206). For a long time, they were relatively neglected parts of the traumatic memory of the Second World War. As an increasing number of survivors came forward and protests were launched, such as Chinese survivors filing a collective lawsuit against the Japanese Government in the Tokyo District Court, this issue came into public focus. Even within the framework of the collective memory about the war, this group is still unusual. The “comfort women” are part of the memory of the Second World War, which is usually called the Anti-Japanese Aggression War in China. Resisting Japan's aggression is a key point in the narrative of Chinese nationalism. Given the rise of nationalism in China in recent years, activities to commemorate the victory in the Anti-Japanese Aggression War have come into vogue, including the Seventieth Anniversary of the Victory of the Anti-Japanese Aggression War and Nanjing Massacre International Memorial Day, among others. Therefore, a tension exists between the nationalist narrative and gender narrative. More precisely, the “comfort women” are double victims of undifferentiated military violence and targeted sexual violence, who not only underwent rape and abuse in “comfort stations” during the war, but also lived in the shadow of stigma after it. Therefore, this paper focuses on how we construct the “comfort women” as part of a collective memory, especially in new cyber memory places provided by new technology.

The concept of “collective memory” proposed by Maurice Halbwachs emphasizes that memory is a cultural construction. By filtering and integrating history, collective memory contributes to shaping collective identity. The revival of the past is a radical reflection of the present. As Schwartz, Zerubavel, and Barnett (1986, 147–64) state, the explanation of the past depends on how we justify the present.

The media provides a new medium for the delivery and storage of memories. Recent years have witnessed the tremendous development of media technology, especially the emergence of new media. In the Web 2.0 era, media technology redistributes the power of memory writing. The elite take control of the mass media, while new media have empowered the masses, making the right to write collective memory available to those who can access media. Compared with mass media, new media is relatively anti-elitist and populist, contrary to the monopoly of the elite narrative. The rapid development of the internet makes the collaborative writing of collective memory possible, of which the online encyclopaedias are an evident example.

The Baidu Encyclopaedia is an open online encyclopaedia produced and owned by Baidu, which claims to be “the largest Chinese encyclopaedia,” and enjoys popularity and authority among simplified Chinese internet users. To date, approximately fifteen million entries exist, and more than six million people have participated in writing it. Written by ordinary users, the online encyclopaedia is relatively democratic and liberal. By studying the editing of the Baidu Encyclopaedia entry for “comfort women,” we can see how the public constructs their collective memory, and how to integrate this historical traumatic memory into the national collective memory and construct an identity discourse to pass between generations. The observation on the victims of crosscutting military and sexual violence contributes to a deeper understanding of the gender narrative in the shaping of commemoration.

Research Questions and Method

Research questions

Considering the tension between gender and nationalist narratives, past and present, this study proposes the following research questions:

- (i) How do the writers construct collective memory in the entry on “comfort women” in the Baidu Encyclopaedia?
- (ii) How does the commemoration process embed the “comfort women” collective memory into the construction of national identity?

Method

The entry on “comfort women,” established on May 2, 2006, is one of the encyclopaedia’s early entries, since the beta version of the Baidu Encyclopaedia launched on April 20, 2006. It was established slightly later than the “Anti-Japanese War” entry, established on April 20, 2006, and the “Nanjing Massacre” entry, established on April 21, 2006. To date, this entry has been edited 151 times.

Regarding the method, this research will employ discourse analysis based on the qualitative method to present the collaborative writing process. Discourse analysis focuses on exploring the power relation and social classification in context. By performing a discourse analysis on historical editions of the article on “comfort women” in the Baidu Encyclopaedia, we discuss how different narratives function through media technology in shaping collective memory.

Discussion

Trace of oblivion and remembering

Stories of the “comfort women” are not naturally or necessarily a part of the collective memory of the Second World War. At first, the Chinese media regarded information related to “comfort women” as part of the diplomatic friction between Korea and Japan, or merely as general social news. As Song (2006, 137–56) notes, it was not until 2007 that the mass media consciously linked the “comfort women” report with the Second World War. With the advent of the online collective writing platform, the collective memory of the “comfort women” naturally migrated to a new memory space. From 2007 to 2011, the number of edits to the entry the “comfort women” shows a slow and fluctuating rise. A rapid increase occurred in 2012, from nine to twenty, and then the number of edits per year remains relatively stable until a slight decline in 2016.

The year 2012 was one of severe political earthquakes in Sino-Japanese relations, and a time when Chinese nationalist cries and actions burst out. The Diaoyu Islands issue, a territorial conflict between China and Japan, resulted in the Sino-Japanese relations hitting rock bottom on both official and day-to-day levels. More than one hundred cities across the country launched anti-Japanese demonstrations, and some even triggered violent clashes. Whether a correlation exists between the fluctuations in the Sino-Japanese relations and the protrusion of the memory of the “comfort women” still needs verification. One thing that is for sure is that, unlike reports in the mass media, the Baidu Encyclopaedia’s entry on “comfort women” was related to nationalism from the beginning.

Constructing the subject of the story

Although the “comfort women” are direct victims and witnesses of violence, they are not generally speakers.

Several amendments to the definition of the “comfort women” refine and supplement some related concepts. The first version provides two definitions of “comfort women”: one is from Japanese dictionary *Kōjien*, which declares them as “women who comforted soldiers,” and the other was made by scholars who define them as sex slaves of the Imperial Japanese Army. On March 4, 2008 an edit amended the definition to “Women’s Volunteer Corps” (女子挺身隊 in Chinese), a near-synonym for “comfort women,” by pointing out that it means a labour production organization composed of women in Japan. The edit on September 19, 2015 states that

the group “comfort women” is a system of military prostitutes, but not all sex slaves are uniformly called “comfort women.” The edits on December 7, 2016 and December 30, 2015 quoted a Chinese history scholar’s initiative and a report issued by the United Nations to stress that we should rename “comfort women” forcibly recruited in the Second World War in China, North Korea, and other countries as “sex slaves.” All editions have emphasized that the “comfort women” are not voluntary, paid military prostitutes, but are deceived and forced to become sex slaves – part of a traumatic memory not limited to China, but shared by many Asian countries and regions. These supplements and amendments attempt to remove the stigma associated with the “comfort women” victims.

Additionally, the definition of “comfort women” is relatively clear and so the successive versions have maintained a relatively stable content, but the amendments and emphasis on national boundaries have repeatedly appeared. There is no doubt that the “comfort women” are from many Asian countries and regions, a majority of whom are of Chinese nationalities. In this regard, the concept of China’s territory – both historically and now – although not directly related to this topic, remains a focus in several edits.

Former versions of the definition of the “comfort women” align China, Taiwan, and Manchukuo,¹ until a modification on February 17, 2008 which changes “Manchukuo” to “Manchuria” and changes “Taiwan” to the “Taiwan region.” In addition, the edit on February 22, 2012 states: “Most of the ‘comfort women’ come from mainland China (including the northeast region, which was then called Manchuria).” This modification, according to the user Xhffeng, is in view of the fact that “Manchuria was the title of the northeastern part of China during the Second World War, so it should be included in mainland China.” Another two edits on October 25 and 26, 2016 are also directed to the sovereignty disputes between mainland China and Taiwan. An accurate representation that is loyal to historical facts is reasonable; but what we are concerned about is the attention to the concept of a complete nation in this expression. Obviously, what “China” means is crucial for the users of the Baidu Encyclopaedia, considering how frequently it is emphasized, although the topic is relatively complicated to clarify in a complex historical context.

In addition to re-emphasizing the clear territorial boundaries, the Baidu Encyclopaedia’s entry for “comfort women” introduces commemorative activities about this and related controversies in Taiwan, indicating that, despite the existing disputes in all fields, with regards to the issue of the

¹ A puppet state established in 1932 by the Empire of Japan in northeast China and Inner Mongolia. The Manchuria area was the same as northeast China at that time.

“comfort women,” mainland China and Taiwan share the trauma and the memory; thus, they are supposed to be on the same side. The two edits in 2015 quote three reports from *People's Daily*, adding that Ma Ying-jeou's repeated statements in the section of “attitudes of various countries” indicate that Taiwan will continue to negotiate with Japan, demanding an apology and compensation for the victims; moreover, he emphasizes that the “comfort women” were not voluntary. In addition, the “important events” section mentions Ma Ying-jeou's announcement that Taiwan will establish the first memorial hall for comfort women during the Commemorative Forum on Commemorating the Seventieth Anniversary of the Victory of the Anti-Japanese War. Although the construction of online collective memory in cyberspace is a collective process achieved by the cooperation of dispersed and anonymous individuals, in which interaction and communication are lacking, these discourse participants have made similar choices about the pieces they place in the common cultural memory, which is not a coincidence. The above statements released by former Taiwanese president Ma Ying-jeou defending the rights of the “comfort women” group are all facts. In addition, another detail is that the subjects of these additions are all about “Ma Ying-jeou” as an individual, not the Taiwanese government he represents.

Ma Ying-jeou announced that the first memorial hall for “comfort women” will be established in Taiwan.

Ma Ying-jeou said on the 16th, we cannot justify continuing to say some comfort women may have been voluntary.

Ma Ying-jeou stated that the UN Human Rights Commission put forward a special report in 1996 clearly defining the “comfort women” as “military slaves.”

Ma Ying-jeou claimed today that Taiwan has always required the Japanese Government to apologize to and compensate Taiwanese “comfort women” during World War II.²

During Ma Ying-jeou's two terms of office, although he went through extreme ups and downs in polls in Taiwan, he always enjoyed great recognition and popularity in mainland China, compared with other Taiwanese government officials. This fact is mainly due to his pro-China attitude and the political assertion of the “one China” principle, which have made him popular in mainland China among successive heads of the Taiwanese government. Therefore, a statement given by the head of a

² <https://baike.baidu.com/history/%E6%85%B0%E5%AE%89%E5%A6%87/79060874>.

government who maintains the integrity of China is more likely to resonate with Chinese people, especially in the face of some statements that are contrary to this common narrative.

However, these are not the only efforts made by Taiwan to fight for the rights of the “comfort women.” Since the early 1990s, Taiwanese government agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, and civil rights organizations including the Taipei Women’s Rescue Foundation, have repeatedly called on the Japanese government to apologize to the “comfort women” and have participated in suing the Japanese government. If the collective memory narrative focuses on and only on the defence of the rights of “comfort women,” then neglecting these actions in the entry is an omission. But, since 2015, writers have edited the entry with statements made by the Taiwanese government and civil organizations in a timely fashion.

This fact seems contradictory if we simplify the filtering of memory fragments as a process of picking up the pieces. In fact, recalling is a construction, as is forgetting. Selecting fragments to embed into the social memory is a reflection of the current reality, because the social context requires us to remember and emphasize certain facts. In 2015, the revision of the Baidu Encyclopaedia’s entry on “comfort women” was not entirely about the right defence activities in Taiwan, which did not make a breakthrough in that year. The collective memory writers’ attention was drawn by another relevant controversy. ● On May 24, 2015, high school students and teachers in Taiwan launched a protest known as the Anti-Black Box Curriculum Movement to oppose the Ministry of Education’s revision of the high school history syllabus. The controversy over the new historical syllabus lay mainly in the section of Taiwanese history and two basic claims by the movement are “de-Sinicization” and “procedural justice.” In this process, the Premier of the Republic of China Lin Chuan and some students stated that the new syllabus should not emphasize that comfort women were “compelled,” considering the absence of evidence, because some of them might have become “comfort women” for economic reasons. This research does not seek to assess this claim. It evoked major disputes within the anti-black box curriculum group in Taiwan and mainland China. The writers of the collective memory of the “comfort women” focused on the historical connections between the mainland and Taiwan, and the national attributes of the “comfort women” in the collective memory.

Such discussions are related to the “comfort women,” but they are out of focus. Collective memory writing does not neglect an explanation of the “comfort women,” but at the same time it pays much attention to disputes on what “China” is. The image of a complete China is very critical to the

owner of cultural memory, although this fact is not directly relevant to the humanitarian tragedies that occurred more than half a century ago. It is relevant to the writers’ perception of the present and a sense of belonging. The country was once incomplete; the history of Manchuria and Taiwan is part of the painful memory of division, and this traumatic memory still exists today. Thus, the awareness and imagination of a current, united country must be maintained. This fact indicates that the nationalist discourse has always been prioritized. The painful memory of the victims who were “comfort women” remains witness and background for the national history and national discourse, but they are not the only protagonists that they are supposed to be.

National humiliation and nationalist discourse

As an online encyclopaedia, the Baidu Encyclopaedia is supposed to hold a neutral and objective position, retaining only the profiles about objective facts without involving subjective and emotional expression. However, along with new media having empowered everyone to write entries, this has become difficult. Writers can inject ideology and subjective standpoints directly into the collective memory narrative, leading different narrative logics into confronting each other. The narrative of the “comfort women” entry in the Baidu Encyclopaedia has experienced a remarkable turnaround. Not only has the content gradually been enriched, but also the focus of the narratives has shifted from underlining humiliation and trauma to enumerating objective facts. Apart from listing the basic facts of the “comfort women,” earlier versions tend to condemn the enormous harm caused by the Imperial Japanese Army to these women. What is more, they emphasize that Chinese society should take an active part in defending the “comfort women” and prevent such tragedies from occurring again.

Early versions include sections such as definition, the “comfort women” system, and its impact. In addition to these basic facts, they also make some subjective assessments, as follows.

The relationship between Japanese soldiers and “comfort women” is the only case in which men have enslaved women, especially women from colonies and enemy countries, something unheard of in the history of human civilization for thousands of years. It fully reveals the barbarity, cruelty, and tyranny of the Imperial Japanese Army. It is the filthiest and darkest page

in human history in the 20th century and the most tragic record in the history of women in the world.³

The editors repeatedly use words such as “only” and “most” and adjectives with strong subjective emotions to express their condemnation of the abuse of the “comfort women.” Moreover, they describe the situation of the “comfort women” being raped and abused in an indignant tone. Initially, this part lacks the relevant references and evidence to prove the descriptions. The narrative oversimplifies the root of the tragedy as a “brutal atrocity” and a “ravage” by Imperial Japanese soldiers, without emphasizing the root of collective institutional crime. The victims’ image also remains flat. The writers employ words such as “miserable,” “trampled,” and “inhuman misfortune” to sum up the situation of the “comfort women” and evoke emotional cohesion. These edits seem to be sentimental expressions drawn from a sense of justice. Soon, successive writers supplement the edits with detailed evidence to replace the less rigorous description, such as quotes from the Korean survivor Park Yong-hsin, photos, profiles, and news coverage. By complementing subjective details, the editors’ main purpose is not to enhance the persuasiveness, because a description with barely any references and too many adjectives is not consistent with the principle of objectivity, a requirement for an encyclopaedia. In their view, the “comfort women” system is a fact and does not require further discussion. Instead of trying to provide facts, they are more inclined to evoke in their readers – neither the victims nor all people, but Chinese people today – some specific emotional resonance by listing the atrocities of the Imperial Japanese Army. They are intentionally calling for justice for the victims and a wiping away of the collective memory of humiliation because of the desire to rebuild their national dignity.

In the second edition, a chapter entitled “To Alert China” tried to underline that the nation’s self-esteem had been dented, and China had to wash away the shame brought about by the history of “comfort women.” This chapter remained in the entry from May 2006 to September 2014.

Today we recall the tragedy of “comfort women” in order to prevent successive generations from forgetting the history, and as a warning to today’s and the future Japanese Government that they should be humiliated by what they have done and never let this occur ever. On the issue of Chinese “comfort women,” Chinese people must say no! Any forgiveness and silence will turn into national humiliation that tarnishes the self-esteem

³ <https://baike.baidu.com/history/%E6%85%B0%E5%AE%89%E5%A6%87/117566>.

of our descendants' and the country's soul. The ineffable humiliation should not be buried in silence. Our self-esteem needs to be respected.⁴

This section was initially situated at the end of the entry. Later, it was moved further up. Then it remained one of the last paragraphs in the entry until it was deleted. After describing the history of the “comfort women” system and the status quo of the victims, the entry does not end with the “comfort women” themselves, but with the fate and dignity of the nation. According to the writers, the system of “comfort women” established by the Imperial Japanese Army not only resulted in innocent women from Asian countries suffering from physical and mental pain, but in the nation's self-esteem being damaged. The top priority in this nationalist narrative is not the victims' feelings and emotions, but rather the nation's self-esteem.

Writers repeatedly emphasize that the “comfort women” are a deep national humiliation. However, as mentioned, people recently came to realize this. Activism to defend the “comfort women” since the 1990s in South Korea and Taiwan did not arouse the attention of the Chinese domestic media and the general public until they discovered the link between this group and the memory of war. Since the public have paid attention to “comfort women” they have become part of the national shame narrative. For a long period before this memory, they had not been given the care they deserved. As mentioned earlier, the “comfort women” are the dual victims of sexual violence and war violence, but their situation is different from that of most victims of war violence. When people retell history, the survivors of the war may receive respect and even glory as heroes, but the victims and survivors of sexual and military violence do not enjoy such an honour, as the trauma caused by sexual violence is seen as shameful, and should have less public exposure. Although the victims of sexual assault suffer systematic and institutional violence, the general public still regards them as people who have lost their chastity and reputation, and even in some cases associate them with prostitutes. The trauma itself is ignored, and the victims who cannot get rid of the label of “sex slaves” are silenced for a long time. Even though today the issue has become a public concern, they are witnesses more than independent individuals. People repeat this label, but they do not really know what “comfort women” really means. Most of the time, in the collective memory narrative, we see the “comfort women” as a group. But they seem to be ambiguous under this unified tag, since people do not always pay attention to individuals and the real suffering they have gone through under this label. For the writers,

⁴ <https://baike.baidu.com/history/%E6%85%B0%E5%AE%89%E5%A6%87/65283252>.

supplementary details from their imagination are sufficient to evoke emotion and rage against a hypothetical otherness in viewers' minds. The label of "comfort women" consists of the oppression and discrimination imposed on individuals, but it is the pain and humiliation of the entire nation that is actually the key point of the story.

Collective memory is always a reinterpretation of the past based on the present, and discourse practice is the reflection of social practice. According to Schwartz, Zerubavel, and Barnett (1986, 147–64), we cannot oversimplify it into an instrumental process. More precisely, people do not simply pick up fragments from the past that meet the current utilitarian purposes. Instead, they retell the memory in a way that manages to justify the present. There are not monotonous repetitions of history, but readjustments of the narrative strategy according to the needs based on reality, making the context discourse consistent with social practice. In previous versions, writers emphasized the necessity of a pursuit for justice, which is a reasonable path for crying away national shame and rebuilding self-esteem. Sometimes, indignation towards Japan also exists. In this process, nationalism defines itself by dividing otherness and ego, thereby strengthening the viewers' sense of national identity.

Such narratives existed in the Baidu Encyclopaedia entry on the "comfort women" until September 15, 2014, when writers deleted most of the emotional content about national dignity directly; instead, many objective references have enriched the entry, making it more neutral. However, the ideology has not been eliminated, but has gradually changed from an explicit expression to potential and implicit structural narratives. Writers have come to realize the objectivity principle of the online encyclopaedia, but they have not thoroughly implemented it. As the social context has changed, they have adopted a seemingly more neutral narrative strategy, but the core of the nationalist narrative remains. Through the reasons for the edit made on June 15, 2008, we can see one reason for this change in strategy.

As an independent country, China must clear out the historical malignant tumours. As passionate descendants of "Yandi and Huangdi Emperors,"⁵ we must pursue the justice that was cut off by time and forgotten by us.

The reason for the writer deleted these two sentences is as follows:

⁵ Yandi and Huangdi are two ancestors of Chinese people in legend; thus, Chinese people call themselves "descendants of Yandi and Huangdi Emperors."

(1) To be subjective. (2) The recent "Warm Spring Journey" is easing Sino-Japanese relations, so "anti-Japanese" content should not exist. (3) We cannot evaluate a country's behavior unilaterally (especially the behavior a century ago). (4) With a single sentence in a paragraph, this typesetting indirectly strongly highlights personal anger towards Japan.

The history of the "comfort women" is a humanitarian tragedy and a disaster, but it is not necessarily directly linked to national self-esteem. The Nanjing Massacre is part of the memory of war trauma, and the collective memory of the Anti-Japanese War was an important part of the construction of nationalism. As Liu (2004, 46–8) notes, the nationalism of modern China is a kind of "weeping-shame nationalism." Since the Opium War in 1840, China suffered from colonial aggression and invasion, causing the country to fall into fission and war. Thus, one hundred years of humiliation is always the tone of early modern Chinese history. The narrators simplify the complex context and radical reasons for the history but keep repeating these shameful episodes. Fragments of trauma memory evoke strong emotional cohesion, and stimulate viewers' strong desire to wash away shame, and thereby strengthen the bond between individuals and the nation. The collective memory of "comfort women" contains the resistance to the humiliation memory and the desire to wash away the shame along with the imagination of a powerful nation today. By recalling traumatic memories, the national narrative successfully transforms the experience of independent individuals into a background story that accompanies a macroscopic national narrative, in which women are accessories and belongings of a nation. This phenomenon symbolizes the vagueness of the focus in the nationalist narrative. Victims only need to be witnesses, rather than the subject and core of the narrative.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, we can conclude that the process of reconstructing the collective memory of the "comfort women" is retelling selected pieces in a deliberate way that reflects the present in the past. In the interaction with the past, the nationalist narrative describes the history of the "comfort women" as the humiliation of the nation, embedding it in the collective memory of ethnic trauma and evoking the emotional resonance of the viewers, thereby contributing to the building of national identity.

In this process, the narrative of nationalism obscures the subjectivity of women, leaving them as possessions of nation, and the sufferings they experienced both physically and mentally are part of the grand narrative of the nation state. By replacing women with the entire nation, victims are

returned to silence. In constructing the discourse practice of the collective memory of the “comfort women,” we can see that the victims who suffered directly are women, and the writers of collective memory spread the suffering that occurred to specific victims to the entire nation. Therefore, people who have not experienced and witnessed the history can have moral and emotional sympathy. It is described as an “unspeakable” humiliation, but the trauma caused by war violence will not be described as something difficult to put forward. Among the pain left by the war, only that caused by violence is too inferior to show in public. Women are seen through the patriarchal view, making them victims of another stigma and exploitation. It took quite a long time to eliminate this narrative in the collective memory. Still, the anger of viewers remains not only because of the persecution of fellow citizens, but also because of trauma for the nation throughout its early modern history. The humiliation is regarded as a humiliation, not only because innocent women suffered from abuse, but also because the national self-esteem has been stigmatized. Victims step backwards into a silent background; people selectively forget their own feelings and stress the national self-esteem instead. While pursuing justice, we should also take a constant and cautious look at the way we regard women. As independent individuals, they deserve understanding and respect at the utmost. There is no need to let the nation be their spokesperson, as the value of the individual narrative should also be maximally demonstrated.

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HOW TO BE LESS DISTANT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

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Abstract

Nowadays, distance is not the main issue in distance education. Online learning is popular and chosen by many users who decide to do some courses, even if they could easily study in other ways. The preference for distance education is now simply the learner's choice. They see the potential of massive peer learning and the freedom of the individual choice of learning path.

Our study shows that e-learning users have some interesting criteria for course selection. The value of the usability of the learning content, as well as the consonance of the learning content with the previous profile of the interest of learners were the two selection factors with the highest estimation in our research.

Although we discovered a strong correlation between average time spent on the internet with the subject's eagerness to pick up courses suggested via the network, it turned out that learners who are overactive in using social media are less willing to take e-learning courses in the future.

Therefore, to make the process of learning in the network not only more effective but also more natural, we should exploit the power of the learners themselves. In this paper, we analyse the factors responsible for making distance-learning users less distant from each other. Here are the most important from our list: the effective implementation of collaborative learning, properly supervised networking, user-friendly mechanisms enabling peer-learning, a flexible system of the individualization of learning paths, the full responsiveness and adaptiveness of courses online and their self-regulating quality, and of course the use of the newest technologies, including augmented reality and 360° multimedia. The paper will also present an analysis of the role of abovementioned factors.

Introduction

The key notion in distance education, namely “distance,” seems to be less problematic now. Originally, it denoted the crucial advantage of e-learning in crossing distances between teachers and learners. The defining reason for applying distance education was connected with less accessible stationary schools and universities of good quality, and the smaller overall cost of educational service online. In the background of this process we see on one side a noble idea of common education for all, and of course attractive visions of commercial success on the other.

So, what can be done to take advantage of this new attitude to distance learning, and to make distance learning less “distant”?

Is distance the issue?

During one of the big conferences on distance education organized in Brazil, one of the delegates, a student from California, described the following situation. He attended a lecture given by a very popular speaker – a professor of a local university. As the auditorium was overpopulated, he could only find a place at the end of the huge assembly hall, and from there could hardly see the person speaking. But with the help of loudspeakers and thanks to the overhead projection he managed to see and hear everything, despite the distance between him and the professor. And he seriously asked himself a question – was that a situation of face-to-face learning, or rather a unexpected instance of distance education?

And the opposite instance of an educational situation frequently happens during school breaks or students’ meetings. A group of students gathers together, but each holds a smartphone or tablet and focuses only on the display. Maybe some of them are engaged in online learning or any other kind of exchange of information over the network. They are physically close to each other, the distance among them very small, but they are still distant in the sense of real cooperation or co-presence.

Therefore, if it is so difficult to distinguish situations in which the actual distance, although small, does not result in conditions for cooperation and information exchange, from situations where a large distance does not deny face-to-face contact, then the following question can be asked – how can the meaning of distance in modern online learning be understood?

Perhaps you need to re-evaluate or redefine the concept of distance as a parameter determining the differences between learning in reality and learning online, or distance learning.

The reasons why a student chooses this type of distance learning are changing in front of us. Even ten or fifteen years ago, the reasons for choosing online learning were obvious. The educational contents made available in e-learning exceeded the barrier of distance between the teacher and the student. E-learning was to change the shape of education and help to learn in places and regions of the world where there are no easily accessible educational services. Together with the development of distance learning, good quality educational services have become more accessible, both logistically and financially. E-learning was also an important idea in providing universal education for developing countries and an element of the Millennium Development Goals. Alongside such noble ideas, the driving force behind the development of online education services was also the quite prosaic desire to earn money through research units and universities around the world.

