

Role of Current Affair Program in Opinion Building in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the “Role of Current Affair Programs in Opinion Building in Pakistan” through questionnaire and interviews’ schedule as a tool of data collection.

We targeted 100 persons who filled questionnaire aged 18-60 years in which 65 percent of the respondents were students of four different universities of Lahore, remaining 25 percent were professionals like doctors, businessmen, working women and IT professionals etc., and 10 percent were retired persons and house wives. This study explored the “Role of Current Affair Programs in Opinion Building in Pakistan”. The study provided results that television programs do have some direct or indirect effects on the minds of Pakistani people and on their opinion formation too. Therefore, this research investigates what role current affair programs are playing in the formation of opinion in Pakistan. The core purpose of this study was to reveal the influence of TV current affair programs or anchor persons on general public. The questionnaire reveals that majority of people does not watch current affair programs for less than 30 minutes. But on the other hand they prefer to listen to their favorite anchor person and usually agree with what he is saying. So that means current affair programs some how influencing the minds of general public and playing an important role in the opinion formation. In this research there are two theories used i.e. cultivation theory and agenda setting theory to assess how current affair programs play their role in the formation of opinion in the minds of general public.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. History of Current Affair and Impact History Pakistani Media
3. Statement of Problem
4. Research Question
5. Theoretical Framework
6. Methodology
7. Questionnaire
8. Data analysis and Interpretation
9. Conclusion and Recommendations
10. Recommendations
11. References

Chapter No. 1

Introduction

The history of current affair programs in Pakistan was not muchold. The state-run channel PTV (Pakistan Television Network) was the only channel that was telecasting current affair programs in old days. PTV was launched in the year 1964 and till today it telecasted many current affair programs. In the past many current affair programs like punjnad etc. were broadcast by PTV and these programs highlighted various national issues including power and energy sector problems, construction of KALABAGH DAM, inflation, education, law and order and many other issues. No doubt the objective of these current affair programs was to harmonize and shape public opinion in favour of ruling governments or the elites. Military dictators like Gen. Ayub and Zia-ul-Haq remained very successful in manufacturing the public consent in the favor of their regime by using media effectively.

On October 12, 1999 when Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf forcibly took over the control of Pakistan by overpowering the democratic government of Nawaz Sharif, he first of all gained control of all stations of PTV in Key cities of the country and then announces his decisions that he made to save the country. As it was the end of 20th century and our country was gradually going towards the 21st century but still there was no other channel that can argue his decision. Then in the first decade of the 21st century cable television introduced and successfully penetrated in the Pakistani society it was available almost in all cities and villages of the country. Now a day people are enjoying flood of information, education and entertainment and getting more and more awareness about different things happening in the world. There are no gates that can stop this bulk of information.

As the time passes some newspaper groups foreseeing the pivotal role of electronic media in the future started planning to establish their own television channels. Geo was the first private television that was launched in the Pakistan. After the launch of Geo Television Network, the electronic media in Pakistan has become the most powerful medium of spreading education, information and entertainment. Nearly 100 Channels Came on TV Screen like news, entertainment, sports, religion, infotainment, and music, cooking and business etc. Due to cable service system, lots of channels can be seen from all over the world on our TV screen. More than 40 television channels beam soaps, satire, films, etc. Although some programs are criticized for being unprofessional, unethical and politically biased, the television channels have made a great

contribution to the media landscape and to Pakistani society. Our media demographics reflect a multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and stratified class society with a clear divide between Urdu and English media. Urdu media are mostly consumed by the rural population. The English media targets urban and the elite and is more liberal and professional in comparison. English television channels have far smaller audiences than their Urdu counterparts, but have great leverage among opinion makers, politicians, the business community, and the upper strata of society. Besides the Urdu/English and Rural/Urban divide, Pakistan media is also divided linguistically with a series of media in vernacular languages, such as Punjabi, Pashto and Sindhi. All these languages are used to influence the general public by either showing positive things about the political and financial situation of our country or negatively propagated to destroy the true image of our beloved motherland. Our media is also used by different other countries like USA, England etc because in our country some people identify these countries our so called friends. They financially aid us and psychologically impact our generation in order to fulfill their own objectives. As far as current affair programs are concern

History of Current Affair and Impact History Pakistani Media:

The Pakistan Television Corporation started working on 26 November 1964 from Lahore. In the start PTV was the only channel in Pakistan that was transmitting news, live drama for a short span of time. After few years PTV started its color transmission and the time of program had also increased. Current Affairs programs have been regular features of PTV transmission, ever-since its inception. A separate PTV Current Affairs Directorate was however, established in 1982. Current Affairs programmes, including regional languages, produced by each of the TV Centre are accommodated in regular PTV transmission. The themes of Regional Language programmes mainly revolve around local and provincial matters of current affairs nature. Current Affairs Division also produces programmes on special occasions such as live telecast of Armed Forces Parade on Pakistan Day, Flag Hoisting ceremony on Independence Day, Head of State's Address to the Nation, Documentaries on important national projects, certain sessions of Senate and National Assembly. In the program Open Forum, Federal Ministers/Minister of States are invited to answer the questions through e-mail, on Telephone and by Media/Experts sitting in the various studios of PTV. Other channels are also telecasting current affair programs and this was started with the issuance of the PEMRA ordinance in 2002 by Gen. (R) Pervaiz Musharraf in

which private channels are allowed to start their transmission. Geo group was the first group that started news channel with the name Geo News and started current affair programs. Then ARY and other channel started this practice. There are number of current affair programs that we watch daily now days. Every program has its own style and every anchor has its own psychology that is created by some other forces.