Have the factors influencing the development of distance learning changed in recent years? The appearance of, for example, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in 2008 and their rapid development, as well as the creation of large and rich consortia that provide good quality online educational content, could have had impacts on the change. Access to distance learning has also been increased by the development of communication technologies. Since almost every student in the world can afford to own a mobile phone or smartphone, the obstacle to online education has been minimized. In turn, the popularity and mass use of social-networking sites and various types of internet applications have enabled the horizontal exchange of information between learners. There is even a massive trend in the use of social-media tools in communication, especially among young people. As a result, this has developed into the new fashion among young people of undertaking e-learning instead of going down traditional routes.

So, have the reasons for choosing education online, obvious and natural years ago, stayed up to date? The most obvious and basic of them are definitely still exist. Students are still eager to enjoy high quality educational content at a relatively low price or for free. The idea of universal education and access to schools for everyone has not died. On the other hand, the commercial aspect of distance learning has not expired. What's more, it is still an important factor influencing the decisions of educational institutions to get involved in creating their own online learning content.

Nevertheless, new factors influencing the development and dissemination of online education come to the fore. What is more, they are now regulating the stream of inflow of a group of learners in the internet-education environment. For the young people, access to ready-made content

is not enough. Education resources, understood as a common learning program for everyone, have ceased to be attractive. Now the learner wants to choose the learning content independently and use them in their own right. An individual choice of learning path has become standard. At the same time, the contemporary young student does not want to study alone, in isolation. Hence the development of massive peer-learning. That is why social learning becomes so popular, i.e. learning in groups, in cooperation and exchange of information, as well as the networking that accompanies these phenomena.

The Social Media i-Laboratory for Education

In 2015, the Social Media i-Laboratory for Education was established at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow. This bottom-up educational institution provides comprehensive research on numerous phenomena related to social media, particularly in the context of online education. The structure of this scientific unit is formed by the following five laboratories:

- **MOC Lab** – a laboratory in which we analyse the current methods of producing massive educational courses with the use of modern multimedia tools. Analyses focus on the question of quality assurance and the self-selection of the learning paths by students, as well as peer-learning, peer-assessment, and project learning, including inverted classes and collaborative social learning.
- **Social Media Analytics Lab** – laboratory in which we use various tools for the analysis of social-media phenomena, especially connected with journalism and education. The main subject of research is the nature and mechanism of spontaneous information distribution on the internet with the use of social media.
- **Virtual Reality Lab** – an experimental laboratory for research on virtual reality as a medium for education. We experiment with such new tools as HoloLenses, 360-grade cameras, augmented reality, and virtual reality, both in virtual laboratories and games environments.
- **Behavioral Studies Lab** – a laboratory equipped with modern tools for monitoring physiological reactions in the context of educational content exposition (eyetracker, biofeedback). We analyse the very basic mechanisms underlining the emerging mental phenomena of study subjects in various social and emotional contexts.
- **Focus Studies Lab** – a laboratory for qualitative sociological methods of research. We focus in this sub-unit on studies that aim at

uncovering causal relations between sets of factors, which are nonmanipulative and noncontrolled.

In the domain of studies on e-learning contexts, our laboratory focuses on factors of the effectiveness of learning online, which include: identity building, intellectual development, attitudes towards globalization, level of emotional intelligence, and spiritual development, as well as levels of trust and social and digital exclusion.

Results and conclusions of studies in various contexts

Conclusions from our previous studies established a promising background for our current research. We concentrated our insight on the nature of various contexts determining progress in e-learning effectiveness. Our study showed, for example, that in early adulthood – the period in which young people build their identity – those who actively seek new information from independent sources are at the same time better prepared to use distance learning. Openness to new experiences and new ways of gaining knowledge is correlated with the eagerness to take part in e-learning.¹

Similarly, interesting results were obtained in the study on the attitude towards globalization among users of online courses. It turned out that the dominance of critical or fearful attitudes toward globalization does not correlate with being familiar with e-learning and having plans to use it. We also observed a negative correlation between accepting attitudes towards globalization and a higher level of knowledge of e-learning and plans to use it. For most people in the age of emerging adolescence, they approve of globalization less when they know less about e-learning and are less interested in its use. Conversely, the greater the interest in the use of e-learning, the more accepting attitude is adopted towards the phenomenon of globalization. Cautiously interpreting the results, we conclude that the use of tools for distance learning and even plans for such use enable better awareness of the drawbacks of globalization and weaken its approval. Conversely, people with a low approval of globalization nevertheless prefer to access tools of distance learning.²

¹ E. Gurba, K. Gurba, W. Misztal, R. Nęcek, and W. Mleczko, "Developmental Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of E-learning among People in the Phase of Emerging Adulthood," Eighth Annual International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies, Barcelona (2016).

² A. Senejko, E. Gurba, K. Gurba, W. Misztal, R. Nęcek, and W. Mleczko, "The Attitude Toward Globalization as a Factor Shaping the Willingness to Use E-Learning by Young People in the Phase of Emerging Adulthood," Eighth Annual

Studying the impact of spiritual development on the effectiveness of e-learning also obtained significant correlations.³ The factor of spiritual development and seeking a deeper meaning in life is correlated with the greater efficiency of using distance-learning tools. This aspect will be included in more elaborated and multi-factorial research designs, but the first results already look promising. We probably underestimate the role of the spiritual and mental dimension in distance learning. Our research aims to fill the gap between ethnographic studies on the factors determining the effectiveness and quality of e-learning on one hand, and the behavioral types of experimental studies on the same subject on the other.

Another important aspect of our interest, strictly connected with that mentioned above, concerns the credibility of new forms of distance learning and social learning. Research on the role of trust in online learning is not new. However, in a specific study we achieved interesting conclusions in this regard as well.⁴ It turned out that the credibility of traditional learning is not significantly higher than that of e-learning. A convincing difference appears when subjects are asked about the credibility of traditional teachers versus virtual ones. In this case, significantly more students (63.2%) admitted that an online teacher is less credible or not credible at all. At the same time, the trust component of the e-learning process is appreciated strongly by potential e-learners, because 81.6% claim that trust in online teachers is important, and 65.8% say the same according to their peers on the course.

An interesting and promising novelty in our team's research is connected with the analysis of the mutual relationship between standards of good journalism – or, more broadly speaking, effective communication – with the effectiveness and quality of online learning. The concept of news values as a set of quality standards in media communication is surprisingly well suited to describe quality determinants in the e-learning process, especially in social and collaborative learning.⁵

International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies, Barcelona (2016).

³ K. Gurba, W. Misztal, and R. Nęcek, "Influence of Spiritual Development on the Effectiveness of Virtual Collaboration in Distance Education," Ninth International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation, Sevilla (2016).

⁴ Krzysztof Gurba and Ewa Gurba, "The Role of Trust in Modern E-learning Models," Ninth Annual International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies, Barcelona (2017).

⁵ K. Gurba, D. Kaczmarczyk, and B. Pajchert, "News Values Concept Application to Gatekeeping in Online Learning," Twelfth International Technology, Education and Development Conference Conference, Valencia (2018).

An interesting perspective of the study is provided by the use of behavioral methods. Our team investigates the reactions of participants of the courses with the use of an eye tracker. Further experiments are going to be done using biofeedback. These new research tools enable the objective identification of criteria for the applicability and effectiveness of online learning. Experiments, observations of physiological reactions, and advanced real-time controlled trials make it possible to draw reliable conclusions and recognition of causal relations that are unreachable with other methods.

Online courses selection criteria

In recent years we have undertaken intensive research in SMiLE on the criteria for course selection by students and recognized the two following selection factors with the highest estimation. First is the value of the usability of learning content. Online learning users are mostly very pragmatic and tend to pick up the topics usable in their current or future careers. Secondly, they prefer courses or learning content that is in consonance with the previous profile of the interest of learners.

Analysing the course-selection criteria and confronting them with activity of learners on the internet, we observe that there is a strong correlation between average time spent on the internet and the subject's eagerness to pick up courses suggested via the network, but that learners who are highly active in using social media are less willing to take e-learning courses in the future.

Factors responsible for making distance-learning users less distant from each other

In the current studies on factors determining the effectiveness and high quality of e-learning from the learner's point of view, we concluded that many students play an important role in filling the distance between learning mates. Crucial in this very dimension is mutual learning or co-existence in the virtual learning realm. Among many factors analysed, we nominated seven as the most important and promising:

- effective implementation of collaborative learning
- properly supervised networking
- user-friendly mechanisms enabling peer-learning
- a flexible system of the individualization of learning paths
- the full responsiveness and adaptiveness of courses online

- self-regulating quality of the courses
- use of the newest technologies, including augmented reality and 360° multimedia

Conclusion

Pointing out the seven main factors responsible for making distance learning less distant for the learners, we focus on the proper use of horizontal communication between all parts engaged in the process of learning. We believe that the more natural and bottom-up process of, firstly, selecting and, secondly, maintaining online courses is crucial for this goal. All the above-mentioned factors play, preferably simultaneously, an important role in making e-learning more engaging, self-controlled, and user-friendly. To make the process of learning in the network not only more effective but also more natural (and eventually less distant) we should exploit the power of the learners themselves.

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PART THREE:
**DIGITAL MEDIA, ADVERTISING,
AND GLOBALIZATION**

INFORMATION, DATA, AND INTELLIGENCE: GLOBAL DIGITAL MEDIA POLARIZATION, DEMOCRATIZATION, AND PARTICIPATION

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Abstract

Using intelligence studies and the related literature review in this area, this research examines the justifications and arguments for the separation between data, information, and intelligence in the era of global digital media. Theoretically and practically, the public and governments seek information from digital outlets, and from governmental and private agencies. This kind of environment has created a high level of competitive intelligence. In addition, it enhances the digital media competition that causes polarization in the name of democratization and participation. Engaging a content analysis and a descriptive assessment of multidisciplinary literature, this research shows the polarization tendencies in global digital media, governmental policymakers, and decisionmakers, which have appeared to have endangered democracy on the political, cultural, economic, academic, and educational fronts. Moreover, intelligence management and global media practices are examined and critically analysed. Utilizing agenda-setting, cultural cultivation, and adoptive structuration theories enabled this research to answer three strategic questions: what impact does information, competitive intelligence, or digital content have on local and global communities? Are there significant differences between intelligence, information, and any other kind of global digital content? How can the public circumvent polarization and boost democratization? Consequently, decision advantage, commonalities, and differences are defined and discussed.

Introduction

In modern times, when we look at the media, we are concentrating on how it impacts our characteristics such as how we communicate with others, raise a child, treat a pet, teach and learn, how we do business, negotiate, vote, measure and control our attitudes and behaviors, engage in friendship or aggressive acts, and the way we interact with one another, neighbour to neighbour and nation to nation (Campbell, Martin & Fabos 2016, 509). Information and data generate a significant volume of knowledge, which enhances the user's involvement. As such, Captain Williams S. Brei explains that "knowledge highlights the need for human involvement" (Jenson, McElreath, and Graves 2001, 1). Brei went further to question the sources for data and argued that, "Intelligence collection systems produce data not intelligence, only the human mind can provide that special touch that makes sense of data for different customers' requirements" (Jenson, McElreath, & Graves, 2001, 2). Consumers include, but are not limited to, governments, media organizations, business corporations, military, higher learning institutions, and private citizens. It is argued that the search for data and information is based on human effort and involvement. The process of converting data into quality information produces knowledge, attitude, and behavior. The result of such interaction with information plays out in the public sphere via traditional and electronic sources. For instance, the US media coverage of public polarization contributes to the polarization of the public (Levendusky & Malhotra, 2016). This article argues that this sort of environment prompts a high level of competitive intelligence. It enhances the digital-media competition that causes polarization in the name of democratization and participation.

Global Digital Media

In the case of global digital media, the amount of data and information made available by the media and disseminated to the public may cause a state of uncertainty and divergence, weakening the level of participation, and have a tremendous impact on the level of participation and the process of democratization. This is to say that the amount of data and information does not necessary inform a decision maker or a private citizen without a proper investigative analysis to obtain the value of decision advantage and gauging the importance of data and information. As a practical concept, the decision advantage dictates that one party should know more than its competitors or adversaries. To put this in context, the director of national intelligence argued that, "The key to intelligence-driven victories may not

be the collection of objective truth so much as the gaining of an information edge or competitive advantage over an adversary” (Jenson, McElreath, & Graves, 2001, 20).

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to show that information and data play a major cultural, social, economic, political, and interpersonal role in any kind of organization at every communication level (Feldman, March 1981; DeSanctis & Pool, 1994). This understanding illustrates that the development of communication technologies and their utilization to disseminate data and information to governments, organizations, and media outlets have expanded over the last two decades. The advancement of information technologies, electronic messaging systems, group decision support systems, executive information systems, collaborative systems, and social media have also impacted traditional data and information management (DeSanctis & Pool, 1994). Consequently, developers and users of these systems are able to flip conventional organizational design, intelligence, and decision making for more moderate and conventional designs (DeSanctis & Pool, 1994). The process examines the structures that are provided by social media, for instance the “structures that actually emerge in human action as people interact with these technologies” (DeSanctis & Pool, 1994, 121). The new design provides a better setting for horizontal networking logic. It also provides an effective method of information dissemination and a distribution system that secures unconventional ways to exhibit faster social, cultural, political, and economic interactions.

Definitions

According to Diffen, “Data is raw, unorganized facts that need to be processed. Data can be something simple and seemingly random and useless until it is organized.” When data is processed, sorted, restructured, and presented in a particular context, it changes to information that is ready to be used by consumers, which include governments, business, and the general public. Information is derived from data. Diffen describes “information” as an older word that dates back to the 1300s and has Old French and Middle English origins. It was always referred to as “the act of informing.” The meaning of intelligence goes way beyond the collection of information and data. Intelligence is the “knowledge that has been specifically prepared for customers based on unique circumstances” (Jenson, McElreath, & Graves, 2001, 4).

It suggests a rigorous level of interaction between the audience and the intended message. Sometimes, the message appears acrimonious. The “media malaise” thesis suggests that media including global digital media cause political disaffection by invigorating citizens’ cynicism (Camaj 2014; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Robinson 1976). The mobilization approach, however, indicates that media in general, and global digital media in particular, promote citizens’ interest in politics, business, exploring, and efficacy. They also restore a level of trust in the system and increase the citizens’ desire to participate (Camaj 2014). The relationship between media consumption, data, information, intelligence, and democratic participation has received mixed views. However, the recent literature review appeared to provide evidence for a strong link between news media and the act of political engagement on the regional and global scales (Norris 2000; Scheufele 2002; Scheufele et al. 2004). Unclear, partitioned, or uncommitted engagement with issues leads to contradiction and confusion. Consistent with current scholarly debates, the media use of data and information has deepened the level of confusion (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005). Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope demonstrated that media, knowingly or unknowingly, seem to continually paint an image for ordinary Americans as being uncommitted and deeply polarized. Examining the breadth of public polarization reflected by the media is not specific or issue-based polarization; rather, it is broad across many issues. Media also display and promote an unusual affective component of dislike for the opposition and showcase uncivil discourse and disparaging remarks about other parties (Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2005; Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012; Maso, 2012). Information and data presented by the media depict polarization as a political phenomenon. Furthermore, they demonstrate that the dissemination of information, no matter how contentious, still plays a critical role in either increasing the level of public participation or making it possible (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Camaj 2014). Meanwhile, “crosscutting interactions” is suggested as an alternative to polarization (Mutz 2002). The crosscutting interactions approach focuses on the openness of the internet and social media, with different opinions just a click away. Generally speaking, polarization has become synonymous with “partisan political discord” (Levendusky & Malhotra, 2016). This view thus argues that polarization would not be especially problematic in social-media outlets (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram). Users have open access to a great deal of information, and though obstacles still exist it is to a much lesser degree.

Theoretical Framework

Applying the theory of agenda setting, the cultural cultivation theory, and the adoptive structuration theory, validate how media platforms are able to focus attention on certain issues and events, which in turn decides what the public is going to be talking about and what is going to be at the forefront of everyone's mind. Data and information are often designed in certain ways to serve a specific purpose or advance a particular political or social agenda. Consequently, these issues become the talk of the public sphere. Surprisingly, despite the expected devotion of time and focus at work, these issues occupy a significant portion of time in the workplace. This is something that is on the minds of a majority of Americans, whether they want stricter gun laws or do not agree with any gun laws or discussion on topics such as immigration and abortion. Such engagement shows the role of the media in promoting political culture and civic orientation. It is argued, however, that this kind of political engagement as promoted by the media reflects the applications of the agenda-setting theory. It also demonstrates the significance of agenda setting as a mediator between media use and political participation (Camaj, 2014). Practically, the agenda-setting theory demonstrates the tremendous power of the media to highlight and prioritize issues on the public agenda. As a social-science theory, it tends to make predictions and emphasize certain issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). According to the agenda-setting theory, the media may gather, construe, and disseminate data and information in a way that leads the audience to focus on highlighted issues and to think about them. The media intends to set the agenda for the public by not necessarily telling them what to think, but rather by telling them what to think about. McCombs and Shaw (1972, 177) wrote:

In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. In reflecting what candidates are saying during a campaign, the mass media may well determine the important issues—that is, the media may set the “agenda” of the campaign.

By the same token, social media in general and Twitter in particular may well set the agenda of any campaign and lead the public to think deeply about particular issues, or influence “what they think about.” Since its inception in 2006, Twitter has become one of the most prevalent social-media platforms, with over 330 million active users and over 500 million tweets sent daily. Indeed, Twitter has grown into a vast news and information network used across multiple platforms by millions of people

globally (Lasorsa, 2012, 21–2). This reflection also “entails better conceptualization and measurement of the political influences of information flows from social media and digital networks” (Bennett & Pfetsch 2018). On one hand, the timeless argument still holds that heavy television watching, for example, leads individuals to perceive the world in ways consistent with media representations. On the other hand, semiotics focuses on understanding the meaning of symbols and signs in media and communication. Due to a substantiated level of connectivity between people, media, and social-media platforms, the cultivation theory is discussed in this research. This theory was introduced by George Gerbner in the mid-1960s and is identified with its focus on television. Yet, it is still relevant to the discussion of data, information, and intelligence. It theorizes that the more time people spend watching television, the stronger its “effects” on them become. It also argues that television has long-term effects, which are small, gradual, and indirect, yet cumulative and impactful. For heavy users of traditional media, such as television, social media (i.e. text messages and Twitter) may be influenced by disseminated data and information. The longer they “live” in the digital world and virtual communities, the more likely that the ideas and views that they receive will align with how they view the real world (Potter, 1994). Simply said, the cultivation theory precisely depicts the correlation between the effect(s) of mainstream media, social media in general, and Twitter specifically, and their content with users and how they perceive the local and global world. Understanding the “duality of structure” – including social, political, cultural, and environmental structure – and the knowledge and awareness of structures rationalizes the utilization of the theory of adoptive structuration. Introduced and developed by British sociologist Anthony Giddens, the adoptive structuration theory offers a reliable analysis to understand data, information, and media function on global settings. This theory focuses on connections of the message, the concept behind a message, the structure, spans of time, space, and agent(s) (Dany, 2013; Schadlich & Gordeeva, 2017). The research adds intelligence to the mixed elements as it connects between two types of resource: allocative resources, which refer to abilities to control and command “material phenomena,” and authoritative resources, which refer to control over people “personas and actors” and “sets of transformations, organized as properties of social systems” (Giddens, 1984, 25; Schadlich, & Gordeeva 2017). Giddens suggested that “the allocative resources arise from the control over material products and other aspects of the material world” (1984, 33).

Media producers, owners, journalists, interpreters, bloggers, and even cell-phone users play a role in how data, information, and dissemination processes take place in the public sphere. James G. Webster argues that the public attention comes as a result of a structural process in which organizations and users mutually create the media environment. Analytically, Webster highlighted two essential public measures: the “market information regimes,” which provide media organizations with the data they need to disseminate to the marketplace, and “user information regimes,” which enable consumers to obtain the information they need via communication technologies to circumnavigate a complicated digital world (Webster, 2011). Increasingly, the unsettled relations between the market data sources, information systems, and the demands of user information cause more divisiveness, tribalism, polarization, and a lack of civic discourse. Consequently, the span of public attention has shortened, and participation in democratic venues appears fragile. There is an urgent need to restore the public attention and involvement required for maintaining democracy and promoting two-way dialogue based on listening, respect, and constructive discourse.

Democratization and Participation

The literature review suggests that the media plays a direct and indirect role in the process of democratizing data and information, which in the end is supposed to expand public participation in the political and cultural realms of society. This mediated relationship occurs gradually and in phases (Camaj 2014; Barry 2002). Based on this traditional hierarchy of effects model, the cognitive level comes first as people become aware and acknowledgeable issues; this is followed by the phase of the information of attitudes, and finally the behavior phase, when people decide to take action as they perceive things. Barry advanced the point that before making a decision to act, people need to have information to understand and develop attitudes, no matter how weak or strong, on issues that prompt them to action (Barry 2002; Camaj 2014). Subsequently, media assist people to obtain knowledge, pay closer attention, foster awareness, and expand the level of concern, which in turn prompt attitude information and behavior, and motivate people to act (Camaj 2014; Barry 2002). A case in point is the 2011 Arab Spring in the Middle East, which demonstrated how the world order was under siege as the people showed attitude information and behavior and made comprehensive actions. Global, regional, and local social networking and virtual communities (VCs) gave in to geographical communities (GCs). The VCs allow people to communicate, gather data,

and produce information, and turn it into actionable plan. It is suggested that “the larger ramifications of the Information Age (IA) are equally important in the long run” (Jenson, McElreath, & Graves, 2001). This demonstrates the fact that the electronic boundaries are supplanting physical ones as global communities have the capacities to share information, call for specific action, organize events, and socialize with a wide range of global citizens (Jenson, McElreath, & Graves, 2001). This virtual phenomenon has already strengthened the ties between members of VCs as their relationships are based on their interests rather than physical communities. Consequently, the VCs’ ties become stronger among global and regional groups rather than governments. In this sense, the presumed boundaries between intelligence as a governmental business, gathering data and information, and the use of global digital media become more limited, thinner, and much weaker.

Responses to Research Questions

In general, the media in the United States and around the world promotes the idea of offering various perspectives concerning different issues and adheres to minimum journalism standards. The latter promises the inclusion of different opinions and views. Yet, this idea does not mitigate the media impact on individuals and local and global communities. Subsequently, what impact does information, competitive intelligence, or digital content have on local and global communities? Jointly, information, intelligence, and digital content have a powerful impact, both positive and negative, on people. For example, the availability of data and information sets the stage for social, cultural, and economic development. It creates a solid information attitude that motivates decision makers to think of multiple perspectives and create developmental programs for their local communities. It offers knowledge that is based on specific data and information, which leads to thinking of comprehensive and executable strategies and sustainable plans that matter most to the communities and nations. Considering the dynamics of competitive intelligence and digital content, it is not surprising that the economic welfare and human development, security, ecological sustainability, public health, education, arts, human rights and political freedom, news exchange, interrelationships, intercultural communication, and international relations among them are climbing, while international isolationism has declined. In addition, up-to-date data benefits media organizations, marketers, and advertisers in terms of decision making in building internal capabilities. For example, Advertiser Perceptions surveyed 119 decision makers from the United States in various industries. The survey involved people in the circles of

making digital, mobile, print, radio and TV media decision. The following table shows the critical need for data management and cost efficiency, among other things.

Table 12.1. Data attribution

ROI attribution	47%
Better audience targeting	44%
Cost efficiency	38%
Data Management	29%
Cross-channel and execution	26%
Extended audience reach	22%

Source: www.marketer.com

Electronically, in 2017, more than 2.5 billion people worldwide used social media. The number is projected to reach three billion by 2018 (Baran, 2019, 283). Ironically, the public has begun to contribute to both data and information by way of social media. For instance, Physicians for Peace (PFP) use social-media outlets such as Skype, Facebook, and Google Hangouts to communicate with both large and small groups around the globe to provide online learning and teaching programs. This is viewed as online digital education, and brings us to the next question: are there significant differences between data, information, intelligence, and any other kind of global digital data?

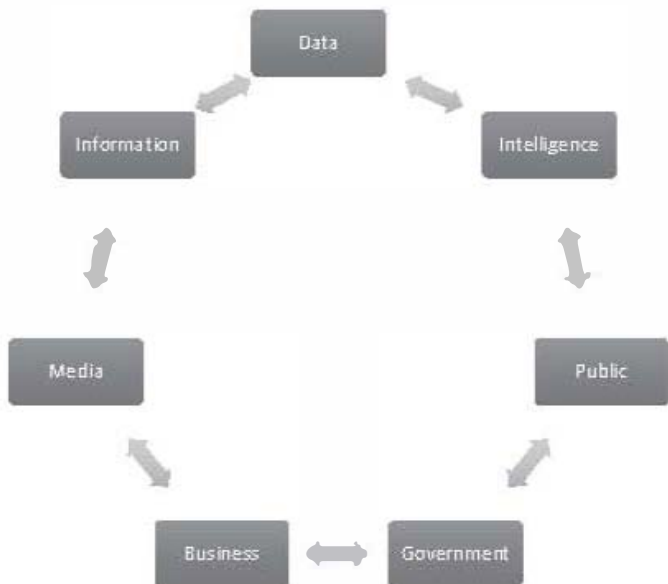
As discussed earlier, although data and information are interchangeable to some extent, they are not the same thing. They represent different formats. Data can be any character, numbers, random words, or symbols, while information is data formatted in a way that allows us to read, understand, and use it. Both data and information engage brainpower – the intelligence to produce knowledge that is based on processed information and skills. Specifically, knowledge means information and skills “acquired through experience or education; the theoretical understanding of a subject” (www.computerhope.com).

Fig. 12.1. Example of data



Source: ComputerHope.com

Fig. 12.2. Data, information and intelligence interconnectivity



Polarization Verses Democratization

Drawing on conventional media programs and social-media content, this research demonstrates that polarization harms democracy. McCoy, Rahman, and Somer's (2018) study showcased "polarization as ideological distance between political parties and candidates," and thus activated by major groups in society to shift power relations and introduce institutional changes. Therefore, how can the public avoid polarization and increase democratization? In 2017, no aspect of business or communication remains entirely independent of digital media, data, and information. Consequently, the public remains totally open to a strong wave of information. According to the 2017 findings from the Global Media and Intelligence Report (2017), "advertisers, marketers, content owners and retailers now operate in a world where digital devices and platforms continue to evolve at astonishing speed." In addition, the same report concluded:

Though most traditional media still retain significant audiences, consumers are increasingly combining traditional and digital media to access information and entertainment, buy products and services, and to communicate with family, friends, businesses and other organizations. Moreover, the immediacy of instant messaging and digital downloads has drastically recalibrated consumer expectations, encouraging an on-demand mindset and greater consumption of media content online. Naturally, these behaviors can vary significantly from country to country and between demographic groups.

Political polarization and "attitudinal polarization" are circumstantial and tend to change overtime. The public tends to search for information that "is congruent with their pre-existing attitudes and beliefs" (Kim, 2017, 658). Media and information literacy is essential because it enables people to evaluate and make assessments, analyse and interpret, and compare news and information to make informed positions or decisions.

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CYBER LAWS AND PRIVACY ISSUES IN INDIA

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Abstract

Everybody has their own way of defining privacy. In simple terms, privacy is the right of an individual to make a personal decision regarding their personal matters away from public scrutiny. Often, people get confused between privacy and security. They are close cousins but different. With the advent of the internet, a new term “internet privacy” has come into usage. The use of the internet affects the privacy rights of an individual greatly. There is a huge amount of personal data about everyone on the internet, and what we fail to realize is that we give away this data ourselves. Such internet privacy issues relating to personal data arise from insecure electronic transactions, data trails and logs of email messages, online banking, and the tracking of webpages.

The quest for privacy is an inherent instinct of all human beings. As a matter of fact, it is natural for an individual to establish individual boundaries with almost perfect seclusion, and it is an ability of an individual or group to seclude themselves or information about themselves and thereby reveal such things selectively. Intrusion into a person's private activities by other individuals or by the government is wrong, and moreover, with the advancement of information and technology, things have become more complicated and such issues need immediate attention. It is now a very common phenomenon that the power, capacity, and speed of information technology have improved beyond imagination and are constantly and rapidly accelerating. The extent of privacy invasion, or certainly the potential to invade privacy, has also increased correspondingly. Cyber law revolves around the issues relating to cybercrimes, electronic and digital signatures, intellectual property, data protection, and privacy. The researcher, for the purpose of this paper, will concentrate on the specific issue of privacy and its relationship with cyber laws in India.

Introduction

There is no specific legislation on internet privacy and data protection in India. However, the Information Technology Act, 2000 contains specific provisions intended to protect electronic data (including non-electronic records and information that have been, are currently, or are intended to be processed electronically). Section 43 and Section 43A of the act lay down provisions for damaging, stealing, illegally accessing, and misusing one's data, computer, or computer system. Section 72 of the act also discusses the punishment for a person breaching confidentiality by sharing data without consent to which they have secured access. Section 66E talks about the individual's privacy and the punishment for violating the same in any electronic form, such as transmitting a photo of one's private parts without consent, or anything which would violate their privacy. Privacy has also been provided to females under Section 354 A to D introduced by Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 after the famous Nirbhaya rape case in December 2012. India's IT Ministry adopted the Information Technology (Reasonable Security Practices and Procedures and Sensitive Personal Data or Information) Rules (Privacy Rules). The Privacy Rules, which took effect in 2011, require that corporate entities' collection, processing, and storage of personal data, including sensitive personal information, comply with certain procedures.

Technological advancements such as micro cameras and video surveillance have had a profound effect on personal privacy. Everyone, be it an individual or an organization, has the right to protect and preserve their personal, sensitive, and commercial data and information. India at the moment needs a dedicated law protecting the data and personal privacy of an individual. A national privacy policy is still missing in India. A right to privacy bill of India was suggested in 2011, yet we so far do not have any conclusive draft in this regard that can be introduced in the Parliament of India. In fact, we are still waiting for a public disclosure of a final and conclusive proposed draft right to the privacy bill 2011 of India that can be discussed in parliament. The laws should be made keeping both genders in mind rather than protecting only female rights because in the cyberspace both males and females are equal victims. A gender-neutral law is as crucial as technological neutral legislation. Protecting the privacy rights of individuals requires a re-conceptualization on both personal as well as professional grounds, keeping in mind human privacy in the context of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Privacy and the Internet

With the development of the internet into a “global marketplace,” the world has seen the sudden emergence of new and fast means of communication. Not only has the internet emerged as a lucrative centre for commercial transactions, it has also grown into an area where individuals from different corners of the world get to communicate freely and cost-effectively.

Communication, speech, and expression undoubtedly constitute some of the most basic liberties of individuals and, to a large extent, can be considered inalienable. In the Indian context, these rights are given statutory recognition in part three of the constitution. As a necessary corollary to the freedom to communicate and speak, this must be allowed to happen with as little state interference as possible, i.e. in the absence of state intrusion and interference into the content of the communication. This immediately raises the controversial issue of the “right to privacy.” The right to privacy, it can be said, is considered a logical corollary to the liberty to speak and express oneself.

An important point to note is that the Indian constitution does not include the “right to privacy” as a fundamental right. Its existence, therefore, as a constitutionally guaranteed fundamental right is debatable. Nevertheless, the judiciary has, on more than once occasion, opined that the right is implicit under Article 21, which provides that no person shall be deprived of their life and personal liberty without a procedure established by law.

Right to Privacy under Cyber Law

There is a common misconception that the right to privacy is merely a weapon to ensure confidentiality in human affairs. Confidentiality is, no doubt, one element in the panorama of rights covered by the right to privacy, but it is just that – one element. It must not be forgotten that the right to confidentiality only arises after information regarding human transactions or affairs has reached the third parties. It must be recognized that the right to privacy extends over the entire gamut of collection, retention, use, and disclosure of information. This stems from the basic human desire for a secure identity of one’s own and, to that extent, it cannot be denied.

In this context, it may be said that privacy involves the right to control one’s personal information and the ability to determine if and how that information should be obtained and used.

The principles are as follows:

- First, collection of personal data should be done with the consent of the person and lawfully.
- Second, the data collected should be pertinent to the subject under investigation. Therefore, for example, a man's medical problems ought not to be investigated while data on his tax returns is being collected.
- Third, the purpose as to collection ought to be clearly specified.
- Fourth, such data should not be further used except without the express consent of the subject and under the sanction of the law.
- Fifth, there ought to be adequate security safeguards so as to prevent the leakage of data into the hands of unauthorized persons or the destruction of classified material.
- Sixth, there ought to be a higher degree of accountability detailing the persons who are in charge of the process of collection, and this is linked with the next point which deals with the individual's participation in the process of data collection.
- Seventh, the individual should have the right to confirm whether there is any data on them and whether such data is pertinent or relevant to the purpose for which it has been collected.
- The individual should also have the right to access any data dealing with them at any time as may be convenient to them, and such data should be made completely available to them in a reasonable manner; if the data collected is not entirely accurate, they should have the opportunity to point out the facilities that may exist.

These, then, may be said to be the broad principles governing the existence of the slightly ambiguous right to confidentiality.

The right to privacy has been held by the Honourable Supreme Court as an integral part of the fundamental right to life under Article 21 of The Constitution of India. Privacy concerns exist wherever uniquely identifiable data relating to a person or persons is collected and stored, in digital form or otherwise. In some cases, these concerns refer to how data is collected, stored, and associated. In other cases, the issue is who is given access to information.

Other issues include whether an individual has any ownership rights to data about them, and/or the right to view, verify, and challenge that information, and various types of personal information often come under privacy concerns. For various reasons, individuals may not wish for personal information such as their religion, sexual orientation, political

affiliations, or personal activities to be revealed. This may be to avoid discrimination, personal embarrassment, or damage to one's professional reputation.

Spamming, sending unsolicited mail, and websites collecting information about individual internet users and selling it off lead to violation of privacy in cyberspace.

Telephone tapping is a serious invasion of an individual's privacy. With the growth of highly sophisticated communication technology, the right to a telephone conversation in the privacy of one's home or office without interference is increasingly susceptible to abuse.

There is no comprehensive legislation on privacy in India. As such, it has been left to the judiciary to interpret privacy within existing legislations. On April 11, 2011, India's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology notified the Information Technology (Reasonable security practices and procedures and sensitive personal data or information) Rules, 2011 under the Information Technology Act, 2000. India now has a privacy law, brought into force with immediate effect with wide ramifications on the way companies do business in India.

The firm is competent in dealing with cases involving the invasion of privacy, even in the absence of a suitable law governing this issue.

The firm puts all its experience into handling cases arising out of:

- insecure electronic transmissions
- data trails and logs of email messages
- online transactions
- tracking of webpages visited
- phone tapping
- spamming
- unauthorized access
- identity theft

In this information technology era, special attention must be paid to privacy rights in India in the information age. We believe that data protection requirements are an essential part of civil liberties protection in cyberspace. With the growing use of ICTs, the data protection requirement has become very important. It would not be wrong to assume privacy and data protection rights as integral parts of human rights protection in cyberspace.

However, despite the importance of these fields, until now we have lacked the legal frameworks in the fields of data security, data protection,

and privacy protection. We urgently need to formulate a data protection law in India and privacy laws in India.

It is safe to assume that the privacy of individuals is certainly a concern of the law. Taking this as a given, we can go on to examine what the legal and policy response is and what it ought to be. Fundamentally, there are various approaches that may be taken:

- legislation
- self-regulation
- reliance on trustworthy third parties who will set and enforce standards

Literature Review

Sharma and Alam (2016) show the imbalance between the age-old procedure adopted in India and the advancements which Indian society has made. The session focuses on the dynamics of the cyber world with respect to privacy concerns and freedom issues, with special reference to the cyber laws of countries like India, European Nations, and the United States. The problem is in how to reconcile all the conflicting claims arising out of the issues of privacy in the context of internet exposure and the right to freedom of speech. This paper will raise all these issues and discuss the legal implications on the intrusion of the freedom of speech along with some case studies on privacy intrusion.

Rehan Khan (2013) attempted to make a comparative analysis of the cyber law relating to the privacy issue and also study the applicable law and the steps taken by two countries – one already developed (the United States), and the other one of the fastest developing countries (India).

Research Objective

The objective of the study is to examine the cyber laws and privacy issues in the Indian context

Research Methodology

This research is based on doctrinal research. Doctrinal research means that which has been carried out regarding a legal proposition or propositions by way of analysing the existing statutory provisions and cases by applying the power of reasoning. The research will be both descriptive and

exploratory or formulative in nature. The data has been collected from books, journals, magazines, and websites.

Analysis and Findings

The numbers of cases registered under the IT Act and IPC have been growing continuously. The cases registered under the IT act grew by more than 350% from 2011 to 2015. There was almost a 70% increase in the number of cybercrimes under the IT act between 2013 and 2014. The cases registered under the IPC increased more than seven times during the period between 2011 and 2015. A similar trend is observed in the number of people arrested. The government also acknowledges the increase in the number of such crimes and that the introduction of devices including smart phones and complex applications and rise in usage of cyberspace for businesses have resulted in such an increase.

Fig. 13.1. Cybercrimes in India

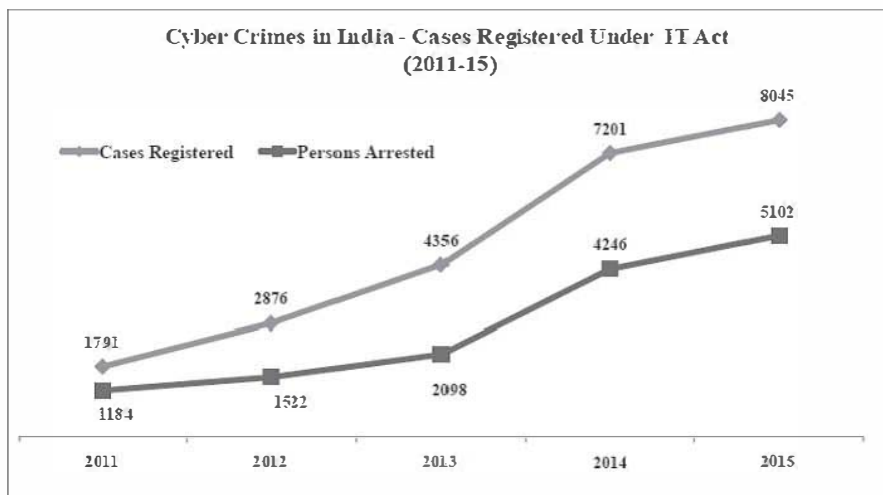
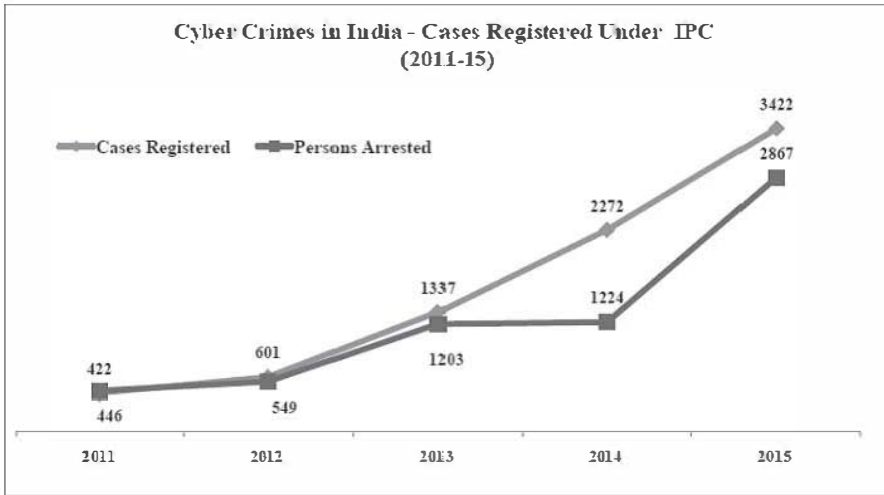


Fig. 13.2. Cases registered and persons arrested



Analysis and Findings

Table 13.1. Cybercrimes up by more than three times in five years

Year	IT Act		IPC	
	Cases Registered	Persons Arrested	Persons Arrested	Cases Registered
2011	1,791	1,184	422	446
2012	2,876	1,522	601	549
2013	4,356	2,098	1,337	1,203
2014	7,201	4,246	2,272	1,224
2015	8,045	5,102	3,422	2,867
Total	24,269	14,152	8,054	6,289

India does not have dedicated laws on privacy or data protection. Consequently, the sharing economy ecosystem aspects are not adequately dealt with under the Indian cyberlaw. If social-media sites share data with third-party legal entities in India, for any purposes other than business and

marketing objectives, there are few effective legal remedies available. In fact, even the Information Technology Rules, 2011 only concentrated on compliances for entities who are dealing, handling, or processing sensitive personal data. Lot of user data may not be sensitive personal data, but may qualify as personally identifiable information. Hence, there is an urgent need to revisit and amend the Indian cyberlaw to provide for specific provisions to govern the sharing of the said data with third parties by social-media websites.

The following major developments of note occurred in the course of the past year, and these affect national policy, legislation, and jurisprudence on cybersecurity, data protection, and privacy to varying degrees.

(1) Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act 2016 (the Aadhaar Act)

The government pushed the Aadhaar bill through parliament in one week in March 2016, resulting in the Aadhaar Act. Briefly, the act provides for the issuance of an identification number from the Unique Identification Authority of India to citizens of the country. This number will be used to deliver state subsidies directly into the hands of beneficiaries.

The Aadhaar scheme was first mooted as the Indian equivalent to the social-security number in the United States. The passage of this bill into law has, however, generated furious debate about the privacy concerns it inevitably raises – the act envisages the creation of a database of personal identifying information of potentially one billion unsuspecting citizens, and also the use of the data therein to facilitate mass surveillance, and absolutely no framework or legislation is in place to regulate either the former or the latter. The act contains provisions on the strict limitation on sharing the data collected, but also makes rather large exceptions to these limitations, which is a major cause for concern.

In a writ petition before the apex court of the country, the Aadhaar Act was challenged as being *ultra vires* in relation to the constitution, owing to its severe violation of citizens' fundamental rights to privacy. It was put to the court that the Aadhaar Act coerces individuals to part with their personal information, including biometric details, and creates an environment that can be used for surveillance. While the fate of the Aadhaar Act is still undecided, one of the biggest hurdles in the matter has been resolved by the Supreme Court in a landmark judgement. A nine-judge constitution bench, presided over by the Chief Justice of India, was posed the question of whether privacy is in fact a fundamental right guaranteed under the constitution.

The court ruled on this question in the affirmative, and in doing so observed that it is not an absolute right but one subject to certain reasonable

restrictions. On the data-protection aspect, the court observed that the right of an individual to exercise control over their personal data and be able to control their own life would also encompass the right to control their existence on the internet. The judgement also states that consent obtained from users must be informed consent, given in an informed manner by users, and cannot be shrouded in lengthy agreement terms. The court even upheld the right of an individual to be forgotten from the internet by observing that:

If we were to recognise a similar right, it would only mean that an individual who is no longer desirous of his personal data to be processed or stored, should be able to remove it from the system where the personal data/information is no longer necessary, relevant, or is incorrect and serves no legitimate interest. Such a right cannot be exercised where the information/data is necessary, for exercising the right of freedom of expression and information, for compliance with legal obligations, for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest, on the grounds of public interest in the area of public health, for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes, or for the establishment, exercise or defence of legal claims. Such justifications would be valid in all cases of a breach of privacy, including breaches of data privacy.

(2) WhatsApp litigation

In a widely publicised litigation in the public interest against WhatsApp, the privacy policies of WhatsApp and Facebook were called into question. This case is discussed in more detail below.

(3) US-India Cyber Relationship

In his final visit to the United States before the end of Barack Obama's term as president, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held significant discussions on cybersecurity cooperation with the president, resulting in the signing of the framework for the US-India Cyber Relationship. This bilateral framework covers aspects of internet governance, cybersecurity, and the building of norms of state behavior.

(4) India selected as a member of the UN group of governmental experts (GGE) to identify "rules of the road" for cyberspace

India has been selected to be a member of the 2016 GGE set up to identify the "rules of the road" for cyberspace. While the GGE's report is endorsed by the General Assembly, it is not officially binding. However, in combination with the initiation of the US-India Cyber Relationship, India's participation in the 2016 GGE meeting signifies a way forward in the framing of issues that must be addressed in these matters.

Regulatory Framework

(1) Privacy and data protection legislation and standards

In the absence of specific legislation, data protection is achieved in India through the enforcement of privacy rights based on a patchwork of legislation, as follows.

The Information Technology Act (2000) (IT Act) and the Information Technology (Amendment) Act 2008

The IT Act contains provisions for the protection of electronic data. The IT Act penalizes “cyber contraventions” (Section 43(a)–(h)) which attract civil prosecution, and “cyber offences” (Sections 63–74) which attract criminal action.

The IT Act was originally passed to provide legal recognition for e-commerce and sanctions for computer misuse. However, it had no express provisions regarding data security. Breaches of data security could result in the prosecution of individuals who hacked into the system under sections 43 and 66, but the act did not provide other remedies, for instance taking action against the organization holding the data. Accordingly, the IT (Amendment) Act 2008 was passed, which, *inter alia*, incorporated two new sections – 43A and 72A – to provide a remedy to persons who have suffered or are likely to suffer a loss on account of their personal data not having been adequately protected.

The Information Technology Rules (the IT Rules)

Under various sections of the IT Act, the government routinely gives notice of sets of Information Technology Rules to broaden its scope. These IT Rules focus on and regulate specific areas of collection, transfer, and processing of data, and include, most recently, the following:

- (a) the Information Technology (Reasonable Security Practices and Procedures and Sensitive Personal Data or Information) Rules, which require entities holding users’ sensitive personal information to maintain certain specified security standards
- (b) the Information Technology (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules, which prohibit the content of a specific nature on the internet, and an intermediary, such as a website host, is required to block such content
- (c) the Information Technology (Guidelines for Cyber Cafe) Rules, which require cybercafes to register with a registration agency and maintain a log of users’ identities and their internet usage

- (d) the Information Technology (Electronic Service Delivery) Rules, which allow the government to specify that certain services, such as applications, certificates, and licences, be delivered electronically

The IT Rules are statutory law, and the four sets specified above were notified on April 11, 2011 under Section 43A of the IT Act.

Penalties for non-compliance are specified by Sections 43 and 72 of the IT Act.

In 2011 and subsequently in 2014, draft versions of a proposed law referred to as the Privacy Bill were released on the internet by a non-profit organization called the Centre for Internet and Society, which claimed that these drafts had been leaked by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology. The Privacy Bill recognizes an individual's right to privacy, but also states that certain circumstances, including the protection of national integrity or sovereignty, national security, the prevention of crime, and public order warrant the invasion of that privacy. In May 2016, the Minister for Communications and Information Technology, Ravi Shankar Prasad, stated in the upper house of parliament that the government was still working on the proposed law.

Additional legislation

In addition to the legislation described above, data protection may also sometimes occur through the enforcement of property rights based on the Copyright Act (1957). Further, other legislation such as the Code of Criminal Procedure (1973), the Indian Telegraph Act 1885, the Companies Act (1956), the Competition Act (2002) and, in cases of unfair trade practices, the Consumer Protection Act (1986), would also be relevant. Finally, citizens may also make use of the common law right to privacy, at least in theory – there is no significant, recent jurisprudence on this.

Compliance regulators

CERT-In

Under Section 70B of the IT (Amendment) Act 2008, the government constituted CERT-In, which the website of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology refers to as the “Indian Computer Emergency Response Team.” CERT-In is a national nodal agency responding to computer security incidents as and when they occur. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology specifies the functions of the agency as follows:

- (a) collection, analysis, and dissemination of information on cybersecurity incidents
- (b) forecast and alerts of cybersecurity incidents
- (c) emergency measures for handling cybersecurity incidents
- (d) coordination of cybersecurity incident response activities
- (e) issuance of guidelines, advisories, vulnerability notes and white papers relating to information security practices, procedures, prevention, response to, and reporting of cybersecurity incidents.

Conclusion

It is true that the right to privacy is recognized as inherent in the right to life with dignity in Article 21 and the right to freedom of speech and expression in Article 19. Neither of these can or should be allowed to stand as an impediment in curbing activities prejudicial to national security and interests. Not surprisingly, both these rights contain express conditions as to when they may be deprived.

At the same time, the situation cannot be allowed to tilt completely to one side so as to negate basic liberties, even when not absolutely essential. The only way out is a compromise between the two extremes. The Supreme Court of India must expand privacy rights in India, as that is the need of the hour.

However, in the ultimate analysis, it is the constitutional duty of the Indian Parliament to do the needful in this direction and must enact sound and effective privacy and data-protection laws for India as soon as possible.

Going forward, there is an urgent need for India to take a strong view on privacy in terms of legislative frameworks. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, India does not have a dedicated law on privacy. The Information Technology Act, 2000 has few effective provisions to protect any data and personal privacy in the digital ecosystem. The Indian Government needs to come up with a strong privacy law which can protect both personal privacy and data privacy in an effective manner. Further, with the onset of new things like the Internet of Things, it is imperative that enabling legal frameworks for protecting and preserving personal privacy and data privacy must be in place in India. India could choose from various models, selecting either a regulator/authority-driven approach, or a more bottom-up approach. Whatever approach India adopts, one thing is crystal clear – any cut-and-paste approach would not work, and merely reproducing some provisions on privacy from other countries without customizing them to the specific Indian conditions as a methodology would also not work. We will need to have our own customized approach and provisions to protect privacy, both

personal and data, in the Indian conditions. This is one area that requires urgent and immediate attention. All stakeholders have to quickly realize that protecting data privacy and personal privacy are important pillars which can help contribute to the further strong development of the digital ecosystem and the mobile environment.

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THE IMPACT OF NEW-MEDIA PLATFORMS ON THE GULF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION LANDSCAPE: CONSUMPTION AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

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Abstract

New media has become a mainstream everyday habit for communications and transactions, although there is concern about online surveillance and governments checking users' activities. In the Arab world there are more than 135 million online users, with 71 million using social media for communication, interaction, etc. The development of digital technologies and the rise of different consumption patterns, values, and trends in the Arab world have already been acknowledged. This study aims to identify the trends and factors that have emerged in the GCC's political communication landscape over the last two decades so as to understand the impact of new media on this region. It also examines how new media change and contribute to creating the public sphere, particularly within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) society, and how they have been used by both the public and GCC governments to influence the nature of public discourse and freedom. Secondary research related to the development of digital technologies in the GCC region was used. Our paper supports the assumption that social media may provide an avenue for the expression of more views and create fresh debates in a new political sphere. This means that the way in which societies and governments interact has effectively

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changed. The information flow via new media has already influenced policymaking, public engagement, and other means of citizen government interaction in the region, where new media and citizens' media can form and empower the structure of the public sphere in the GCC by assisting in building an accumulated awareness that allows for political reform, restructuring of the social contract, and the formation of public opinion.

Introduction

The debate between democracy and media freedom is based on the fact that the principles of real democracy are represented in the efficiency of political communication between the people, the authorities, and the elite. None of these elements can be generated without a full system which maintains a balance between everyone, and which has the ability to supervise, audit, investigate, criticise, and present views and thoughts freely by law (Dahlgren 2009; Mutz and Martin 2001). People concerned with political, economic, societal, and cultural life need to use communication effectively, with numerous different media and platforms, in order to express their views and perspectives. Therefore, any decrease in this regard will subsequently lead to the decline of effective democracy. This paper attempts to discuss the impact of new media platforms on the GCC political landscape by attempting to identify the trends and dimensions as well as the social factors, and how new media contribute to the GCC public sphere. The paper also discusses how new media have been used (by both the public and governments) for interactions over different issues, especially after the events of 2011.

Media Freedom and Control

The third US President Thomas Jefferson insisted on the importance of effective communication and a free press, and highlighted the role of media in a democratic society. In this well-known quote, he says:

The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. (1787 ME 6:57)

The mass media are seen as a hypothetical institution and known as “the fourth power.” Journalism is the only profession mentioned by the American constitution which stipulates the following: “Congress shall make

no law ... abridging freedom of speech of the press.” Alexis de Tocqueville, a French writer and political thinker, underpins this by saying: “There can never be real newspapers without democracy nor democracy without newspapers” (Epstein 2006). Despite the media changes which have arisen during recent years, the communication scene in the Gulf region is generally characterized by the controversial relationship between the governing authority, the state institutions, and the target audience. It has attempted to dominate, either directly or indirectly, its instruments of communication over decades through use of the rentier state (Beblawi & Luciani, 1990; Morse 2007), despite the absence, inefficiency, or impact of political communication tools (the fourth power consists of parliament, political parties, parliamentary councils, and civil-society organizations). There was no clear separation between these authorities before the appearance of the mass media with its instruments, completing the scene as the fourth power which works as active support to the other three authorities (Ayish 2002; Kraidy 2006).

The prevalence and increase of new-media use and its platforms have helped to reform the political and press communication sphere in the GCC region. The new media now offers a broad range of ideas based on expression, dialogue, open discussion, the sharing of supportive and opposing views, and the exchange of news and information. This can be termed as “communication democracy,” as it includes the participation of the vast majority of people, particularly the marginalized segments of society (e.g. women and the youths who represent the majority and future of the GCC region). Yet, there have been several obstacles and challenges which have hindered the optimal use of these new communication platforms and applications (Mourtada & Salem, 2012; Saad & Kilany, 2012).

The Political Communication Scene in the GCC

Political communication is a modern platform which is connected to the political aspects, issues, and debates in a given society. It is concerned with how information spreads and influences politics and policymakers, the news media, and the citizens (Blumler & Kavanagh 1999; Dahlgren 2005; Norris 2001). Multi-communication tools play the mediator role in political communication and are considered as a mirror of society, reflecting the most important issues around politics, decisionmakers, and public opinion. The communication process, in this regard, aims to realize certain goals within the political sphere; thus, its essence focuses on creating an impact and modifying the trends and views of the receiving audience through employing different elements of the mass media (Blumler & Kavanagh

1999; Chaffee 1975). Chaffee (1975) defines political communication, briefly, as the effect and function of communication in the political process. Meanwhile, Meadow (1980) says that political communication occurs when the political conditions form the content and amount of communication.

During the last three decades, political communication in the GCC, through its mass media, has been associated with the concept that the state represents in the society and the individual without the approval of the public (Ayish 2002; Held & Ulrichsen 2013). Meanwhile, the state is limited by its major political leaders (Al-Haj 1996). In general, GCC political communication is dispersed either through being subordinate to the governing authorities directly/indirectly, or through its media content being subordinate to the supervision of internal/external agendas. In addition, GCC political communication has somehow been unable to face what the Western institutions and news agencies represent. This has led to a chaotic situation which has had a negative impact on the media's effectiveness, as well as on political communication in each country of the Gulf region since the late 1960s. It has also had an impact on the relationship between the political communication system, the status quo, and political discourse.

The effectiveness of political-communication tools has waned, particularly in terms of the mass media, with the conflicts, their political implications, and the intellectual and social currents during the 1950s and 1960s with the rise of Arab nationalism, calls for independence, and the ending of foreign occupation. Yet, these tools were able to maintain the Gulf's unique position in terms of the rejection of revolutionary ideology, the collapse of existing royal entities, and the unifying of parties by force (Al-Haj 1996; Al Ghailani 2014; Alterman 2000; BuMetea 2013). Finding an objective Arab media outlet with "credibility" became a major challenge, particularly after revealing the role of those media associated with the government. Take, for instance, the Sout Alarab [Arab Voice] station, which was listened to by all Arabs and which transmitted news of the Arab army victories over Israel (Labidi 2003). Afterwards, they discovered the greatest defeat in contemporary Arab history, the *al-Naksa* [the defeat], as it was called the following day in 1976 (Heidi 1975). The media outlets were varied, due to the rise and fall of *al-Naksa*, from the formation of allies and political agendas for each Gulf country during the Arab agreement (in the early 1970s) to the time of the Islamic Revolution (in the late 1970s), the adoption of the principle of exporting the revolution via the Iranian constitution (jurisdiction), the Iran-Iraq war (in 1980 and 1988), the foundation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (in 1981), and the Arab-Arab division after Iraq conquered Kuwait (in early 1990). However, the scene was characterized by the maintenance of the special relationship

between the control of the political communication output and the status quo, and by exercising influence, direction, or control of the mass media so that they became part of the political tools to achieve the government objectives and promote its internal and external policies.

The Second Gulf War in 1991 led to a new chapter in Arab political communication, especially in the GCC (Lo & Chang 2006; MacArthur 2004; Pan, Osman, Moy, & Reynolds 1994). This was caused by the impact and repercussions of the exclusive – live and continuous – coverage by CNN of the Kuwait Liberation and the expulsion of Iraqi forces by the International Alliance (Aday, Livingston, & Hebert 2005; Bennett & Paletz 1994; Zelizer 1992). The satellite broadcasting services enabled the media to shape the scene by showing real pictures. Thus, it was a breakthrough in the history of media coverage in world affairs (Lewis et al. 2006; Lo & Chang 2006; MacArthur 2004). This was followed by the appearance of the Arabic channels aired through satellites. The scene was overwhelmed by unprecedented subjects and programmes in the Gulf and Arab media alongside various transmitted materials including news, entertainment, documentaries, and political broadcasts (Amin 2002; Floumoy & Stewart 1997; Schleifer 2005).

The pan-Arab stations stemmed from European capital cities. For example, there was MBC TV in London in 1991 and ART in Rome in 1993 (Abdel Rahman 1998; Al-Jaber & Elareshi 2014). ART was followed by the Orbit station, one of the first digital channels broadcasting American news, which aired on American channels including NBC, ABC, and CBS. Furthermore, it allowed its subscribers to acquire forty radio and television channels (Ayish & Qassim 1996; Miladi 2006). Al-Jazeera TV (launched in 1996) played the most prominent role among the pan-Arab satellite news channels, causing heated debates from its inception due to its nature, approach, and agenda (Lynch 2006). It became globally renowned after covering the Second Palestinian Intifada (2000), the Afghanistan war (2001), the Iraq war (2003), and the conflicts in Palestine, Lebanon, Somalia, and other hotspots around the world until the so-called Arab Spring in 2011, originating in Tunis and which managed to change the regime there. The revolutions paved the way for huge reforms to several Arab regimes, such as those in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. Their impact, responses, and repercussions reached other Arab and Gulf centres such as Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait. This strengthened the role of those media sponsored by Gulf capitals since the reporting of information and the circulation of news were no longer exclusive to Western sources. It reversed the direction of information travelling from East to West after decades of its

usual course being the opposite direction (Al-Mahdi 2011; Dickinson & Gunter 2013; Lynch 2012).

Further, the transformative steps in the Arab Gulf political communication stream led to an increase in the number of active players, entrepreneurs, and investors on both Arab and international levels. As a result, a plethora of 24/7 news services were founded, such as Al-Arabiya TV (2003), Hurra TV (2004), BBC Arabic (2008), France 24 (2008), and Sky News Arabic (sponsored by the UAE) (2012), among other non-Arabic channels (e.g. in Russia, China, and Germany) (Ferjani 2009; Gause III 2011; Gillespie 2013). They in turn led to satellite news services opening up in unprecedented competition, causing governments to grow concerned about the enormous amount of information being disseminated with limited control through the mass media they owned, either directly or indirectly. Old media lost popularity hugely to new private and entertainment services (Elareshi & Gunter 2012). On the other hand, official government news broadcasting in Arabic faced several obstacles, such as a declining number of viewers, a lack of professionalism, and diminishing trust due to issues such as the provision of biased, single-view coverage and a focus on government news interests. Ultimately, they were perceived as failing to maintain balanced coverage (Elareshi & Gunter 2012; Sultan 2013) and implementing the agendas of their sponsors or their countries of origin.

The new technology and the breakthroughs in media communication have led to an increase in media consumption, especially with the spread of new media (Gunter & Elareshi 2016; Salem et al. 2011). Despite this new presence on the media landscape in most of the GCC region recently, the old media's links to the political communication process still present several challenges which limit radical changes in the system (content, codes, regulations, protection of rights, liberties, and democratic values) (Alansari 2013; Ghamam 2011; Howard & Hussain 2013). For example, Freedom House (2013; 2014; 2017) reports a decline in press freedom in most of the GCC region. Although the constitutions in most of the GCC region stipulate freedom of expression, they are associated explicitly with the codes and regulations restricting press freedom and publishing and with highly regulated broadcasting restrictions, banning speech, authorizing the supervision of writers and authorship, confiscation of books and periodicals, seizures, fines, and arrests (Al Khalidi 2015; Duffy 2014). One of the preambles which is most common in many GCC codes and regulations refers to the banning of any published material which may affect the internal and external integrity or security of the state (anything related to the army, defence institutions, regimes and internal regulations, confidential documents, information, news, communication through any mass media, the

internet, or any other technological means subject to written permission from the competent national authorities) (Al-Ansari 2006; Al Khalidi 2015; Saidi 2010).

Further, most of the UN Human Development reports issued over the last two decades show that the press and media, along with their infrastructure and content, have seriously suffered and are thus unable to inform and build the community. The mass media in most of the GCC region is governed by an environment which severely restricts freedom of speech and expression. Furthermore, the actual practices reveal continuous violations of the media and of freedom of the press, applying the approach of diminishing the ceiling of freedoms and instituting oppression through penalties and threats along with the Redlines (Duffy 2013; Zayani & Ayish 2006). There have been exceptions in some Gulf countries where newspapers attempt to go beyond the limits and flourish, change, renovate, and develop (e.g. Kuwait). This is due to many changes, including the prevention of direct and close governmental supervision over daily newspapers, the abolition of the ministries of mass communication in some GCC countries, the elevation of standards of freedom and expression, and the cautious and relative opening up of political issues on internal, regional, and international levels (Reporters Without Borders 2008; 2016).

The Kuwait Publications Law in 2006 allowed for a broader scope of media through the issuing of newspapers, magazines, and new periodicals contrary to the old law issued in 1972. This new code has been seen as a significant step as it stipulates that annulling the licenses of newspapers is banned subject to a final court decision. Today in Kuwait, there are estimated to be fifteen daily newspapers issued in Arabic, three in English, and several news websites. Although these numbers seem big compared with the number of readers and the population in Kuwait, the polls indicate that 20% of Kuwaiti citizens read newspapers on a daily basis. The newspapers which were founded forty years ago maintain the top distribution ranking, despite the competition and challenges imposed by the new newspapers. They have developed a loyal readership due to the issues and thought they present.

Both Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House indicate that the ranking of the GCC region regarding press freedom has not changed. The reports from 2015 to 2018 show that the GCC media have not been ranked as free, other than in Kuwait (see Table 14.1 below). In addition, the same reports show that the media in Bahrain were characterized by partial freedom in 2009, yet were then listed as being not free in the following 2011 Bahrain uprising.

Table 14.1. Recent media press ranking in the GCC

Country	Reporters Without Borders		Freedom House	
	2015	2017	2016	2018
Saudi Arabia	164	168 (- 4)	Unfree	Unfree
Bahrain	163	164 (-1)	Unfree	Unfree
Oman	127	126 (-1)	Unfree	Unfree
UAE	120	119	Unfree	Unfree
Qatar	115	123 (- 8)	Unfree	Unfree
Kuwait	90	104 (-14)	Partially Free	Partially Free

New Media as Platforms

Digital communication as an expression describes communication supported by computers, the internet, and social media. These digital platforms have enabled their consumers/users to interact through online activities. Most studies have indicated that the new media are seen as the most important platforms in the digital age (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Mohsen 2013). They play a vital role in promoting dialogue and discussion by reaching different people and allowing them to participate beyond their physical borders. This has exceeded the traditional role of media by creating new patterns and leading to a structural transformation in many sectors (Sponder 2012; Ziani & Elareshi 2016).

The concept of communication has changed due to the significant transformations, with new media starting to dominate the scene. However, these changes have influenced several political and cultural fields to varying degrees (Al-Khoury 2012; Al-Sayegh 2013; Grail Research 2012). These new platforms have effectively participated in social changes via revolutions, uprisings, and social struggles. Moreover, social media form one of the most prominent platforms in the Arab world. After starting as entertainment tools related to social interaction between individuals, social media have become a platform for debating, organizing, and leadership, and an effective means of reporting events and following news. They have also become a “main source” for international media in reporting conflicts, wars, and disputes. They have surpassed the objective of their foundation and play an active role globally regarding issues of global politics, as well as cultural and historical conflicts (Al-Jaber & Gunter 2013; Ghannam 2011; 2012).

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) have assisted in reporting conflicts and stories with accurate details away from official supervision, editing, and suppression (Menaceur 2015; Tufekci and Wilson, 2012). They do not offer exclusive information, but rather have become part of the story through giving users the opportunity to interact, express, and report through pictures, clips, and videos from an insider's perspective, and this is known as "citizen journalism." As active participants in reporting, discussing, and analysing events, users have become real heroes in reporting and circulating events globally. They represent an audience that no longer follows state television with its official government approved statements (Aday et al. 2013; Halverson, Ruston, & Trethewey 2013).

Social-media applications are credited with creating a broad platform for the public sphere. Habermas (1962) states that the issues of society require a political and social debate in which public and private are involved, leading to the formation of public opinion in society. In this respect, the standard of legitimacy of issues lies in logic, reason, and justification, regardless of the power of the authorities. Thus, the role of authority is diminished due to an increase in, and development of, public debate under societal discussion. The fundamental elements of the public sphere include integrating the individual into society, participating in public and political life, contributing to the democratic culture, creating agendas and directing political parties, and influencing the decision-making process.

Though the public sphere in the GCC region this has not yet been formed in the way that it exists in the Western world, and it can be said that social media have led to creating this sphere in virtual communities. These communities have been able to develop their capacity for interactive communication and mobilization, and applied huge pressure in raising controversial issues and stimulating public debate on political and intellectual topics which could not have been tackled through the old media. Moreover, some of these issues go beyond the official, social, and religious taboos which are classified as unlawful and prohibited (Dickinson & Gunter 2013; Lynch 2012). Social-media platforms in the GCC have been able to offer alternatives in order to confront the role of the gatekeeper. They could also take over the role of the old GCC media in determining the priorities of public opinion, since the latter can no longer exclusively specify and determine the nature of subjects, issues, and agendas. Theoretically, when some media sources focus on certain issues, they influence the perceptions of the audience as these issues then seem more important than others. Therefore, the users became free to use, redistribute, and publish internet news stories through social media (Meraz 2009).

Table 14.2. Penetration rates of social-media platforms in the GCC Region in 2017 (% of population)

Country	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn	Instagram
Saudi Arabia	44.0%	8.1%	9.0%	8.0%
Qatar	85.0%	9.1%	22.4%	9.1%
UAE	81.1%	8.7%	32.5%	12.9%
Kuwait	56.0%	12.6%	11.3%	9.0%
Bahrain	58.7%	12.9%	16.9%	10.0%
Oman	32.1%	4.2%	6.8%	6.0%

Source: Salem (2017)

The popularity of social media accounts in the GCC region is attributed to accessing high-speed internet and the spread of smart devices among most population categories, particularly the young. Qatar and the UAE have the highest rates of smartphone distribution in the world, with an average of 1.6 smartphones per person. In Saudi Arabia 81% and in Qatar 80% of mobile-phone owners used IP messaging apps more frequently than SMS in 2017. This means that local governments face pressing and complex challenges to improve the living standards of their citizens. As more users come online, an increasing range of mobile services are being consumed, such as video, social media, financial services, and e-commerce (GSMA 2017). *Business Insider* indicates that the GCC region has surpassed all countries regarding the proportion of active users of social media compared with the total number of internet users. The comparison has shown that the proportion of the Gulf population using Twitter is 45%, while the USA has hit 23% and China only 19%. More than five hundred thousand daily tweets are sent from the GCC region. About 80% of Twitter users tweet via their mobile devices, whereas about 90% watch videos on their smartphones. A study by Northwestern University in Qatar exploring digital news use in the Middle East revealed that smartphones were more common in the Arab region (UAE 99%; Qatar 95%; Saudi Arabia 93%) than in the US (77%), with an average of 77% of Arab nationals getting news on their phones and 79% receiving news via social media (Dennis, Martin, and Wood 2017). The report also revealed that Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and YouTube were considered among the most popular social-media content providers in the GCC region (see Table 14.2 above).

Social Media Consumption Patterns

Social-media platforms are now an open sphere, allowing GCC users to express their views and present political, social, and religious issues among other delicate issues that used to be prohibited. This has influenced political, social, and religious speech in most of the GCC region. Social-media platforms have enabled users to reply to, and argue with, politicians, religionists, media professionals, intellectuals, and elites (Ahmed 2016; Dickinson & Gunter 2013). The powerful role that social media plays in the GCC region is attributed to the fact that it allows a real opportunity for marginalized members of society, particularly women, to express their opinions/rights, to mobilize their efforts to seek a more equal society, and to practise independent and liberating roles particularly in conservative communities. The use of social-media platforms has assisted in changing the rules of the old game and has introduced new players to the world of political communication in the GCC region. The intellectual influence of new media among young activists in society has far exceeded the influence of the old traditional intellectual elites and media (Linaker, 2014; Sabbagh et al. 2012). Furthermore, young activists have grown used to presenting their demands outside the old media. They allow for presenting religious, cultural, intellectual, educational, economic, and health issues in an unprecedented way. Examples of these issues include human rights, workers' rights in the GCC, corruption, divorce, and the hijab, as well as unlawful gender gathering (Ghannam 2012; Nielsen Company 2012).

The driving factors in social-media consumption patterns and usage vary and differ from one country to another. In Kuwait, for instance, social-media platforms were employed in mobilization and calling for demonstrations over millions of dollars in government grants and foreign transfers in 2011 (Ghannam 2011). This resulted in protests against the parliamentary opposition and a large number of citizens calling on the government to resign and change its prime minister. Subsequently, the government stepped down and an early election was set (AlSalem 2016; Mourtada & Salem 2012). Social media also drove activity by some marginalized categories in society, such as the "Albdon," known as people without a nationality whose demands included enjoying basic human rights, such as access to education, health, transportation, work, marriage, travel, and the ability to obtain Kuwaiti nationality (Dickson 2015).

In Bahrain, social media became a platform used every day, and played an important role during the 2011 uprising. In 2010, 88% of the population was found to have an internet connection, according to the International Telecom Union. Castell (2007) indicates that the internet is used to deepen

civic engagement and promote mass self-communication, converging with old media to awaken political legitimacy. In fact, data recently obtained across the MENA region showed Bahrain topping the list in terms of time spent on social media (Dennis, Martin, & Wood 2014; 2016).

In Oman, social-media platforms have enabled the promotion of popular activity along with political, economic, and social demands. The law on prohibiting gatherings in Oman did not prevent hundreds of people from crowding into the streets to protest in 2011. These protests focused on living conditions, welfare, job opportunities, salary, social justice, and combating corruption. Yet, the official responses came in the form of packages, including the major aspects of protestors' demands (Rane & Salem 2012; Teller 2012), suggesting that social media applications helped in spreading a transnational language of protest and in forming civic identities based on political views.

In Saudi Arabia, social media applications have saturated society with new collective engagements, with 90% internet usage and alternative political routes being presented. Political leaders were called on to allow Saudi women to drive cars, one of the issues that has caused heated debate in the country (Jamjoom & Smith-Spark 2013). Campaigns such as #women2drive appeared on different social-media platforms, indicating the shift. Eventually, they won the campaign in 2017 and women can now drive. Social media platforms do not simply update old mechanisms of government, but can also create new political networks, as Davies (2015) indicates.

Similarly, in Qatar, a group called "Qataris for Reform" published reports and studies on ignored shortcomings; in particular, Ali Khalifa Al-Kuwari, a Qatari activist, has been hosting monthly interviews since March 2011 (Alzaidi 2013), and these have resulted in a number of his research papers (which were converted into a book) being published online and promoted through social media. These papers cover a variety of local issues, such as constitutional issues, judicial authority, culture, official media, education, and identity. Reform challenges in Qatar include the following four main aspects, according to Qataris for Reform. First, blocking information related to public affairs, especially linked to demographics, nationalisation, and public money. Second, the absence of transparency regarding crucial decisions which determine "the country's day-to-day affairs, the destiny of society and future of the coming generations," including security agreements, the healthcare insurance system, and education. Third, the limited margin of freedom of expression and the absence of independent civil organizations concerned with public affairs and citizens' rights along with the rights and duties of professionals and workers. Fourth, the mixing of public and private affairs and the shortcomings

of the public administration system, which hinder the central function of public administration and the need to ensure investment, authority, and public decisions for the public interest.

Challenges and Risks of the Social-media Sphere

Despite the great momentum and huge use of social media platforms in the GCC, the challenges are still there. Most of the GCC region has founded bodies for organizing communications, controlling the technical aspects of the internet to ensure official supervision over online production. Furthermore, the Ministry of Information, or their institutions, still have powers to control the new multimedia platforms. This may require shutting down websites, spying on conversations, and tracking personal messages on smart devices (Duffy 2014). With respect to consumption patterns, there is a huge difference between the age ranges, with fifteen to thirty representing the majority of social-media users, with it being much lower usage among older people (aged thirty and over). However, the participation of young people in political activities and public affairs is still low, compared with that of older people. Thus, this creates a psychological barrier among the younger generation due to feelings of loneliness, marginalization, and seclusion, which may result in a state of detachment and resorting to living a hypothetical existence (Dennis, Martin, & Wood, 2013; Dennis et al. 2017).

Recently, using social media responsibly and rationally has become significant in the GCC region (Dennis, Martin, & Wood 2017). Social-media platforms have become areas of dispute, opening immoral fights and religious, doctrine, and sectarian wars, causing polarization, rumours, and scandals, as well as promoting extremism and terrorism (Reyaee and Ahmed 2013). An analytical study conducted by New York University and published by the Carnegie Middle East Center, indicated that over seven million posts in Arabic were shared from February to August 2015. Furthermore, circulating violent activities on social media played a fundamental role in spreading sectarian, as well as anti-sectarian, language (Davies 2015). Most of the posts and tweets which include anti-Shiite, anti-Sunnah, or anti-sectarian language were sent from the GCC region. The sectarian language permeates the internet through religionists, extremists, the mass media, and the Gulf elites. It is therefore reasoned that social media applications are not a separate entity from reality. Instead, they are mere reflections of reality, with its different repercussions, correlations, and conflicts.

On the other hand, most of the GCC authorities have launched or organized campaigns targeting Twitter users by threatening them with

public prosecution, filing cases and complaints against them, accusing them of threatening national security, and imposing detention, arrests, seizures, and security prosecutions without specific accusations or with “fake” accusations, particularly for young Twitter activists. The Twitter transparency report in 2015 indicated an increase in the pressure inflicted upon them by Arab authorities to obtain more information about certain accounts.

Further, the close monitoring of political and civil activists became inevitable. All this despite the religious fatwas being overwhelmed and employed in the political conflicts by individuals as well as by religious and moral institutions in order to limit the use of social media. However, it is difficult to set a code of conduct for the ethics and regulations of using social media in the GCC region, where the role of civil society is weak as opposed to being totalitarian and authoritative. Social media continue to grow, with smart devices continuing to spread and the focus of the visual media still being on streaming videos, so we should expect the same flow of material being posted on social media if events such as those of 2011 reoccur. They may not lead to stability or agreement with the current political situation in most of the GCC region as these places have not witnessed a change since the revolutions started in Tunisia in 2010.

Conclusion

The impact and repercussions of social media have followed most of the theories and contributions made by mass-media studies over the last five decades. Similarly, technological developments in the communication and information sectors have led to the increased significance of mass communication practised through smart devices. These now play a major role in providing us with knowledge, ideas, and information (Dermis, Martin, & Wood 2017). Their ability to influence our thinking and views about different issues in our societies, as well as our personal lives, has been broadly promoted. They influence how people see and reflect on different issues and matters related to their countries, governments, and economies, and whether people think locally or globally. They contribute towards forming public opinion and have become the main platforms for consuming culture, news, and entertainment. The moments, minutes, and hours that people spend watching programmes or television segments on YouTube and reading local and international newspapers and magazines through pocket-sized electronic screens are contributing to the formation of their views about the world.

The consequence of the change which has affected the region since 2011 is still having an impact on politics, society, culture, and education. Most importantly, social media applications have impacted on the ideas, news, and information that people use. In this regard, the old official media in the GCC region seem to have lost much of their sway and popularity, as well as the viewers that they captured from the 1970s to the 1990s. In particular, their outputs and impacts declined after the appearance of pan-Arab satellite services, especially given the impact of those news services that changed the flow of information and those that were prioritized to cover official activities.

Despite the important role of new satellite news services in raising the standards of freedom and broadening the scale of GCC and Arab political dialogue and debate, the impact has been marginal and limited when it comes to real radical political changes. As a result, it is clear that the old media alone cannot create the desired change. It is the social-media forms that have driven the most prominent transformations in GCC political communication, particularly for marginalized groups such as the youth. Young people no longer demand improvements to their economic conditions; instead, they clearly demand representation in uncommon, and perhaps unlawful, political, social, and religious claims in a society which is still governed through restrictive measures, and which conducts itself within a unilateral system that is governed by tribal and moral dimensions.

Hence, debate has reappeared regarding the public-sphere concept introduced by Habermas (1962). This debate has started to permeate the GCC/Arab public sphere as a result of the deteriorating role of the official media. The debate is about how the new media and the citizens' media outlets can form and empower the structure of the public sphere in GCC/Arab societies, and how can they play a central role in leading peaceful democratic activities in the region. In this way, they can assist in building an accumulated awareness which allows for political reform and restructuring of the social contract, as well as mobilizing/recruiting societal members to participate and produce a new set of values, culture, and behaviors which are in accordance with the democratic process and the modern civil state.

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SOCIAL MEDIA: THE NEW POLITICAL ADVERTISING JUGGERNAUT

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Abstract

Social media has made significant waves and its presence is felt in the current political landscape over other media forms available. This analysis contemplates the approaches that are refiguring political communication in India. There is a considerable shift of interest of the masses from traditional media to new media. The major reason for this is the 2014 win of the Bharatiya Janata Party with a huge majority in the general election, which utilized the immense potential of social media to its advantage. Social media brought that change, and this is why social media has become an indispensable part of political-communication planning. The wide reach and easy accessibility of social media are making the political parties relocate the staging of their agendas from traditional media to new media.

Interactivity happens to be the driving aspect of social media, differentiating it from the decades-old unidirectional media platforms. Harnessing the ability of new media, political communication is changing the attitudes and behavior of voters towards political promotion and furthermore influencing the decision making of voters. This study proposes to analyse the strategic mechanisms of Indian political parties to promote themselves on social media, as well as reflect on the changes social media has brought in the conduct of political communication. The study explores the prospects and challenges the political parties and the political communicators are facing. This analysis tries to discover the effect of the discovered changes on the political communication in the 2019 general election. A report reflects on the fact that there is a possible 20% hike in the budget of political communication through social media in the general election. In the 2014 general election the expenditure was worth four to five hundred crore Indian rupees to influence voters through social media.

Therefore, there has been a big swing in the agenda setting of political parties in India. An enquiry involving a survey of public behavior is to be commissioned to gauge the impacts and effects. The researcher intends to find out the public-relation strategies and approaches to be employed to influence voters through social media. The analysis captures the changing dynamics of advertising and agenda setting against the backdrop of social media and its future implications.

Introduction

The internet has become a staple in the lives of people. According to a report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India and Kantar (IMRB), there will be five hundred million internet users in India by June 2018. Such an intensifying popularity of the internet is leading to another fact related to the number of users of social media in India. Social media is one of the most popular internet services in the world. As per the study by Statista for 2018, the users of social media in India are estimated to reach around 370 million by 2022. By 2019, social-media users will be around 258 million in India. Facebook is top of the list among social networks in India. By 2021, Facebook is expected to reach approximately 319 million users in India.

The social-media platforms are making their way into people's lives at a swift rate. These services are allowing people to stay informed and participate in public life (Bennett 2008). This is why advertising has a new platform to persuade its target audiences and to reach out to new audiences quickly. This duo of social media and advertising has given birth to a new and now the most popular phenomenon – political advertising.

The Old Era of Political advertising in India

In India, political advertising was never as aggressive as today. It was limited to print and electronic media. Also, great importance was given to slogans in the political ad campaigns. Here are some well-liked political ad campaigns from earlier times:

- “Jai Jawan, Jai kisan” by former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1965. Appreciating the soldiers and farmers congress started this campaign. After the Pokhran nuclear test, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Bajpayi added “Jai Vigyan” to this slogan in 1998.
- Touching the nerve of the common person and their fantasies for a better life, Indira Gandhi used the slogan “Garibi Hatao” [“Remove Poverty”] in 1971, leading to victory for Congress.

- A state of emergency was imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975. After two years, in 1977 a slogan against Indira Gandhi “Indira Hatao, Desh Bachao” was used by Jai Prakash Narayan. The result was of course in favour of the Janata Party. Indira Gandhi witnessed a mammoth loss.
- After the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, a slogan was in the air: “Jab tak sooraj Chand rahega, Indira Tera Naam rahega.” The wave of sympathy worked out well, and Congress won.
- In 1996 for the first time BJP made a thirteen-day rule under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Bajpayi. BJP used the slogan “Bari bari sabki bari, Abki Bari Atal Bihari.” The Ideal image of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Made a way for the BJP to come into power. Another slogan coined was “Jancha, parkha, Khara.” This was an apt slogan for Atal bihari Vajpayee.
- To get back into power, Congress took up the common person as its agenda for the elections. The party won over BJP by saying “Congress ka Hath, aam aadmi ke sath” enthusiastically and loudly. A hand is the symbol of the Congress party.
- For the 2004 general elections, BJP used “India shining.” BJP started to campaign negatively, framing Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi as foreigners in the eyes of the Indian people. This resulted in a huge loss for BJP.

So, it seems that political advertising plays a profound role in democracies like India. The 2014 general elections are the best example of political advertising in India through social media and appealing with the right tools.

The use of the appeal in political advertising

Normally, there are three types of appeal: rational, emotional, and moral.

Rational appeals affect the audience in a way that their thinking process moves in the direction of the appeal. This appeal involves a reasoning process in which it is believable that the society would easily accept the messages that is being disseminated in the form of an appeal. The moral appeal roams around the sense of what should be right or wrong. A moral appeal becomes more important when the responses, especially favourable responses, are required for a social cause. The third appeal, that is emotional appeal, sells a product, idea, or any ideology by using an excited state of mind. The campaigning using the emotional appeal is done in such a manner so that the feelings or the mental agitations are used as a stimulus to sway

the audience to take action. If we carefully scrutinize the political strategies of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2014 general elections, it demonstrates the superfine use of emotional appeal to influence the mind of the masses.

Social Media: A Game Changer

Any communication requires a medium, and for political communication and advertising mass communication is the much used and much needed medium. The growing technologies are making the mass medium much stronger than before. Magazines, newspaper, television, radio and the internet are the common platforms of mass communication. As the internet has entered the lives of people, India is at the top of the list of Facebook users with 270 million. These huge numbers and their shifting interests from traditional media to social media have also shifted the election campaigning from traditional to social media. The pioneer of social media for the elections was the Bharatiya Janata Party, abbreviated to BJP. It employed social media and took an advantage to secure a massive win in the 2014 general elections in India. BJP became a trendsetter, and now every political party is exploring social media to establish themselves at the centre of democracy. Social media has changed the game of the politics as well as the advertising industry.

India has the largest youth population, with more than 65% of its population below the age of thirty-five, which is also the population that uses social media the most. Indians spend somewhere around three hours each day glued to their smartphones and there were approximately 340 million users in 2018, which is up by almost 40 million from 299.2 million users in 2017. In addition, digital-media advertising has grown considerably and makes up almost 15% of the total advertising industry spending, and is supposed to reach 24% of the entire market by 2020. Out of this total, advertising spending on social media is 29% for desktop computers and 27% for mobile technologies.

Social media appears to be a prominent part of the internet today. If reports for the year 2018 from Statista are to be believed, then by 2022 there will be 370 million social-media users in India, and by 2019 an estimated 258 million users will be using social media. Facebook is still among the top social networks in India, and will reach 319 million users in India.

The statistics clearly show that social media is a significant tool to secure a win by advertising. The investment firm the Omdiyar Network asserts that, on average, an Indian user spends two hundred minutes on mobile apps, out of which 38% is spent on social-media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, and 2% on other apps. Facebook is still the dominant social-

media network in India, and how much Facebook advertising is affecting the advertising industry is revealed in a report by the Dentsu Aegis Network. By 2020, the Indian digital-advertising industry will reach approximately 18,986 crores, and the expenditure on digital media will reach almost 19,000 crores. This figure is almost the same size as the industry. Advertising on mobiles will be around 60% of the total share of the expenditure. The majority of the expenditure will remain on social media. Facebook and Google will share around 80–85% of the total expenditure.

At present, the elections in India seem incomplete without social media. From Panchayat elections to municipal elections to legislative elections, social media has become an indispensable part of the political advertising.

The mandate

The mandate which made several advertising firms consider social media as the strongest tool was the result of the 2014 general election. The Bharatiya Janata Party got the comprehensible mandate and a massive win. According to the result analysis by NDTV, Indian citizens made it clear by casting 282 votes in favour of BJP, which is a majority of 272. BJP and its allies managed over 300 seats out of 543 total seats in parliament. These astonishing numbers were the result of the “Modi-wave,” which was helped by forwarded messages on social media. Eight months after being declared as the face of BJP, Mr. Modi proved himself an irrefutable charismatic politician who is even appreciated by his opponents.

Literature review

“The hardest thing about any political campaign is how to win without proving that you are unworthy of winning.” Adlai E. Stevenson

Unworthy or undeserving does not matter; political advertising can make certain a victory. Political communication is a tool which is used by politicians widely. Brian McNair scrutinized the way political communication is used by politicians, NGOs, trade unions, and even terrorist organizations (McNair 2003). The purpose of this political communication as observed is to persuade. The audience, however, is not limited to any particular group, party, or community; it may be as broad as an entire nation. Apart from this element is the media, which is the important change element. Any message that is disseminated with a political message has a target audience. This target audience can also be called voters. Political actors attempt to influence the voters as their ultimate purpose is to be in the centre of the governance (SAGE Handbook of Political Advertising 2006). Christiana

Holtz-Bacha introduces the term “political actors” instead of “political candidates.” Political actors are conscious of their television appearance (3). The officially observed political advertising started in the 1950s when Dwight D. Eisenhower used television media as the platform for political advertising for the first time. Political advertising appears to be a contest where political parties and the candidates are in a competition with each other (3). They present themselves before the voters and appeal for votes. This political advertising is not limited to a phrase only. Eight types of political advertising have been observed by a careful analysis of thirty years of spots in political campaigns worldwide (Devlin 1986). Political advertising started with primitive ads. The political campaigns for Eisenhower in the 1950s were primitive. These were followed by talking heads, especially intended “to focus on an issue and allow the candidate to convey an image impression that he can handle issues, and most importantly, that he can handle the job” (Devlin 1986, 26). Negative ads were not accepted until the 1960s. After that, they were considered an important part of political advertising. India seemed to accept this trend after the 2014 general elections. Concept and production talk about “the big ideas.” They do not personalize a campaign for the candidate (Jamieson 1986). Further, the interaction of the candidate with people in life surroundings is called a *cinéma vérité* spot. Jamieson also introduces the personal witness ads which Devlin recognizes in two forms. “Man in the street” is the technique of using a vox-pop to show the support of “ordinary voters.” Also, Devlin considers the personal witness ads as testimonials. A testimonial in political advertising is equivalent to a brand endorsement in commercial advertising. Big names, celebrities, and esteemed personalities endorse political candidates and ask for votes in their support. Jamieson also adds a format that he calls the “neutral reporter format.” In this tactic, several facts are presented to the viewers, and then they are asked to make judgements. As this is a tactic it is very obvious that the word “neutral” is present in the format without its meaning being followed.

Political advertising may include scores of research methods, and now when social media has become a game changer, the liberal democracies and advertising agencies are exploring these methods on the highest possible level. Political advertising sells the ideology of the political parties, and in return they expect votes to secure a clear and massive mandate to park them in the centre of the democracy. Political communication has been a known phenomenon since 1952. The presidential candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower used television to persuade the masses, meaning he received 33,936,234 popular votes and 442 electoral votes against Adlai E. Stevenson, who managed to get 27,314,992 popular votes and 89 electoral votes. The tone

of the political advertising contributed a lot to the unforgettable victory of Eisenhower in the presidential election of the United States. In the Indian context, the 2014 general election is a milestone for political as well as academic studies. The public-relation strategies were never so engaging as in the Indian political context. The public-relation mechanism developed a way to use the social-media platforms.

Methodology

To quantify the impact of the political advertising on the masses, an inquiry involving a survey was conducted. As this study is focused on the impact of the political agendas and the strategies used in the 2014 general elections to influence voters through social media, the sample must be from the population that is an active user of social media. So, given this consideration, the purposive sampling method is used. Also, this study focuses specifically on the 2014 general elections, considering the massive win of the Bharatiya Janata Party with a clear and colossal mandate by the Indian citizens, and therefore focused group interactions are also a part of the research methodology.

Sampling:

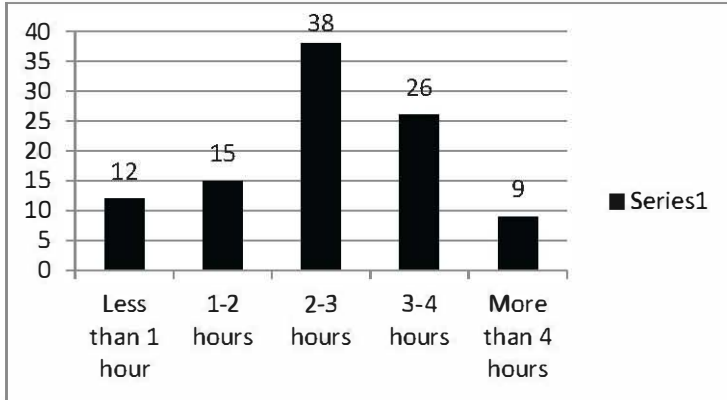
[In most usages] the following elements appear in the definition of role, providing a strategy for coping with a recurrent type of situation; it is socially identified, more or less clearly, as an entity; it is subject to being played recognizably by different individuals; and it supplies a major basis for identifying and placing persons in society.

Ralph Turner, "Role: Sociological Aspects," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* vol. 13 (1968, 552).

The sampling which fulfils the purpose of this study is purposive sampling. A sample size of one hundred persons aged sixteen to thirty-five represented the sample for the survey.

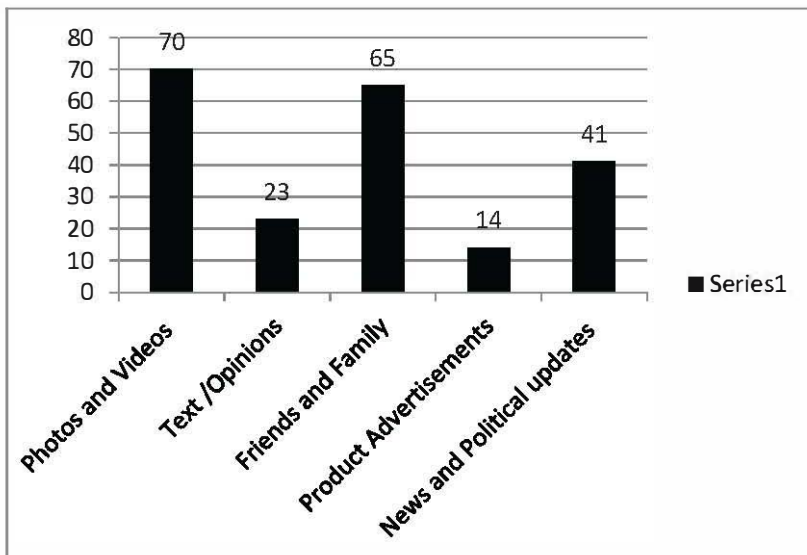
Result and Analysis

1. How much time do you spend on Social media?



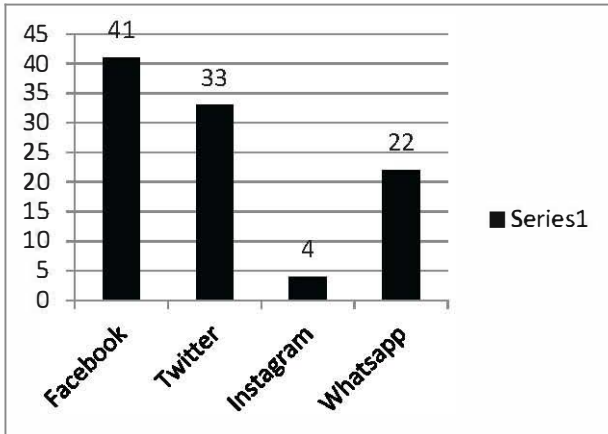
The study reflects the fact that Indians prefer social-media apps to any other when they use their smartphones. According to a report by the **●**ndiyar Network, Indians spend around two hundred minutes on mobile apps, out of which **70%** is spent on social-media and entertainment apps.

2. What do you use social media for the most?



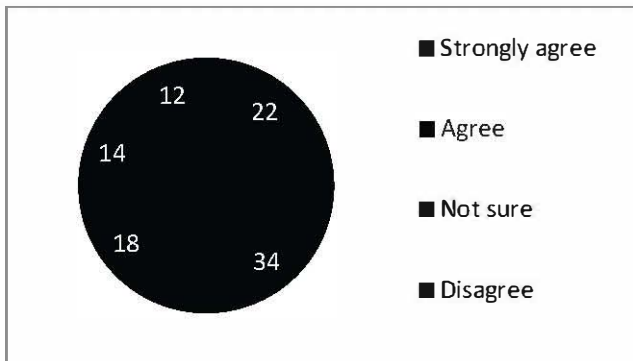
The respondents made it clear that they use social networking for entertainment, checking out photos and videos, and connecting with their friends and family over anything else.

3. As far as political advertising is concerned, which social-media platform is the most effective?



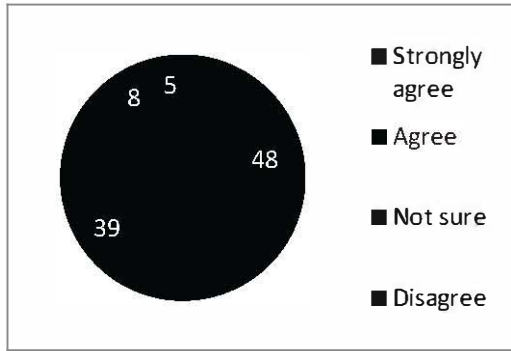
Although, across the world, Twitter leads the race for political messaging and its role has certainly grown, it seems that the respondents were more in favour of Facebook for their dose of politics.

4. Do you believe that the politically-motivated posts on social media are a form of political advertising and that these posts are done with the objective of influencing the youth towards a particular ideology?



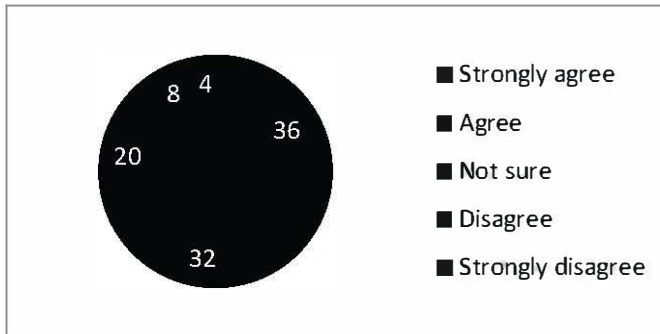
The study proved that the average social-media user is well aware of the hidden motive behind the political posts and how it impacts them personally.

5. Do you think that social media was excessively used during the 2014 Indian general election?



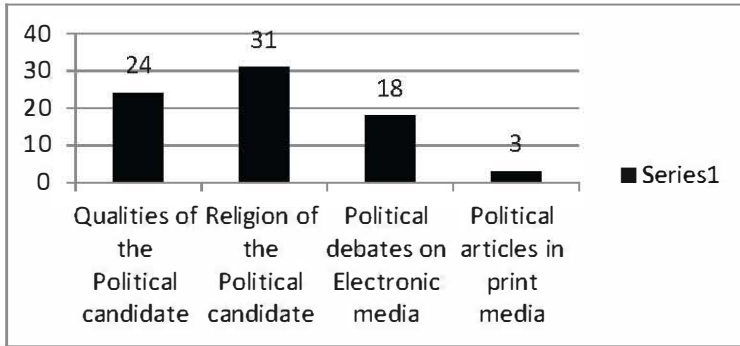
The respondents feel that the sudden interest in social media by the political parties was excessive, and somewhat undermined the original reason for these apps.

6. Do you believe that, with the sole objective of marketing themselves, the political parties manipulate the facts and information to influence the voters?



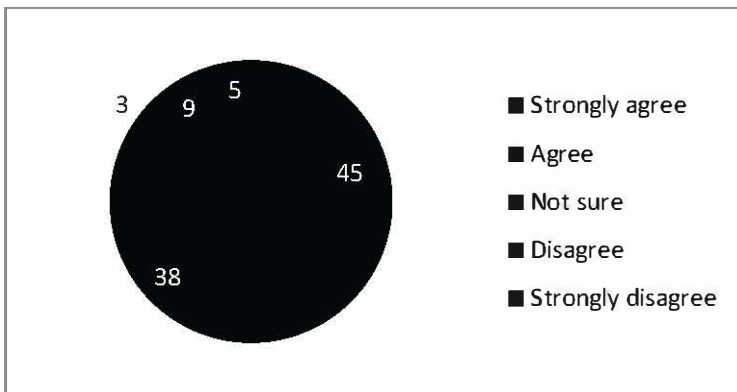
The respondents were aware of the manipulative tactics of the political parties, but it is not clear whether they critically assessed all the parties or only those in opposition to their own political ideology.

7. What was the deciding factor in casting your vote in favour of a particular party?



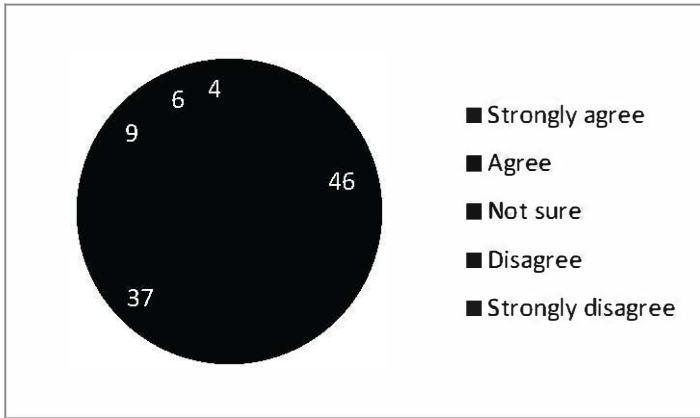
Although during every election it is stressed that one should vote for candidates based on merit, this survey revealed that more respondents voted for a political leader based on religion and caste than anything else.

8. Have there been any negative effects or new problems created because of social media?



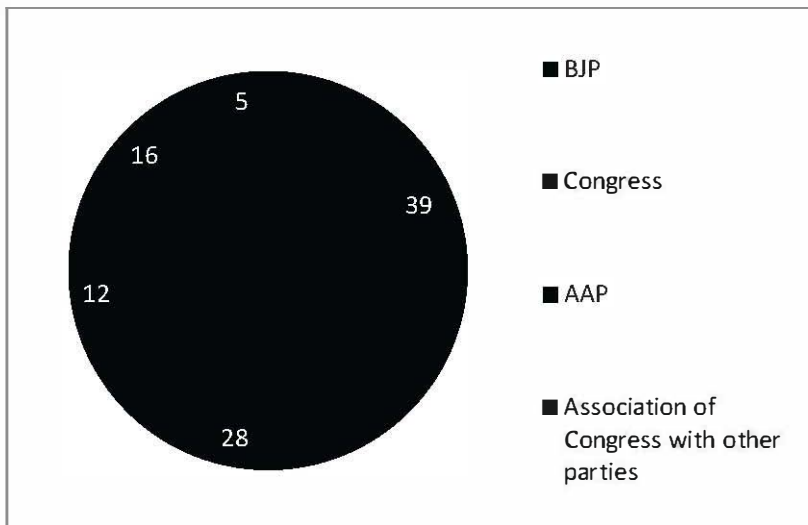
The majority of the respondents felt that social media has been harmful in more than one way, and its greatest impact is due to its addictive nature, thus harming personal relationships and providing a false sense of belonging.

9. Did the use of social media affect the outcome of the 2014 general election?



The 2014 general election was the first time that social media was so heavily used by any political party, and the respondents did feel that BJP had gained an advantage due to its heavy social-media advertising.

10. Which political party according to you will benefit the most due to social media during the 2019 general election?



The respondents felt that BJP will again weave its 2014 magic and utilize social media to its advantage. AAP has proven to be savvier, but due to its limited reach it will not be able to reap the equivalent benefits.

Conclusion

Keeping the above data in mind, the purpose of this study was to understand public behavior towards social media to gauge the impact and effect and what public-relations strategies and approaches were employed to influence voters through social media, and moreover to analyse the changing dynamics of advertising and agenda setting against the backdrop of social media and its future implications.

It can be clearly inferred from the study that social media creates considerable impression on its users as far as political influence is concerned. While on the one hand social media helps to improve political knowledge, on the other it helps to bolster misinformation which creates undue advantages for the political parties. Many respondents noticed this manipulation, but were still influenced by the constant barrage of particular types of information. According to a study conducted in 2013 by the Internet and Mobile Association of India and the Iris Knowledge Foundation, at the national level the outcome of at least 150 out of 543 parliamentary constituencies was to be determined by social-media users as the number of Facebook users was more than the victory margin of 2009.

Another noticeable trend is that even though users on Twitter are considerably fewer than Facebook, the impact of Twitter as far as political discourse is concerned is greater. This could be because on Twitter the users tend to be more educated and younger and have an opportunity to directly connect with the official accounts of both the political parties and the leaders. In addition, the social-media discussions on politics played out in the personal face-to-face world as well. As more and more people get involved with social media to discuss and put forward their political views, the more they respond to politics in the real world.

After the 2014 general election, when BJP used social media to wipe out the opposition by portraying its leaders as larger than life while trivializing the opposition, almost all political parties woke up to the power of social media, and this is why they have now commissioned “social-media cells” to communicate their political agenda and counter the opposition, and in some cases spread malicious information to undermine them. Doctored digital posts including images, fabricated stories, distorted facts, biased opinions, and created threats, which are a staple on social media. False posts generally had a higher reach, thus creating a negative impact on the social-

media users and often causing pandemonium and strife within society. Social media has also empowered the voters to make the politicians accountable. Thus, it would not be wrong to say that gradually a new kind of political system will evolve where it will become difficult for the sitting MLAs and MPs to repeat their successes just on the basis of empty promises, and they will need to constructively engage in a dialogue with their voter base. They will also have to present their report card to positively influence the public.

The 2019 general elections will showcase the unprecedented playing out of political rivalries, both on the ground and in the digital social-media world. A major fraction of the advertising budgets will be directed towards social-media advertising, where the specific targeting of the ads can be done to drive greater returns.

Discussion

The breeze of elections brings promises, propaganda, and change. The addition of social media to the political communication is bringing in some formidable challenges for the public-relation agencies and policymakers as well. The media ecosystem is observing rapid changes. Social media has become an important system to win elections in India. Political parties are now shifting their agendas to social media platforms. The political parties seem to keep social media on top when it comes to setting their agendas to secure a win with a majority. The emergent culture of using social media for political advertising is escalating the demand of skilled social-media managers. Moreover, in the quest to reach the maximum audience through social media, the attention has shifted towards the youth. This is why the trends they follow, make, and accept are on the priority list of trained social-media managers. For political parties, agenda setting on social media is both a challenge and an opportunity. The 2019 general elections in India are supposed to witness massive social-media campaigning from each political party. In 2014, the general election went to the Bharatiya Janata Party. The Indian National Congress (INC) has already shown signs of scaling up its social-media campaigns. INC learnt from its loss. All the major political parties now have a department dedicated to data analytics and social-media campaigning. This becomes more imperative as, after China, India has the second highest number of internet users at 462.17 million. With the growth in internet usage, social-media users are also rising exponentially. According to a report from Statista, there were about 168 million social-media users in India in 2016. This number will rise to an estimated 258.27 million users in 2019.

Around 65% of the population of India is between eighteen and thirty-five. On average, a person spends approximately four hours on the internet. Additionally, there is a budding trend of consuming news mostly from social-media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. For this reason, the political parties are targeting the social-media sites as a platform to publicise their policies and agendas, and to up their political game. It is not an exaggeration to state that political parties are now more dependent on social media vis-à-vis any other medium, and this dependency will continue in the 2019 general election as well.

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DIGITAL MEDIA AND ETHICAL CONCERNS: THE GROWING MENACE OF FAKE NEWS IN INDIA

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Abstract

Digital-media ethical issues have recently emerged as one important area of study. This media form has provided a platform where the people have free and open access to the world to volunteer their ideas and opinions more freely and instantly. However, digital media has also become the main culprit of spreading misinformation, hoaxes, and lies. Most of the social networking sites and instant messaging apps are the preparators of spreading fake news. Is digital media moving in the right ethical direction in the wake of transforming and disseminating information, especially when India will very soon become a digital land? The growing amount of fake-news cases in the country propels new “laws, ethics and rules” to ensure the best utilization of digitization and its outcomes. This research paper tries to examine the various ethical issues which digital media is facing, such as the distortion of facts, the overflow of information, the breach of privacy. The methodology used in the research is personal observation, discussions of various recent issues, interviews, and the interpretations drawn out of them. The practical significance of this research paper is to stimulate the thinking and understanding of various ethical concerns attached with the digital media and what measures should be adopted to ensure digitally safety for ourselves.

Introduction

The digital revolution can be defined as simply a revolution which has brought the whole world under one roof. It has facilitated people to connect with the entire world at their fingertips. In the digital world, the production

and transmission of messages and information are instant because the digital waves have no disturbances when compared to analogue.

Now think of the time when we used to make STD calls (any calls outside your home state) during the initial years of the 1990s. Could we imagine that situation in the present? Of course not! Thanks to the mobile technology of today, India has witnessed a digital revolution in the past few years and is the biggest digital hotspot of the planet. The digital medium is now seen as the most potent tool for cutting the divide between the wealthy elite and have nots. We are now digitally independent for finance, culture, technology, and networking. Digital media is also an important area of the digital revolution – it is digitized content that can be transmitted over the internet or computer networks. This can include text, audio, video, and graphics. This means that news from a TV network, newspaper, or magazine that is presented on a website can fall into this category. Most digital media are based on translating analogue data into digital data. The internet began to grow when text was put onto it instead of being stored on paper, as was done previously. Soon after, text was put onto computers then images followed, and then came audio and video. In the age of everything getting digitized so randomly, the ethical questions connected to this also arise, such as – are we getting the right information through the right channel at the right time? One such issue is related with the consumption of fake news. Are we really consuming pure news or are we really sufferers of fake news? With the rise of so many digital-media platforms, it has become very easy and cheap for consumers to consume news or any other entertainment alternative from such platforms. Also, there are a lot of choices for them to gather information according to their preference and demands. In such cases, no one is bothering to check the authenticity of information. Surprisingly, it has been observed that much such information passes through social-media platforms, which have become the real culprits of spreading wrong, misleading, or distorted information to attract people. Falsehoods spread like wildfire on social media, having a quicker and longer lasting pickup than the truth. This research paper tries to understand the term “fake news,” how the concept of fake news started in India, and the various cases where consumers have no idea about fake news, from where, why, and when they are consuming the fake news, and also how they become culprits of spreading fake information or news themselves. First, let us understand what fake news is.

What is Fake News?

Fake news is propagating false, misleading, and hoax information without any authenticity or a verified source. It is deliberately spread among the people just to gain attention and publicity. It carries false messages in an amorphous category, including misleading news, unverified content, hoaxes, and even fabricated pictures in the names of internet memes. The assessment may involve distinguishing mere poor journalism from deliberate attempts to spread misinformation. India in the year 2017 saw the rise in the amount of fake news generated through various platforms. Although social media is always held responsible for spreading fake news, this was a year when the mainstream media gave tough competition to social media in originating and circulating it. In the race to be the first to break news, some things are circulated without first being fact checked. The year also saw the more menacing variety of agenda-driven fake stories circulated by the mainstream media. The media, having the status of the fourth pillar of our democracy, holds the responsibility for disseminating truthful and pure information to the people, but this is not always the case.¹ Technology has proved to be a main cause in the growing number of cases of fake news. With the boom in digital media, the convenience of cheap smartphones and reasonable data rates have enabled the democratization of online content. The flipside is that the speed of content distribution has made traditional journalistic controls of verification unfeasible. Thus, the unfettered flow of speech has become vulnerable to the peddling of unverified information. Unfortunately, this free flow of hoax messages and content is largely driven by the social-networking sites and instant messaging apps like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube. These messages are transmitted in the form of videos or text, which have potential to incite violence in the state at a larger rate. Social-networking sites have the great potential to attract lot of people and create sensations in society. Recent incidents in India are indicative of the potential harm, ranging from political misinformation to a spate of lynchings. This explosion of fake news has now reached India from other parts of the world. To gain an understanding of how this fake news is exploding, let us look at the growth of digital media in India in recent years.

¹ Available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/fake-news-lies-spread-faster-social-media-truth-1c0es-n854896>.

The Growth of Digital Media in India

India will soon become the world's second largest country behind China in the growth of digital media.² There are over 460 million users in India currently, which is estimated to rise to 250 million in 2021. Worth noting is the fact that India has a high rate of penetration on the mobile internet. There are around 420 million mobile phone internet users in India³ (according to a report of Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and the market research firm IMRB). The number of mobile internet users is growing three times faster in rural India than urban India. Due to the greater affordability of mobile services in India, especially with the launch of Reliance Jio late last year, the total monthly average mobile bill has decreased over time. This argues well for mobile penetration in the coming days and can pave the way for greater penetration in rural India as long as affordable handsets are available for the lower income section of the population. In urban India, communication, social networking, and entertainment (videos, music, etc.) are the things mobile internet is most used for, while in rural India entertainment drives the usage followed by social networking and communication.

The proliferation of digital infrastructure has also brought shifts in consumption patterns, which is based less on geographic, gender, and age criteria and more on the ability to pay, and for this reason the data costs are diminishing. A large share of internet users is occupied by social-network users.⁴ There are over 260 million active social-media users in India. The largest part of this share comprises Facebook users, followed by Twitter. People use Facebook very much, and spend most of their time on it. The most popular activities on social media include maintaining one's own virtual profile on the likes of Facebook and Twitter, posting and sharing updates, as well as replying to something a friend has posted. While college students form the largest demographic of active social-media users in India, working and non-working women also register a large share in that user base.

² Available at www.statista.com/statistics/278407/number-of-social-network-users-in-india.

³ Report of Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI).

⁴ Available at <https://www.impactbnd.com/blog/the-difference-between-facebook-twitter-linked-in-google-youtube-pinterest>.

Digital Media Affecting the Media and Entertainment Industry

Apart from social-networking sites, there has been a significant rise in the digital subscription of the media and entertainment industries as well. The tactical media consumers are now consuming both paid television (cable or satellite) along with having at least one on-demand subscription, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, or Hotstar, which are driven by low-cost subscription charges and better-quality content without any advertisements. Here are some facts:

- By 2020, India is expected to become the second largest online video-viewing audience globally, following the exponential growth of video consumption over digital media.
- By 2020, the largest segment of consumers will consume traditional media (either paid for or free) and free on-demand content on the back of falling data charges and growing free wi-fi access. "With the fall in broadband pricing triggered by Jio, the gap between the cost of watching an hour of TV on broadband and traditional cable or DTH has significantly reduced,"⁵ ("Reimagining India's M&E Sector").

It also pointed out that the increasing affordability of smartphones along with the availability of data packs providing 1.5 gb per day for around Rs 5 have made it affordable for consumers to watch content on the go.⁶

While currently it is still more expensive to watch television using broadband (than traditional routes like cable), the fall in broadband price poses a threat to the cable and DTH industry.

The number of distribution companies and existing topmost satellite channels are arriving with their online app-based services to provide wholesome entertainment to the consumers based on their choices.

⁵ Available at <https://www.ey.com/in/en/industries/media---entertainment/ey-reimagining-indias-me-sector>.

⁶ Available at <https://www.livemint.com/Companies/g6pp1jEfAFLXNk83uVL0M0/Digital-only-media-consumers-to-reach-4-million-mark-by-2020.html>.

The Circulation of Fake News through Digital Media

Fake news has been one of the most hotly debated socio-political topics of recent years. Websites which deliberately publish hoaxes and misleading information have popped up across the internet and are often shared on social media to increase their reach. The year 2017 has registered a steep rise in the creation and posting of the number of fake-news stories related to religion, socio-political affairs, crime, and other different issues on many social-networking sites and instant messaging app-based services. These fake messages claim no source, no fact checking, and an ex-post facto effect, and going viral on Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp would lead to some violence and deaths in India and other parts of the world. Terms such as “fake news,” “post-truth,” and “alternative facts” will be forever associated with the US presidential elections of 2016.⁷ Hoax stories, such as Hillary Clinton selling weapons to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Pope Francis endorsing Trump for president, were liked and commented upon hundreds of thousands of times on Facebook, with many consumers not being able to correctly judge the facts.

In today's scenario, fake news rarely finds a good consumer market in the United States because people have become cautious of the information they read online, with over a quarter stating that they seldom trust the news that they read on social media. Similarly, due to the Chinese government's strict rules towards social media, China is also untouched. But this peril has moved towards India. In India, a nation which consists of the highest number of internet users, fake-news stories have become a part of everyday life, exacerbating weather crises, increasing violence between castes and religions, and even affecting matters of public health.

Cases of Fake News in India in the Recent Past

In 2017, the screens of the computers lit up with the messages of the arrival of Cyclone Phyan in Mumbai, due to which a lot of people started panicking, with some going home from work early after receiving messages on their phones that roads were being closed. Others passed the message on to loved ones in Phyan's path. As it turns out, the cyclone never hit Mumbai. In fact, the weather forecast, and India Metrological Department never

⁷ Available at

https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTN_2018_Final%20Booklet_11_1_2018.pdf.

raised a warning for any such cyclone. They tweeted and requested that people stay calm and not trust any such rumours.

One message that made the rounds in November,⁸ just after the government announced an overhaul of the country's money, claimed that a newly released two thousand rupee bank note would contain a GPS tracking nanochip that could locate bank notes hidden as far away as 390 feet underground.

- (1) Another rumour circulated about "salt shortages," which prompted a rush for salt in four India states.
- (2) Many false stories have triggered violence and even the deaths of innocent people. In May 2017, rumours went viral about child abductors in a village, triggering several lynchings and the deaths of seven people.
- (3) Similarly, in August, fake news of an occult gang chopping off women's braids in north India spread panic and tension, and a low-caste woman was killed.
- (4) A video went viral with two people being beheaded, and the text said that these were Indian soldiers killed in Pakistan, with the message that, if the watcher is a true Indian patriot, they should forward the message. But the reality was that the video showed individuals who were taken in a gang war in Brazil.⁹
- (5) There have also been fake messages related to political parties' agendas, such as spreading hatred and anger against other parties. This year, many fake videos were uploaded which have instigated riots. These videos were supported by many politicians for their own interest.

These are some of the instances of fake news registered in India. There are other cases of fake news which have created bedlam in the society in recent times. There is no proof of where these messages or information came from or who did the fact checking. The only thing they had in common is their subsequent production and widescale distribution.

⁸ Available at <https://www.altnews.in/top-fake-news-stories-circulated-indian-media-2017>.

⁹ <https://www.huffingtonpost.in/2017/05/26/10-instances-that-show-a-fake-news-explosion-is-taking-place>.

Where does Fake News Come From?

The fake-news problem in India is very real, as dystopian as it may seem. According to Pankaj Jain, one of India's most active fake-news slayers: "Fake news is a fabricated term which can mean many things – a mistake, intentional misleading, twisting a news story, or fabricating a complete lie." ● Out of all the channels which spread fake news, the biggest distribution is being done around social-networking platforms. The main culprit is the instant-messaging app WhatsApp. Fake news going around in WhatsApp circles is most likely to spread and affect people. Most of our population from the villages, or with access to cheap data but no formal education, are users of WhatsApp, not Facebook or Twitter. Sensational headlines which scream at the audience to get viewers and entice readers to click through to dubious websites are a money-making tool. The same people who tirelessly forward "good morning" messages to their WhatsApp circles and clog up the internet are the same people who, mostly innocuously, also help to peddle fake news. The proliferation of fake news came into the fore with the US presidential elections in 2016, when many purveyors of fake news aimed to help Trump win. Social-networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter swayed the election results. The flow took place from the United States to India in 2017 when fake news registered with the government of India and became a debate on WhatsApp forwards of the primetime news slots. The post-truth times had truly arrived, where the people are forced to accept fake news and doctored videos.¹⁰

India is the most dominant market in the world in terms of consumption of social-networking sites. India is the largest WhatsApp market with more than two hundred million internet users in 2017. The number of Facebook users is 241 million, which has surpassed the US market.¹¹ According to Statistica.com, the 4G revolution has increased the number of mobile-internet users. While these social-networking sites were designed as a messaging platform for one-on-one exchanges or small groups, in India they have taken on a life of their own. Many Indians use WhatsApp not as a messaging platform, but as a consumption platform – people join lots of groups, so they receive an endless flurry of video messages, memes, and random jokes and stories, directly to their inbox. The more sinister effect arises when these messages or stories contain false information. The end-to-end encryption of messages locks the messages and gives a key only to the sender and receiver to open it, but also makes it possible for the company

¹⁰ Available at <https://web.stanford.edu/~gentzkow/research/fakenews.pdf>.

¹¹ Available at <https://www.statista.com/topics/779/mobile-internet>.

to see inside chats and regulate the flow of false information. But with large groups sending and receiving messages it becomes difficult for journalists or police to get in and track from where a rumour originates. This year, the amount of fake news spread on social media has led to violence, mob attacks, and other panic situations in the country. A blitzkrieg strategy is adopted on social media to spread these fake messages wherein people post tweets and messages taken from a common template created in advance, with the idea of pushing a suitable trend to popularity.

Regulatory Measures to Curb Fake News

Due to the increasing instances of fake news in print and electronic media, the Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) released a circular¹² announcing amendments to guidelines that the Press Information Bureau follows while granting accreditation to journalists. The circular was an authoritarian threat to journalists, in which it was clearly mentioned that if any journalist is found to be involved in propagating any kind of misinformation or fake news, they would lose their accreditation for fifteen days. The circular stood as improper regarding the rights of journalists and faced opposition, as for a journalist to lose their accreditation means a lot. Ultimately, the government had to revoke the notice at the direction of the prime minister's office.¹³ Later, it was realized that there is no role of accredited journalists behind this. However, the news channels were also found to be involved in such activities. As of now, the greater role of social media is emerging for the spread of such hoaxes, misinformation, and fake news. Between June 2016 & May 2017, more than twenty criminal complaints involving online content were filed, and many people were detained for content circulated on WhatsApp or published on Facebook, according to the research organization Freedom House. So, criminalizing the spread of fake news is the only way to overcome this huge problem. Is this the only feasible solution for creating a check on such activity? While conducting interviews with some expert groups from the media industry, the cyber world, and lawmakers, the study found that: "Criminalizing and penalizing the dissemination of information is difficult mainly because people who disseminate the information are not necessarily aware that they are involved in this practice." Sometimes, innocent people also come under the scammer as the investigation is very difficult to undertake as the information passes on from various people who have no idea what they are

¹² Report by the Press Information Bureau.

¹³ Available at <http://www.policyforum.net/fighting-fake-news-india>.

doing. Knowingly or unknowingly they become culprits, and to penalize them is not a justifiable solution for this problem. “Criminalizing fake news is counterproductive,” said Sunil Abraham, executive director of the Centre for the Internet and Society: “The trouble with criminalization is the person circulating the news is ‘fooled’ and is unaware of the crime they are committing. It is very similar to copyright infringement at a non-commercial stage. Many just don’t know.”

Countering this issue, many different nations have now adopted stringent laws and policies to control the flow of misinformation. They have declared this as a criminal offence.¹⁴ South Asian countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam have sought to treat the manipulation of content as a criminal offence. Indonesia has launched a separate cybersecurity task force to bring purveyors of fake news to task. Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte created stricter laws authorizing punitive action resulting in a jail term of up to six months and heavy fines of up to an equivalent of Rs 2.5 lakh for the publishers of fake news. Germany has passed a law called the Network Enforcement Act, or NetzDG, advocating a crackdown on “punishable false reports.” Enforced on October 2017, the hate-speech law mandates that companies remove hate speech within a certain time, and this was created with the intention of also curbing fake news. The United States has also put Facebook and Twitter under increasing security to control the spread of fake news. To return to India, organizations such as SM Hoax Slayer, Altnews, and Check4spam are working to combat disinformation, but they are not enough to control this menace on their own. The government also had to play a stricter role in solving such problems. This research paper also aims to study the measures being adopted by the Indian Government to curb the spread of fake news in India.

Measures Adopted by the Indian Government to Control the Spread of Fake News

To control the spread of fake and provocative messages on WhatsApp, which has led to the killing of several persons and many other related crimes, the government in July 2018 called for several changes in the way the Facebook-controlled messaging app operates in India. Union Information and Technology minister¹⁵ Ravi Shankar Prasad gave strict instructions to WhatsApp to put in place a system where the flow of these

¹⁴ Available at <https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2019/a-guide-to-anti-misinformation-actions-around-the-world>.

¹⁵ Available at <http://time.com>.

fake messages could be stopped in any area of a state. If the messages are being circulated in any area of a state in large volumes, then it must be discovered where the messages are circulating from and stopped urgently. The social-networking owners cannot evade their accountability and responsibility by merely saying that they have created a platform and the rest is to be looked after by the country. They must take up the responsibility to look after instances where such hoaxes, lies, or other misinformation lead to “horrifying” or “terrible acts of violence.” The government suggested that WhatsApp work closely with the home ministry, the IT ministry, and state-police forces to check the spread of hoax messages. The government has even commanded WhatsApp to be liable to be treated as abettors if the platform does not take the necessary actions. The California-based company WhatsApp CEO Chris Daniels responded to the government warnings and came up with the prompt action which needs to be taken up by the company to curb the abuse of the instant-messaging platform. The issues of false news, misinformation, and the spread of hoaxes needs to be dealt with collectively by the government, civil society, and technology companies. The security of people is the prime focus of the company, and they have designed some features, keeping in mind the overall security of the country. Facebook, the owner of the messaging app, has proposed the use of machine-learning techniques to identify malicious content. They are testing¹⁶ a method to identify forwards while also beginning an exercise with academia to study how misinformation is spread in the country. In another move, the company has also limited the number of forwards for messages. Now, only five forwards are allowed instead of one hundred. They have also removed the “quick forward” button that appears next to messages containing videos, audios, and photos. Furthermore, they have introduced a new feature of labelling the forwarded messages which would enable the receiver to understand that the message was not created by the sender. They are working on a system to develop a labelling feature to highlight forwarded messages, which would be tuned into a fully-fledged feature. WhatsApp, in response to the government, said that the company is testing a new label in India that highlights when a message has been forwarded versus that composed by a sender. Although WhatsApp is already working with fact-checking organizations such as Boom Live in India, it still needs more partnerships. Also, the company is working hard to spread awareness and educate people about how to stay safe online and how to spot fake news. In this regard, the company published a full-page advertisement in all the major newspapers of India which was intended to

¹⁶ Available at <https://www.medianama.com/2018/05/223-chris-daniels-whatsapp>.

counter fake news. They have also started “educational campaigns” to create awareness among people about fake news and to spot it.

Conclusion

India is on the threshold of the digital world. The advent and growth of the internet has empowered millions of voices to be raised and heard universally at the click of a button. The digital world is giving endless opportunities to distort the facts and reshape narratives. Indian people are no less susceptible to the spread of fake news and its harm. But the fact is that fake news is not a new concept in India, and it has been around since time immemorial. Yesterday’s rumours, propaganda, and yellow journalism are today’s fake news. What has changed today is its gravity and potency to harm. After going through a lot of secondary data, personal observations, and discussions on recent issues, this research study has come to the conclusion that undertaking the issue of fake news requires a coherent and collaborative approach on the part of law and policy makers in India. At the most fundamental level there is a need to arrive at a definition of fake news and the degree of its exactitude. Moreover, there is a need to draw a distinction between harmless propaganda and verifiable disinformation that has the likelihood of causing imminent social harm or irreparable damage to the reputation of an individual. Further, the internet platforms also need to understand their responsibility, and should develop standards of news, where if the line is breached the state government is allowed to intervene. While the Indian Government has not yet been able to come up with any comprehensive policy to tackle the growth of fake news, its methods in equivalent fields are instructive. Some states have come up with two feasible solutions: either they shut down the internet operations during the times of communal tension in the affected areas, or they come up with credible counter speech. But it has been argued by many people that shutting down the internet is not a proven solution to the problem, as it affects those also who are not involved in rumour mongering. In contrast to this, a credible counter speech strategy, where the authorities send messages to citizens, has proved to be effective in the face of large-scale fake news. In India there is no such law or regulatory body which governs the flow of information or content on the internet, as under India’s information-technology laws social-media websites are categorized as “intermediaries,” which allows them to take advantage of safe harbour provisions that exempt them from any liability for content they have not initiated or modified. Therefore, there is a need for the government to come up with stringent laws

and policies in this regard. Mandating for social-media websites to check fake news is also a possible solution in this regard.

Finally, a better and more influential way to limit the spread of hoaxes on WhatsApp and other social-media platforms is to increase media literacy. WhatsApp has already initiated this move wherein it has published a full-page newspaper advertisement. It is now also working with local researchers to combat the spread of hoaxes. The deleterious effects of fake news only emerge when enough people believe in it. If the public, as a community of individuals, approach information as sceptical, critical agents, and not as passive receptors, many rumours masquerading as news will automatically get rejected at their source. Quality education at school level is also very important. In the meantime, the government and civil society would do well to initiate awareness campaigns about fake news and its potentially deadly consequences.

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THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL-MEDIA ADVERTISING ON CONSUMERS

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Abstract

The advertising industry is in a stage of transformation. Digital media is evolving as an essential medium for advertising and creating a reach for the brand among potential consumers. The consumer behavior also changes as the technological advancements provide access to the reviews of the product, enabling them to compare the product's price and other aspects, and select accordingly. This makes it essential to understand how consumers perceive the online advertisements. This research provides the brands with a fresh analysis of the consumer's behaviors, making it easier for them to choose the appropriate digital channel for the desired effect on the consumers. The primary aim of this study is to evaluate the factors associated with advertising in digital media that affect students' behavior and their willingness to purchase. A quantitative approach was used where the data was collected through the survey method. The primary data was obtained through a structured close-ended questionnaire to understand the attitude of students towards advertisements on digital media and to identify the relation between advertising and consumer behavior. This study also examines the impact of digital-media advertising on students' lifestyle and on forming their perceptions about brands and products.

Introduction

Consumer behavior and intentions are fundamental issues of the present-day society.

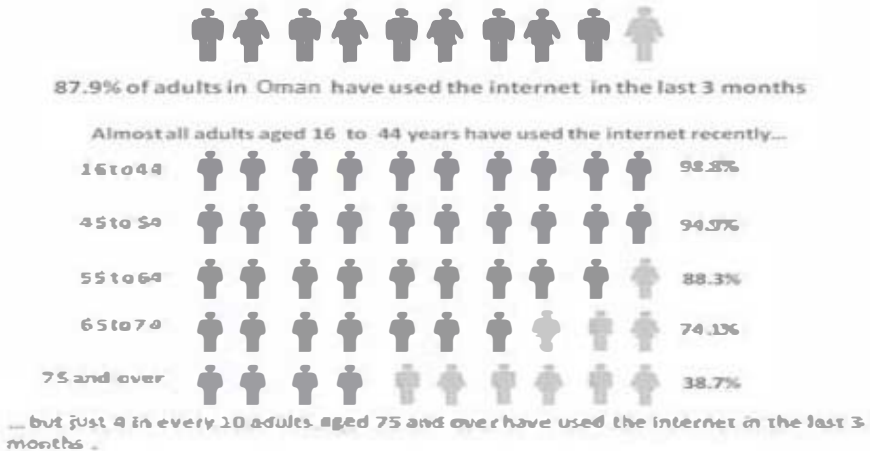
Throughout history, the priority of brands has been to be famous and market its products to the customer to increase sales. "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large," said the American Marketing Association

(AIM) in July 2013. An analysis of the trends of the past three decades illustrates that the development of society has made digitalization a chief element of consumer behavior. The digitalization of the community has transformed the lifestyles of people. The use of the internet, social media, mobile applications, and other forms of digital communication technologies have become an integral part of the lives of billions of people.

According to the *Oman Daily Observer*, the *Times of Oman*, and *Mascat Daily*, as compared to people all over the world, Omani teenagers spend the most amount of time on the internet, which exposes them to mental-health problems and mood swings. The adolescents in the Sultanate of Oman spend 188 minutes per school day occupied with their smartphones or computers, and almost one out of four are treated as “acute” internet users as they spend three times more time on the internet than the average child in other parts of the developing world.

Further, as shown in Fig. 17.1 below, the National Centre for Statistics and Information asserts that the use of the internet by adults increased as compared to previous years. In the last quarter, 87.9% of adults aged sixteen to twenty-four in Oman used the internet, as compared to 86.2% in 2015. It also claims that nearly all adults are current internet users, which is 99.2%, in contrast with 38.7% of grownups aged seventy-five or over.

Fig 17.1. Recent digital-media users by age group in Oman (2016)



Source: National Centre for Statistics and Information

The widespread access to digital forms of media has made digital advertising the most effective means of advertising for the organization and

brand. The collection of new advertising tools evolving with the growth of technologies is called digital advertising.

Digital advertising can be defined as the application of internet and associated digital technologies in combination with conventional communication to achieve advertising purposes (Chaffey and Chadwick 2012). Digital advertising is the adoption of various channels such as social media, websites, multimedia advertising, online search engine advertisement, e-marketing, and interactive marketing (polls, adverts in games, mobile marketing) to reach the target market.

Digital media offers several methods of advertising, ranging from links, banner advertisements, small advertisements, and pay-per-click advertising. Digital advertising is considered a new form of promotion and provides new prospects for enterprises to do businesses. The reach of a brand can be increased in several ways, but it is essential to gratify the goals of the organization by curtailing expenses.

The actions of promotion directed through digital channels permit promoters to have one-to-one connections with probable customers as a means of successfully advertising to consumers. People expose themselves more and more to digital and social media for numerous reasons, including the position of a consumer, as they try to find information about products and purchase and consume them, and converse with others about their experiences. The brands have replied to this necessary move by increasing their practice of digital advertising channels. As a result of the communicating form of the media, the audience has the option to disregard or block the online advertisements.

Some advertisements are more damaging than others as they have long-term effects on the consumer. The negatively charged advertisements not only affect the mind of a consumer but also impact their activities (Terlutter & Capella 2013). The approach of these people towards the online commercials transmits the actual influence of the advertisements, which shows the advertisement's success.

Thus, a study on the digital channels of advertising would be of immense significance for the organizations. Despite the steady upsurge in digital-media participation in all developed portions of the world and the presence of numerous studies in this field, the progressions in the digital age have been scrutinized from the viewpoint of technical or commercial advancements, and insufficient studies have been conducted on the consequences of advertisements through digital channels on the purchasing intention of consumers, especially graduate students and their attitudes towards these advertisements.

Research is needed in the ever-changing environment of the digital media in which consumers are placed and network with brands and each other to understand the factors of digital advertisements that affect their behavior and their purchasing patterns.

Problem Statement

The way humans interact has transformed considerably due to an increase in the time spent on several forms of digital media, leading to behavioral changes among consumers in their interactions, activities, and mannerisms. This generates the requirement for organizations to update their strategies, along with the need to be aware of the effects of different factors of advertising on digital platforms on the consumer's purchasing intentions and how their attitudes impact the organization's digital-advertising campaign. The existing body of literature on digital marketing is focused mainly on social media and social networks, but not on other forms of digital media. Moreover, the previous research on digital advertising focuses only on the technical aspects and not on consumer's behavior. Therefore, there is very little knowledge of the effects of digital advertising on attitudes and purchasing intentions. The digital-advertising media has a lot to offer academics in the field of research. Therefore, a study on undergraduate students' purchasing patterns and attitudes towards brands has been conducted. This study thus aims to identify the factors of digital advertising that affect the students' decision making as with the technological advancements; the organizations have the potential to generate sales growth by reaching out to young consumers through digital-media channels.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study examines the impact of digital-media advertising on students' lifestyle and forming their perceptions about brands and its products, which would benefit the company as it would make them aware of the most effective digital-media channel with a particular focus on female students pursuing graduation.

Following the identification of the aim of the study, the objectives formulated for this study are:

- to study the awareness of digital advertising in the College of Applied Sciences, Ibri

- to examine the influence of several factors of digital-media advertisements on consumer's purchasing intentions
- to study the attitude of the students towards advertisements on digital-media platforms
- to ascertain the relationship between digital advertising and purchasing intention
- to investigate the acceptance and elimination factors of digital-advertising channels

Research Questions

- (1) Does a consumer's behavior towards advertising on digital media affect their purchasing intentions?
- (2) What approaches must be employed to improve the influence of advertising on digital-media channels to entice probable customers?

The existing research on digital-media advertising discusses the technical aspect of digital advertising. However, there is a connection between the consumer and the organization. The organization has an influence on the customers through the digital-media marketing actions, and the customers impact the organization with their attitude towards the marketing process. Therefore, it is essential to undertake additional studies which focus on the influence of digital-media advertisements on consumer's buying behavior.

The chief factor of this research is to recognize and get an understanding of the main elements of digital-media advertisements that influence consumer's intentions to buy. An in-depth analysis of the literature was also done to categorize the features of adverts changing purchasing intentions. Therefore, the connection of numerous elements and purchasing intentions are also worth studying.

Limitations of Research

Despite the contribution of the study, it is essential to address its limitations. Firstly, this study focuses on female as well as male students of CAS, Ibr. Secondly, the sample size is minimal to determine the actual attitudes of the consumers; the respondents' number only two hundred students pursuing undergraduate courses at the mentioned college, of which close to 90% are girls. Thirdly, only five factors of digital advertising that affect consumer behaviors are studied, but several product-related factors may also significantly change purchasing behaviors in this context. Also,

further research in this field can also be conducted by taking more male students as respondents to identify other factors affecting advertising and customer attitudes towards advertising in digital media, which would add to the existing literature.

Literature Review

In studies related to advertising, the outlook towards the advertisements is given extreme importance for understanding the customer's responses to communication by advertisements (MacInnis & Pieters 2012). The attitude towards the advertisements strongly indicates the effectiveness of the ad (Sanbonmatsu, Seo & Iacobucci 2014).

The opinion of online consumers is very different from the consumers of the offline world. The trend of buying online is growing steadily as the consumers consider it more straightforward. In an effort to motivate the customers to shop online, brands use several advertising methods, for instance promoting the saving of money (Ahmed & David 2014).

There are two reasons for digital advertising: the communicate factor and the content factor. The communicate factor talks about the presentation of advertisements and sharing information about the product. The aspect of the content focuses on the shape of the digital ad, plan, and visuals that are employed to entice the consumer (Muhammad & Dwi 2015). Advertisements on digital media are distinctive in the way that customers visit the advertisements, in comparison to traditional print and TV media, where ads are positioned in front of the audiences (Harshini 2015).

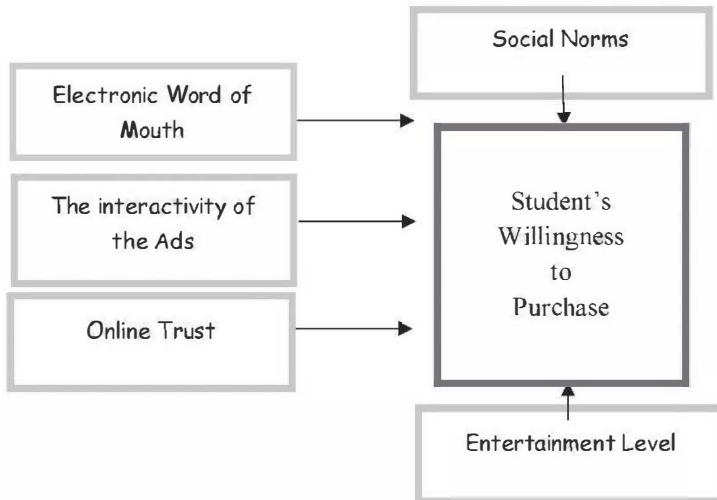
Humans are viewed as the most authoritative people in the world of commerce as they have the authority to select the item they want to purchase or not (Blythe 2013).

Thus, it is significant to comprehend what features affect the choices of the customer. Client faithfulness is judged by their commitment to the brand and product which is the essential feature of other persuasive business dimensions.

For digital advertising, the allegiance program is a central act which needs to be retained in the mind in order to create respect for the brand in customers. Personalized communications are accountable for guaranteeing greater remembering rates. By using consumers' details, it is possible to expect prospective proposals that need to be sent to their current clients for keeping the customers alive and tied up with the brand (Mariani 2015). The development of new advertising channels has led to the empowerment of customers.

The prevailing models on customer impact debate the overall dynamics of brand-consumer relationships and the diverse ways in which the customer affects the brand advertising activities. The brand's decision-makers however must deliberate how various factors like electronic word-of-mouth, the interactivity of ads, online trust, and entertainment level affect buying behavior. The influence of these five aspects on businesses' digital-media advertising activities is studied.

Fig. 17.2. Advertising and Empowerment of Customers



Electronic Word of Mouth

Kozinets et al. (2010) talk about connecting word-of-mouth in digitalized communities. They describe word-of-mouth advertising, also called viral advertising, as “the intentional influencing of consumer-to-consumer communications by professional marketing techniques” (71). Viral advertising is proposed to convert “commercial information into cultural stories” (86).

The presence of word-of-mouth has been researched comprehensively; still, there is a deficiency of research deliberating it in the context of digital-media advertising (Kozinets et al. 2010, 71).

Word-of-mouth promotion has been modernized due to the internet's easy availability, grasp, and transparency. Thus, the traditional representations explaining the idea of word-of-mouth have to be reviewed. After linear-oriented representations from marketers and customers to other clients, a

more complicated method is recommended. In the suggested network coproduction model, conversation not only moves from companies to consumers, but also from several types of consumers who provide feedback to advertisers and other consumers (Kozinets et al. 2010, 72–3).

Online Trust

Online trust plays a significant role in digital interactions. It is a facilitator of both customer responsiveness and customer faithfulness (Chung & Austria 2010). “Brand attitudes and purchase intentions depend heavily on online trust” (Colliander & Dahlén 2011, 318). Chung and Austria (2010) propose that an additional study on customer trust in the digital-media context should be conducted. Digital media as a marketplace fascinates many diverse types of users. They favour liberty of preference regarding what kind of advertising to accept. The consumers do not esteem brand actions conducted with the purpose of advertising in an online environment.

Therefore, businesses and advertisers should strategize and perform their advertising actions in a manner that generates trust. It is recommended that it is more suitable for brands to form their digital-media advertising plans for audiences to alter their behavior, suggesting the importance of customer influence and customer trust on brand’s decision making (Akar & Topcu 2011). Colliander & Dahlén (2011) propose that assertiveness towards the brand is based mainly on the supposed association between the creator of the advertisement and the brand in question.

When a brand grants authority to the advertiser or a “fashionable friend,” it instantaneously drops control of its promotion. Losing control may lead to a higher amount of online trust and better brand allegiance, based on the advertiser’s trustworthiness. Advertising tends to be delicate towards the apparent loyalty. Trust is a vital concern, not only between the customer and the advertising channel, but also between the brand and the advertisement creator.

Entertainment Level

Entertainment is referred to as the ability to accomplish the audience’s requirement of distraction, alteration, aesthetic satisfaction, or emotional satisfaction. Researchers have confirmed that a practical aspect, such as entertainment, could play an important role in manipulating the attitudes of consumers towards digital advertising (Raney 2003).

The Interactivity of Advertisements

Digital media can assist the consumers in communicating by offering the option of two-sided communication between the brand and customers, while many forms of traditional media provide only a one-sided discussion from the brand to the consumers. The consumers have improved communication understanding as they can opt for anything they want and at their preferred times on the internet. Further, the digital media lets the consumers interact in harmony with the brands as the physical, spatial, and temporal distance obstructions that exist in traditional communications are removed. Interactivity enables consumers to become more involved as they perform most of the deeds. Feedback is one of the assets of digital-media advertising (Campbell and Wright 2008).

Social Norms

The communication on any form of digital media provides the opportunity for discussions along with the construction of social guidelines, such as social norms, social interactions, and bonds, and authorizes consumers to take on numerous positions to keep up the systemic equilibrium (Tsai & Bagozzi 2014). The digital community contains shared customs and traditions, a sense of moral obligation, and the responsibility to the community.

People adjust their behavior in agreement with social customs when strong social ties are present between themselves and their target group.

An SBT model has been suggested to help in maintaining adults' orthodox behavior, not only within the offline organizational setting (Cheng et al., 2013) but also against the background of digital media (Marcum & Higgins, 2014).

The higher the traditional communications between online consumers, the more efficiently the interpersonal connections can be achieved (Ren et al. 2012).

The functional and social aids encourage users' shared and helpful behaviors, which pushes users to accomplish community-supporting behaviors (Dholakia et al. 2009; Ortiz-Cordova et al. 2015; Chan et al. 2014; Wang et al. 2016).

Hence the fact that social communications can move users' sense of social ties and a following response to digital-media advertising can be opposed. Still, few prior studies have scrutinized the impact of social norms on customers' attitudes towards digital advertising.

Research Methodology

The research philosophy is categorized into three principal sections: positivism, interpretivism, and realism. Positivism asserts an impartial and autonomous point of view. If the researcher is familiar with the subject, the positivism research philosophy is selected. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) specify that the positivism approach focuses on quantifiable interpretations which can be directed towards statistical analysis.

Thus, the research philosophy selected for this research is positivism, as the researcher has substantial knowledge, understanding, and information about the topic of study. Further, this philosophy has been implemented because of the quantitative nature of the study. The researcher will be framing a hypothesis with the intent of testing the ideas and concepts established with the aid of the data collected from the primary sources.

Research Approach

The research approach is of two types: deductive and inductive. The deductive approach is used in the case of quantitative data collection and analysis along with the development of the hypothesis for fruitful results and conclusions from the research (Ott & Longnecker 2015).

The positivism research philosophy and deductive research approach are always employed together; thus, the researcher will use the deductive research approach. This study is chiefly concerned with the theoretical background which makes the deductive approach appropriate for the study to be conducted effectively. The application of the deductive approach will assist the researcher in making a shift from the theoretical context to hypothesis testing and observations. The valid hypothesis has been developed by the researcher from the primary data collected from the structured close-ended questionnaire.

Research Design

According to Panneerselvam (2014), research design is the framework of how the study is to be conducted. The research design is divided into three main types: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive. This mainly offers the particulars that the researcher wishes to disclose or validate with the help of the study.

In this study, the researcher will use the descriptive research design. Descriptive research includes grouping data that explains the procedures and then categorizes, tabularizes, and portrays the information collected.

The primary purpose of this research is to comprehend and gather information about the influence of digital-media advertising on consumer behavior with the assistance of a descriptive research design and its hypothesis.

Sampling

This study consists of a sample size of two hundred respondents and a random sampling technique is used. Due to the budget and time limitations, only CAS, Ibri, has been covered in the study. The total population of this research study comprises 180 female students and 20 male students pursuing undergraduate courses in the said college, aged eighteen to twenty-two, who use any form of digital media.

In the random sampling technique, a random sample from a large population selection of each item is controlled by the same probabilities and the successive preferences are independent of one another.

The sampling technique has been employed as it was not practical for the researcher to approach the total population of the college. The foundation of this selection is the variety of female students, both national and international, studying in this university. The students pursuing graduation have been selected as they spend the most time on digital media. This aided the researcher in studying the impact of advertising on digital media on the behavior of college students; that is, mainly young adults (aged eighteen to twenty-two).

Data Collection

The research made use of primary data, which was collected using the survey method. The current study is concerned with the consumer behavior towards the advertisements and thus necessitates knowing the perspectives of many students. A structured closed-ended questionnaire was selected as a tool for data collection. The questionnaires were distributed to two hundred respondents sampled from the CAS, Ibri. The questionnaires were distributed in the graduation classrooms to female students and some male students. The administered questionnaires were collected at the end of the same day and their responses were used for analysis. The questionnaires analysed the exposure to digital-media advertisements and their impact on the attitude and behavior of university students.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation concerns the abstraction of essential data from a mass of data. The data collected through the closed-ended questionnaire were coded in the MS Excel sheet. It was then imported, cleared, cleaned, and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to complete the examination factors affecting consumers.

Statistical Tools

This study evaluates the relationship between consumer and digital social media using the statistical tool of correlation analysis. Correlation analysis measures the relationship between two items. When comparing the connection between two things, one item is called the dependent variable and the other the independent variable. The aim is to see if any modification in the independent variable will result in a change in the dependent variable.

A Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the correlations between the independent factors – electronic word-of-mouth, the interactivity of the ads, online trust and entertainment level, and the dependent variable “students’ willingness to purchase.” The results obtained were presented through table and bar graphs for the clear demonstration and explanation of the research finding.

Discussion

The transforming environment and technological developments altered the consumption trends, methods of doing business, and means of advertising. The advertising reached an entirely new level with the invention of the internet and ensued the emergence of digital advertising.

The ground-breaking change brought forth by digital media has significantly impacted our daily lives. Digital media has a global impact on not just the business world, but also on the communications of individuals (Edosomwan et al. 2011).

Acknowledging the rapid growth of digital media, companies have become aware of the need to establish a presence on digital-media platforms (Parsons 2011). The importance of digitalization and online presence has pushed the companies into tough competition for customer’s attention, which makes it necessary to study the consumers’ purchasing patterns. The basic objective of this research is to study the impact of digital media advertisements on the attitudes and behaviors of the students of CAS, Ibri.

Therefore, this research tried to identify the various factors of advertising on digital media that impact the user's attitudes and behaviors, the impact of these advertisements on students' lifestyle, and in forming their perceptions about brands and its products which influence their purchasing decision.

This section presents the analysis and findings of the study as set out in the research methodology. For this purpose, quantitative data was collected. The outline of the crucial inferences made to ensure that the research study can be easily understood will be presented in this section.

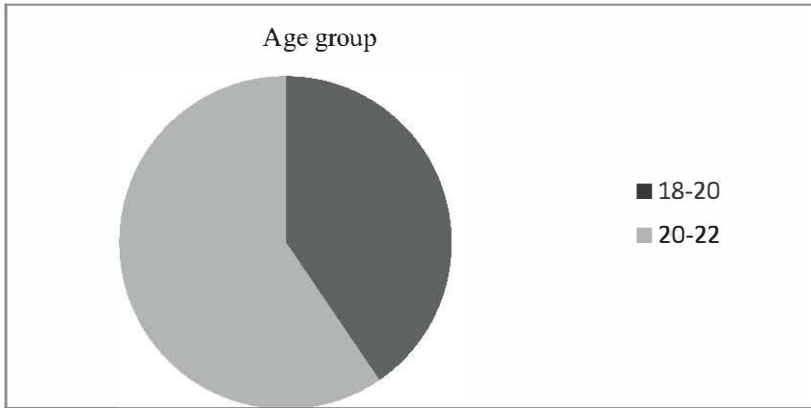
Personal Details of the Respondents

This study initially sought to ascertain general information on the respondents involved in the study with regards to age, gender, and nationality. The demographic information points to the respondents' suitability in answering the questions on the effect of digital advertising of the students of CAS, Ibri. The respondents were asked to indicate their age group. The study findings are illustrated in Table 17.1 and Fig. 17.3 below.

Table 17.1. Distribution of the respondents by age range

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18-20	81	40.5	40.5	40.5
20-22	119	59.5	59.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 17.3. Pie chart of respondents divided by age range



As shown in Table 17.1 and Fig. 17.3, the study sample was representative of two hundred respondents pursuing undergraduate studies at CAS, Ibri.

The findings indicate that 59.5% of respondents were aged twenty to twenty-two.

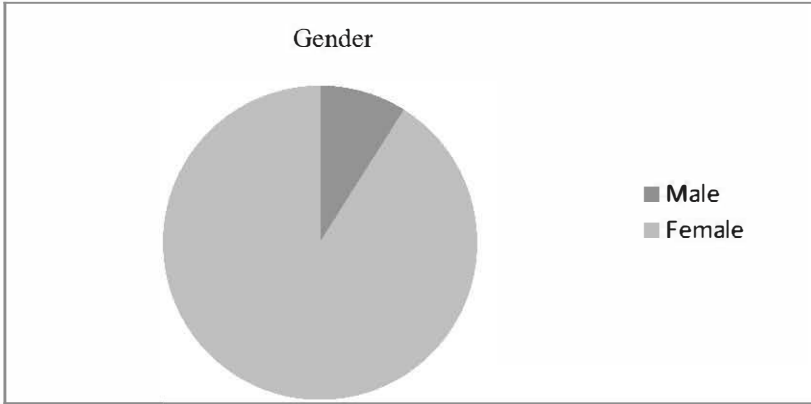
The study sought to determine the gender of the respondents and the findings are as shown in Table 17.2 and Fig. 17.4.

Table 17.2. Gender distribution of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	18	9.0	9.0	9.0
Female	182	91.0	91.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: field data

Fig. 17.4. Pie chart of gender distribution of respondents



From the above, it can be stated that the primary focus of the study was female students, as 91% of respondents were female.

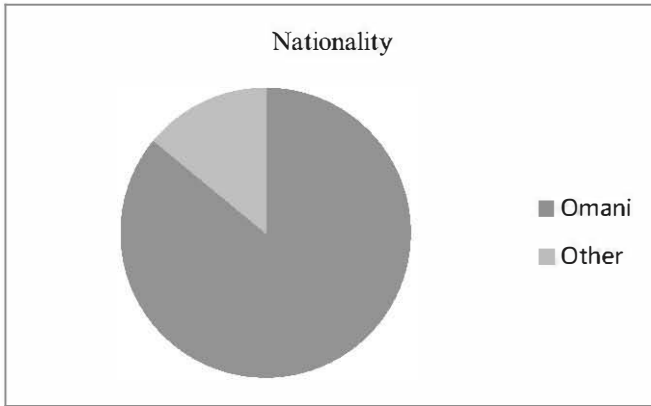
The findings of the study aimed to determine the nationality of the students pursuing graduation at CAS, Ibr, as shown in Table 17.3 and Fig. 17.5 below.

Table 17.3. Frequency table of the nationality of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ●mani	172	86.0	86.0	86.0
●ther	28	14.0	14.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: field data

Fig. 17.5. Pie chart of the nationality of respondents



As is clearly shown, 86% of the students pursuing graduation at CAS, Ibri are Omani.

Awareness and Attitudes towards Digital Advertising

The first objective of this study was to determine the awareness of digital advertising among the students of CAS, Ibri, to provide information to the brands that would assist them in reaching a wider audience.

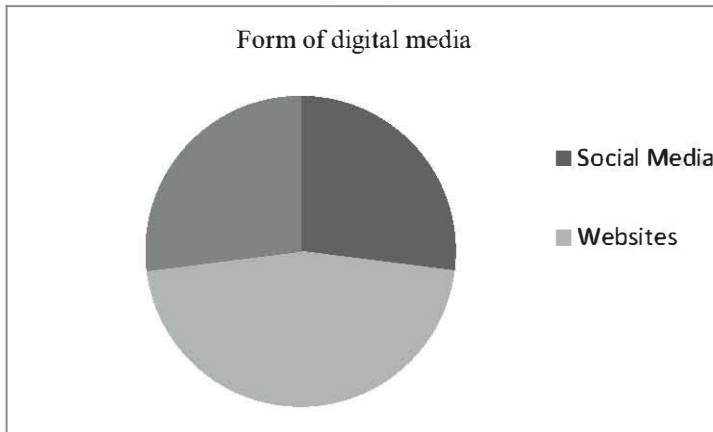
The study sought to establish whether the respondents were aware of numerous forms of advertisement adopted by various companies. The majority of respondents (91%) accepted the fact that they were aware of various channels of online advertisements used by brands. This illustrates that awareness of internet advertising was determined by the level of knowledge about the different advertisements used by brands in Oman.

The respondents were asked to specify the preferred digital-media channel from: social media, gaming consoles, websites, and mobile applications. Table 17.4 and Fig. 17.6. below illustrate the findings.

Table 17.4. Frequency table depicting the preferred form of digital media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Social Media	54	27.0	27.0	27.0
Websites	92	46.0	46.0	73.0
Mobile Applications	54	27.0	27.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: field data

Fig. 17.6. Pie chart depicting the preferred form of digital media

As shown, on average, most respondents (46%) spend most of their time browsing websites, which is more than the time spent on social media, gaming consoles, and mobile applications. Also, none of the students spend much time on gaming consoles. This indicates that the exposure of websites to an individual is better than that of other mediums.

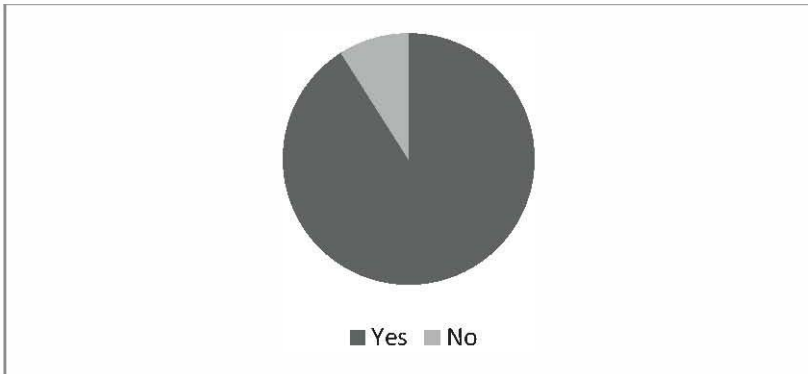
The study wanted to determine the awareness of the digital form of advertising among the students, so they were asked if they pay attention to the advertisements while using different forms of digital media. The findings are shown in Table 17.5 and Fig. 17.7 below.

Table 17.5 Frequency table depicting attention paid to digital ads

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	182	91.0	91.0	91.0
No	18	9.0	9.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: field data

Fig. 17.7. Pie chart depicting attention paid to digital ads



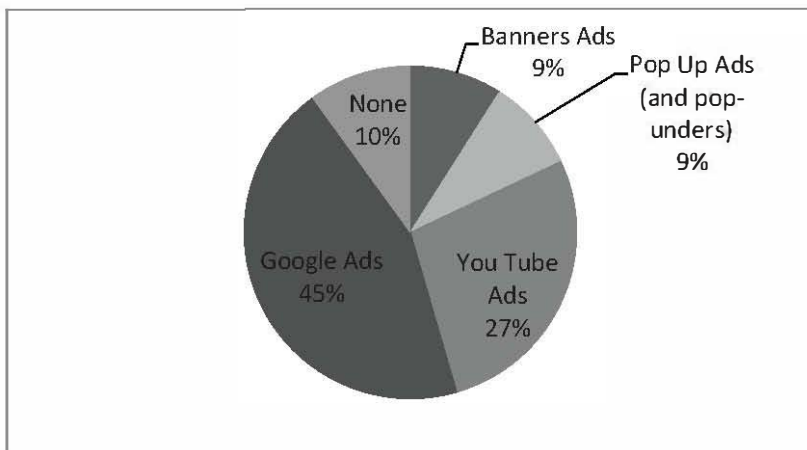
As depicted, the majority (91%) of respondents pay attention to the advertisement on digital-media channels. This proves that there is a possibility for brands to reach the students through online channels.

The study sought to find out the most accepted form of digital-media advertisement from among banner ads, pop-up (and pop-under) ads, YouTube ads, and Google ads. The results are shown in Table 17.6 and Fig. 17.8 below.

Table 17.6. Frequency table depicting preferred adverts

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Banner ads	18	9.0	9.0	9.0
Pop-Up (and pop-under) ads	18	9.0	9.0	18.0
YouTube ads	55	27.5	27.5	45.5
Google ads	89	44.5	44.5	90.0
None	20	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 17.8. Pie chart depicting preferred adverts



Most of the students (44.5%) liked watching Google ads, while 27.5% liked YouTube ads, and 9% liked watching the banner ads, which means that 180 students had a positive perception towards advertising on the internet.

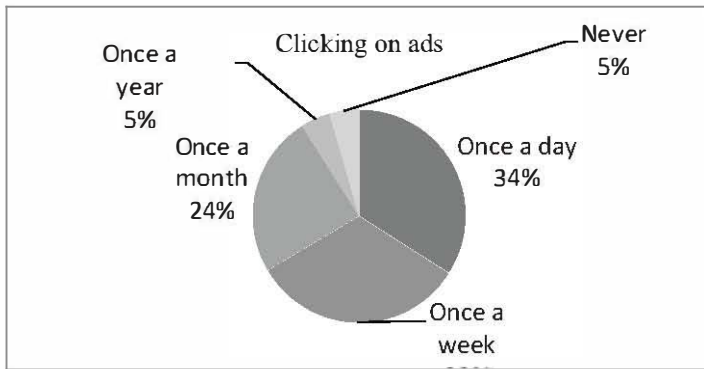
To further assess the attitude towards advertisements, the students were questioned on their frequency of opening the adverts, options ranging from

once a day to once a year. The findings are shown in Table 17.7 and Fig. 17.9 below.

Table 17.7. Frequency table showing the regularity of clicking on online ads

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ● Once a day	68	34.0	34.0	34.0
● Once a week	65	32.5	32.5	66.5
● Once a month	49	24.5	24.5	91.0
● Once a year	9	4.5	4.5	95.5
Never	9	4.5	4.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 17.9. Pie chart showing the regularity of clicking on online ads



The research shows that the majority (34%) would check an online advert once a day, while 4.5% never checked it. Further, the study found that 45.5% opened the adverts they found relevant.

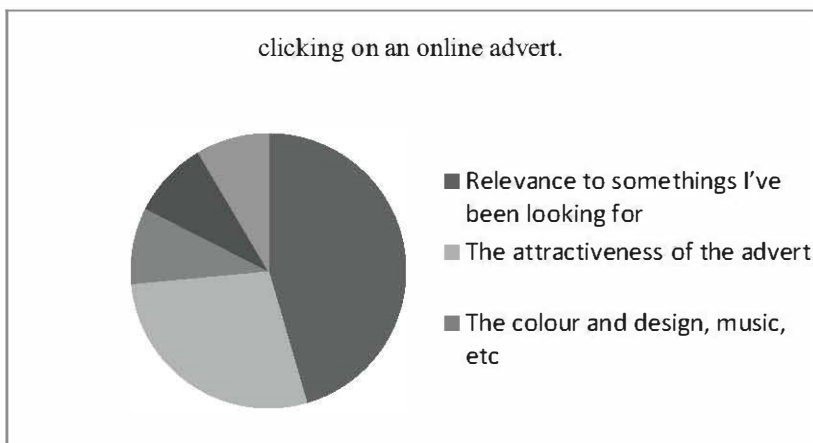
This shows the recognition of online advertising as an advertising tool and its high ability to attract consumers.

The responses revealed that most respondents, despite the aesthetic attributes of online advertising, showed a preference for online adverts, which prompted their clicking on them.

Table 17.8. Frequency table of the factors that prompted the students to open an advertisement

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Relevance to something I've been looking for	91	45.5	45.5	45.5
The attractiveness of the advert	56	28.0	28.0	73.5
The colour and design, music, etc.	18	9.0	9.0	82.5
Sheer Curiosity	18	9.0	9.0	91.5
To pass time	17	8.5	8.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 17.10. Pie chart of the factors that prompted the students to open an advertisement

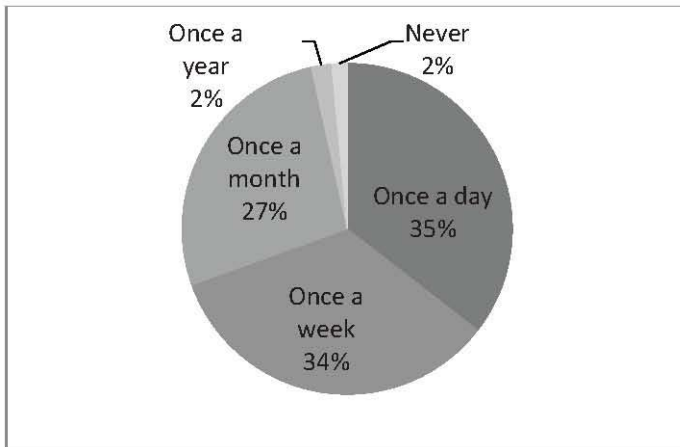


The respondents were further asked to say how often they closed adverts that popped up on their screens, with options ranging from once a day to once a year. The results are shown in Table 17.9 and Fig. 17.11 below.

Table 17.9. Frequency table of closing an online advertisement

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ●nce a day	71	35.5	35.5	35.5
●nce a week	68	34.0	34.0	69.5
●nce a month	54	27.0	27.0	96.5
●nce a year	4	2.0	2.0	98.5
Never	3	1.5	1.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 17.11. Pie chart of closing an online advertisement



It is evident that, though a significant 34% showed that they had clicked on online adverts once a day, while a larger majority (35.5%) closed online adverts once a day and do so often. Out of these, some said that the intention was not to see the ads, but they did not have any option but to see them as

they were pop-up or floating ads. This is evident in Table 17.10 and Fig. 17.12 below, where it is clear that 63.5% of students closed the pop-up and pop-under ads that appeared on their screens.

Table 17.10. Frequency table of the treatment of pop-up and pop-under ads

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Close it	127	63.5	63.5	63.5
	Click on it	19	9.5	9.5	73.0
	Ignore it	54	27.0	27.0	100.0
Total		200	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 17.12. Pie chart of the treatment of pop-up and pop-under ads



Relationship between Digital Advertising and Purchasing Intention

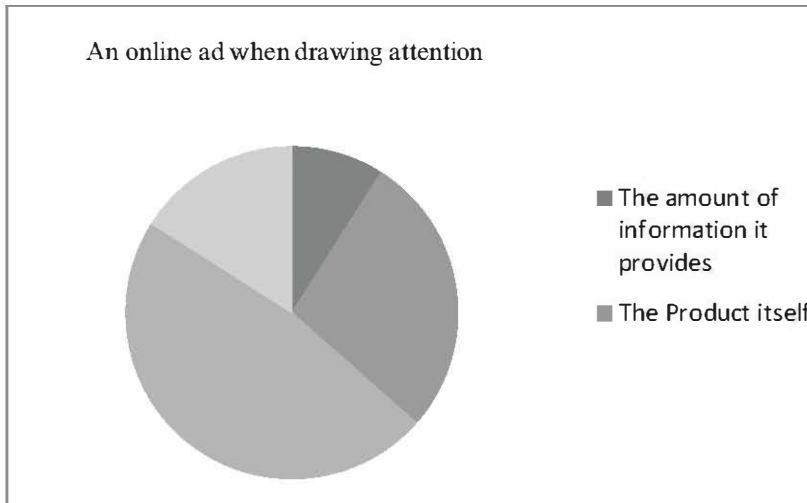
The objective of this study was to determine the relationship between internet advertising and purchasing decisions. Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons why they were drawn towards an online advertisement

that influenced their buying intentions. The results are shown in Table 17.11 and Fig. 17.13 below.

Table 17.11. Frequency table on the reason students pay attention to ads

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid The amount of information it provides	18	9.0	9.0	9.0
The Product itself	55	27.5	27.5	36.5
The Price	95	47.5	47.5	84.0
The title of the advert	32	16.0	16.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Figure 17.13. Pie chart on the reason students pay attention to ads



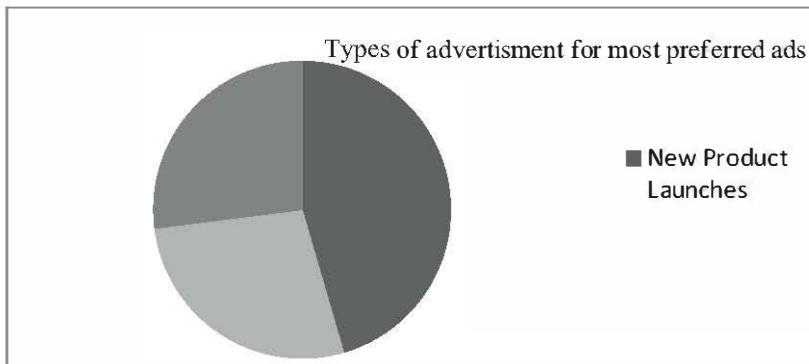
As shown above, 47.5% of students were attracted by the product being marketed in the online ads if they were offered at affordable prices. This clearly shows that consumers have the will and intention to embrace products advertised online. A majority of respondents did not make any online purchases based on the information provided by the ads, but on the offers provided by the brands.

Further, as shown in Table 17.12 and Fig. 17.14 below, of the students attracted towards the advertisements while spending time online, 45.5% viewed the ads only if they were new products. This conveys to the brands that all the new launches should find their space in digital advertisements to attract consumers.

Table 17.12. Frequency table depicting the most preferred ads

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid New Product Launches	91	45.5	45.5	45.5
Product information Ads	55	27.5	27.5	73.0
Discount Ads	54	27.0	27.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 17.14. Pie chart depicting the most preferred ads

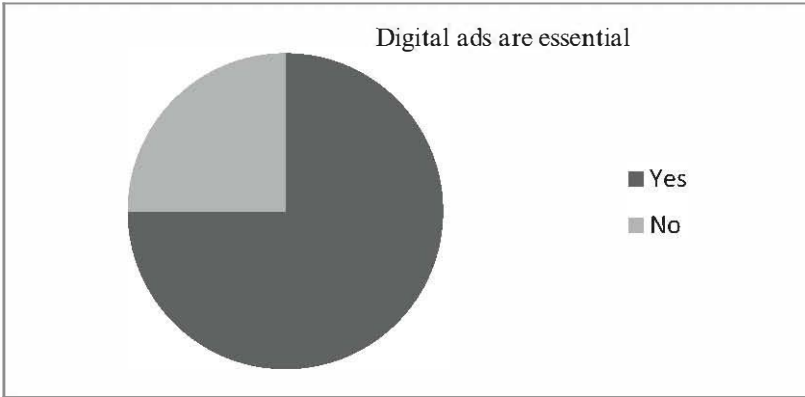


The respondents were further asked about the essentiality of the digital advertisements in influencing their purchasing decisions. The results are shown in Table 17.13 and Fig. 17.15 below.

Table 17.13. Frequency table depicting the essentiality of digital ads

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	150	75.0	75.0	75.0
No	50	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 17.15. Pie chart depicting the essentiality of digital ads



As shown, 75% of students believed that the brands should continue advertising their product through online channels. This proves that there is an online customer market that spends most of their time on different digital media, making it necessary to digitalize the world of advertisements.

The Effects of Digital-media Ads on Consumer’s Purchasing Intentions

In order to further assess the relationship between internet advertising and purchasing intentions, the respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on relevant statements on the effects of various factors

of internet advertising on purchasing intentions. The responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale where: 5 – Never, 4 – Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 2 – Frequently, and 1 – Always.

The respondents were asked about the effect of the advert when they make a decision to purchase online after getting information from an online advert. The results are shown below.

Table 17.14. Effect of online ads on consumers

S. No	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree
(a)	Relief	27 (13.5)	26 (13)	77 (38.5)	70 (35)
(b)	Content	25 (12.5)	18 (9.0)	93 (46.5)	64 (32)
(c)	Assured	20 (10)	31 (15.5)	92 (46)	57 (28.5)
(d)	Excited	29 (14.5)	10 (5.0)	63 (31.5)	98 (49)

As shown, the research findings indicate that a majority of respondents neither agree nor disagree to emotions generated by the online advertising, while others agree that they feel excited, assured, content, relieved after viewing the online adverts and placing orders online for that product. This suggests that fewer people believe that digital advertisements do not influence their purchase decisions as it raises their emotions to a great extent. Most of the students neither agree nor disagree, which shows that they are still trying to accept it as a mode of purchasing.

The Positive Effects of Digital-media Advertising on Consumer Behavior

The respondents were then asked to give the motive for viewing the digital advertisements. The responses were rated on a scale where: 5 – Never, 4 – Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 2 – Frequently, and 1 – Always. The results are shown in Table 17.15 below.

Table 17.15. Table depicting the purpose of viewing the digital advertisements

S. No	Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
(a)	Get information	34 (17)	24 (12)	96 (48)	46 (23)
(b)	Generate ideas	36 (18)	12 (6)	109 (54.5)	43 (21.5)
(c)	Negotiate/ Bargain	27 (13.5)	20 (10)	70 (35)	83 (41.5)
(d)	Discover New Commodities	20 (10)	19 (9.5)	106 (53)	55 (27.5)
(e)	Forward ● Online Ads	17 (8.5)	33 (16.5)	95 (47.5)	56 (28)
(f)	Pass Time	27 (13.5)	17 (8.5)	90 (45)	66 (33)

As shown in the table, the majority of students sometimes and frequently used online advertisements as productive mediums which would help them grow and improve their lifestyle, and thus it can be implied that most of the online adverts carry information that is useful, which is reflected in the frequency of using these adverts for positive purposes.

Negative Effects of Advertising in Digital Media on Consumer Behavior

To assess the effect of digital advertisements on the lifestyle of the respondents, the respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on relevant statements about the effects of internet advertising on them. The responses were rated on a scale where: 5 – Never, 4 – Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 2 – Frequently, and 1 – Always.

The students were asked to provide their honest opinions regarding the changes that have occurred in their lives as a result of viewing digital advertisements. The results are shown in Table 17.16 below.

Table 17.16. Table depicting the general impact of advertising on students' lifestyles

S. No.	Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
(a)	If I drink and smoke, it is because of an advertisements and commercials	7 (3.5)	16 (8)	26 (13)	95 (47.5)	56 (28)
(b)	I spend more time on the internet to search about the products	19 (8.5)	19 (8.5)	27 (13.5)	78 (39)	57 (28.5)
(c)	I watch video advertisements for sale announcements	30 (15)	10 (5)	24 (12)	82 (41)	54 (27)
(d)	I shop more after seeing online advertisements	3 (1.5)	15 (7.5)	21 (10.5)	87 (43.5)	74 (37)

It is evident that almost half of the respondents have chosen the option frequently in the case of all the statements that were given. This shows that the digital advertisements influence the positive and negative actions of the students. The advertisements of alcoholic drinks on the internet play a significant role in the increase of alcohol intake among students. Further, the students spend money on shopping frequently as a result of the advertisements they see online. Moreover, the students spend more time online looking for sale announcements and searching about new products, which shows that digital advertisements impact the students in a negative manner rather than positive.

The Impact of Several Factors Associated with Digital Advertising on Consumer Purchasing Intentions

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships among college students' purchasing attitudes and digital advertising. A series of hypotheses were proposed and tested to ascertain the effect of the factors associated with advertising online on the intentions of the consumers to buy the product advertised. Linear regression was used to test the hypothesis and the results are:

H₀₁: Social norms have no significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase

H_{A1}: Social norms have a significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase

Table 17.17a. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Change Statistics			
				F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.078 ^a	.006	-.014	.296	4	195	.880

a. Predictors: (Constant), SN1, SN2, SN3, SN4

Table 17.17b. Correlation: Students' Willingness and Social Norms

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.222	.093		13.123	.000
	SN1	.007	.019	.029	.374	.708
	SN2	.008	.020	.036	.407	.684
	SN3	-.017	.019	-.079	-.893	.373
	SN4	-.002	.016	-.010	-.133	.894

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Willingness

From the tables above it can be ascertained that the correlation (R) between students' willingness and the variable of social norms is **0.078**, which indicates a low degree of correlation. The R square is **0.006**, which

indicates that there is only 0.6% of variation in student willingness. The f value of ANOVA is 0.296 with p value = 0.880, which is more than a 0.05 level of significance, so we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternate hypothesis. Thus, it can be said that social norms have no significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase.

H₀₂: Electronic word of mouth has no significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase

H_{A2}: Electronic word of mouth has a significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase.

Table 17.17c. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Change Statistics			
				F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change
1	.138	.019	-.001	0.941	4	195	0.411

a. Predictors: (Constant), WM1, WM2, WM3, WM4

Table 17.17d. Correlation: Students' Willingness and Electronic Word of Mouth

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.184	.088		13.482	.000
	WM1	.027	.019	.116	1.445	.150
	WM2	.010	.018	.047	.583	.561
	WM3	-.028	.020	-.126	-1.402	.163
	WM4	.002	.020	.008	.094	.925

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Willingness

From the tables above it can be concluded that the correlation (R) between students' willingness and the variable of electronic word of mouth is 0.138, which indicates a low degree of correlation. The R square is 0.019, which indicates that there is only 1.9% of variation in students' willingness to purchase. The f value of ANOVA is 0.941 with p value = 0.441, which is more than a 0.05 level of significance, so we accept the null hypothesis and

reject the alternate hypothesis. Thus, it can be said that electronic word of mouth has no significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase.

H03: The interactivity of ads has no significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase

HA3: The interactivity of ads has a significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase

Table 17.17e. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Change Statistics			
				F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.066	0.004	-.011	0.288	3	196	0.834

a. Predictors: (Constant), IA1, IA2, IA3

Table 17.17f. Correlation: Students' Willingness and Interactivity of the Ads

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.131	.093		12.110	.000
	IA1	.011	.021	.044	.536	.592
	IA2	.007	.023	.027	.290	.772
	IA 3	.002	.019	.009	.115	.908

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Willingness

From the tables above it can be concluded that the correlation (R) between students' willingness and the variable of the interactivity of ads is 0.066, which indicates a low degree of correlation. The R square is 0.004, which indicates that there is only 0.4% of variation in students' willingness to purchase. The f value of ANOVA is 0.288 with p value = 0.834, which is more than the 0.05 level of significance, so we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternate hypothesis. Thus, it can be said that the interactivity of ads has no significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase.

H04: Online trust has no significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase

HA4: Online trust has a significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase

Table 17.17g. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Change Statistics			
				Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change
1	.418	0.175	0.158	10.319	4	195	0.0001

a. Predictors: (Constant), ●T1, ●T2, ●T3, ●T4

Table 17.17h. Correlation: Students' Willingness and Online Trust

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.439	.170		2.584	.010
	●T1	.042	.016	.192	2.626	.009
	●T 2	.154	.025	.464	6.120	.000
	●T3	-.001	.015	-.006	-.091	.927
	●T 4	.002	.011	.009	.144	.886

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Willingness

From the tables above it can be concluded that the correlation (R) between student willingness and the variable of online trust is 0.418, which indicates a high degree of correlation. The R square is 0.175, which indicates that there is only 17.5% of variation in the students' willingness to purchase. The fvalue of ANOVA is 10.319 with p value = 0.0001, which is less than a 0.05 level of significance, so we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. Thus, it can be said that online trust has a significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase.

H05: Entertainment level has no significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase

HA5: Entertainment level has a significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase.

Table 17.17i. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Change Statistics			
				F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.193	0.037	0.018	1.890	4	195	0.114

a. Predictors: (Constant), EL4, EL1, EL2, EL3

Table 17.17j. Correlation: Students' Willingness and Entertainment Level

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.252	.093		13.540	.000
	EL1	.006	.019	.024	.307	.759
	EL2	-.046	.019	-.201	-2.421	.016
	EL3	.033	.017	.164	1.945	.053
	EL4	-.003	.017	-.012	-.159	.874

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Willingness

From tables 17.17i and 17.17j it can be concluded that the correlation (R) between students' willingness and the variable of the interactivity of ads is 0.193, which indicates a low degree of correlation. The R square is 0.037, which indicates that there is only 3.7% of variation in students' willingness to purchase. The f value of ANOVA is 1.890 with p value = 0.114, which is more than a 0.05 level of significance, so we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternate hypothesis. Thus, it can be said that the entertainment level has no significant positive impact on students' willingness to purchase.

Impact of the Factors Associated with Digital Advertising on Consumer-purchasing Intentions

Advertising has an impact on the consumer's decision-making process. The factor of online trust has a positive impact on students' willingness to purchase. Online trust has a noteworthy role in digital communications. It can be used to judge the customer responsiveness and faithfulness. Brand

approaches depend heavily on online trust as compared to the other variables. The brands should thus strategize and accomplish their advertising actions in a way that produces trust among the consumers. The consumers view the activities of the brand directed with the resolve of advertising in an online setting as positive. Digital media as a marketplace captivates many diverse types of users. The respondents are students who are not currently earning, which means they spend the money given to them by their parents; the students would then spend the money only on the source they find trustworthy. The brands should then choose the channel for advertising, making the trust factor their primary concern. The factors such as social norms, entertainment level, interactivity of the ads, and electronic word of mouth do not impact the students' willingness to purchase to a great extent. Though the electronic word-of-mouth promotion has been accepted in the society due to the internet's easy accessibility, hold, and transparency, the students portray brand loyalty and believe in gathering information about the product themselves rather than depending on the views of their family or blogs. Further, entertainment is considered as an important factor in handling the attitudes of consumers towards digital advertising. However, the students do not associate the brand value with a celebrity, and rather buy the product that is genuinely worth spending money on. It is believed that the digital community contains the common customs and traditions and a sense of moral responsibility, but the modern students do not feel a sense of responsibility to the community while buying a product. They value their own notion and ideologies while shopping online. Lastly, the students are not affected by the interactivity of the ads. This shows that the students are so engrossed in their lives that they do not interact with the brands. They prefer viewing the ads and buying the product. The idea of providing feedback has not been accepted by the present generation.

Seven Ways to Make Digital Media Advertisements Promote Online Shopping

To achieve the aim of eliminating the negative factors associated with digital advertising to increase the sales of the brands, the respondents were asked to share their opinions regarding the probable changes in advertisements on digital media by brands that would increase their chances to purchase or seek information about the advertised product or service. The responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale where: 5 – Never, 4 – Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 2 – Frequently, and 1 – Always. The results are shown in Table 17.18 below.

Table 17.18. Depicting the probable changes in ads to increase sales

S. No	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(a)	If the Ads would download faster	23 (11.5)	7 (3.5)	20 (10)	88 (44)	62 (31)
(b)	If the Ads became more interesting	18 (9)	6 (3)	17 (8.5)	93 (46.5)	66 (33)
(c)	If the Ads become less annoying or offensive	10 (5.0)	6 (3)	26 (13)	86 (43)	72 (36)

As shown, most students opted for the options agree and strongly agree, which means that the students who are not interested in viewing the adverts owing to the length, content, and size of the videos might start viewing them if certain alterations were made to it; this would ultimately lead to a positive influence on the students, and they would make online purchases and the brands would benefit.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to determine the effects of digital advertising on consumer behavior using a sample of students from CAS, Iibri. After an analysis of the study findings, the conclusion is that the awareness of internet advertising depends on the level of knowledge about the existing platforms of internet advertisements adopted by various companies in the United Kingdom and time spent by the students on various forms of digital media. Digital advertising is effective in providing a higher reach and the creation of awareness about the product and the brand.

Further, it is evident that consumers are already aware that there is a promotional tool known as digital advertising in addition to other promotional methods. Consumers have come across online adverts on a regular basis; however, less than half of the students view them every day. Google ads are the most preferred form of digital ads by the students. However, consumers show a slight preference, liking, and inclination towards online adverts.

The study concludes that digital advertising influenced the purchasing decisions of the customers to a reasonable extent, as nearly half of the respondents were influenced by the ads. However, digital advertising is a key element in the lives of the students. It has both a positive and negative impact on the lifestyle of the students. The study further concludes that out of all factors of digital advertising, online trust contributes most to the consumer behavior.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research on the various factors of digital media affecting digital advertising is recommended. Also, with a greater population coming into contact with online facilities, a similar and more detailed study on the people belonging to different fields and countries may be necessary.

This study recommends that brands should conduct market research on the diverse markets in various countries to ensure that the digital-advertising initiatives being applied suit the targeted markets to increase their sales. A study on the contrast between digital advertising and other advertising channels is also necessary.

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