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Lomonosov Moscow State University  
National Association of Mass Media Researchers

# **World of Media**

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# **LEAD ARTICLE**



# Changing patterns of digital news consumption among Russian journalism students

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## Abstract

The authors examine features attributed to consumption of news on the Internet by young and active residents of Moscow – students of the Faculty of Journalism at the Lomonosov Moscow State University. The empirical data was based on ‘news diaries’ filled in by students in the course of a week between February 15, 2016 and February 21, 2016, 40 people in total. Authors analyze users’ behavior on the web, specifically their interest in various news resources and links to news publications posted on social websites. The article figures out the contemporary academic approaches to news production, distribution and consumption in the digital environment. The study explores media consumption of young Russians who belong to the ‘digital natives’ generation. The collected through the empirical research data is proved by the current theoretical approaches to online news consumption process. This article describes the present-day role of the Internet and digital media in the Russian media system to provide context for this analysis.

## Keywords

News content, agenda, digital media, Russian media studies, online news consumption, Internet, Russian students, digital natives.

## Introduction

The Internet has dramatically changed the media environment, media industry, and professional practices of the field. In recent decades, the rise of digital media has become the mostly debated issue among media scholars (Flew, 2014;

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Manovich, 2001). Among questions in this area of inquiry are the nature of new media as compared to the old ones (Kung et al., 2008); the emergence of the new public sphere (Fenton, 2009); changing newsrooms practices and roles of professionals and amateurs; new economics of digital news (Doctor, 2010); and new understanding of information, knowledge and literacy, and digital media consumption (Frau-Meigs, 2007).

The emergence of new, digital media reality in technologically advanced societies is clearly indicative of the formation of a new 'centre of gravity/centre of influence'. What is meant here is the audience, whose activities are concerned with the establishment of new practices in the media environment.

It is essential to raise the question of the future structures, forms and practices of the media, both at the level of society and the individual, because passive consumption of media texts produced by journalists, editors, show business people, advertising experts and public relations professionals is losing its dominant position in the media space. The audience is getting 'active' in terms of text selection, distribution and even production.

Theorizing about news in Western European and North American journalism studies has a long tradition. It focused on the relation of news to the reality, and its possible influence on the audiences (Atwood & de Beer, 2001; Lasswell, 1927). In the last decades, international scholars have identified basic features of news as a product of journalistic professional activity and analyzed relations between reality and facts. The studies included the process of making/representing news by newsroom professionals and the construction of reality presented for the audience, including the role of journalists in making news (Lasswell, 1948; McCombs et al., 1997; Shoemaker, 1991; Schudson, 2002; Tuchmann, 1978). One of the most important concepts in the field has been agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1974) and its subsequent development by P. Shoemaker and S. Reese (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). They have found out a number of major influences on media content underlying the role of inertial and external factors, their variety and complexity. The scholars have pointed a multilayer nature of media content production which has been useful for a contemporary understanding of the news gathering, writing, dissemination, and selection by audiences.

However, today the distribution of news in new media is not a vertical, but horizontal process, and not institutional forces but the audience by itself becomes the leading driving force of its dynamics. The key transformation of the media communication process of online news (from the producer to the recipient) is connected with the decentralization of the media system. This essential change in the media landscape in the digital age led to the reconceptualization of news



in the context of new media (Balmaeva & Lukina (eds.), 2016; Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Doctor, 2010; Fenton, 2009; Flew, 2014; Tkacheva et al., 2016a; Tkacheva et al., 2016b (ed.), 2010; Vartanova, 2013).

Both the process of agenda formation and the content structure are transformed (McCombs & Guo, 2014; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The global technological revolution inspired scholars to re-consider the concept of news. The particular interest strived from the fact that processes of its production and distribution in a new digital environment involved an increased number of professionals such as journalists, advertisers, PR-specialists and non-professionals, for instance bloggers, Internet and social networks users, who became active in setting news agendas.

Researchers have described new conditions of making, disseminating, and developing news in the digital media (Dunas et al., 2016), analyzed the nature of news provision in Russia and pointed to an increased influence of new media on the national media system (Gureeva, 2015), identified the changed role of audiences in consuming, sourcing, producing and disseminating of news, pointed to growing gaps in generational media cultures (Kulchitskaya, 2014; Vartanova et al., 2014), and examined in diversification of news sources and agendas (Gladkova & Korobeynikova, 2016; Tolokonnikova & Cherevko, 2016).

Scholars also have re-considered relations of news producers, journalists and audience, resulting in news production decentralization, de-hierarchization and de-monopolization. For the audience it is easier to bypass journalists as monopolist producers of news and news agendas although new outcomes of the process are both positive (increased speed, sources' accessibility, audience's involvement in the production process) and negative (deskilling, unreliability, manipulation) (Balmaeva & Lukina, 2016; Lukina, 2010; Viren & Frolova, 2015).

Together with structural changes, many media companies have changed operations and production. News agencies now directly access audiences providing news on the consumer's first demand, becoming competitors for press and audiovisual media (Vartanova & Frolova, 2010). The classical model of information agenda has become complemented with the alternative or parallel agenda models, actively involving users' new production and active dissemination (Vartanova, 2014).

## **The Internet as a news resource in Russia**

Today, Internet penetration in Russia makes up 76%, running second to Azerbaijan (78%) among the CIS countries. Yet, this indicator is much lower than the average for Europe, it standing at 80% or for North America at 88%.

Thus, the growth potential in Russia is still great<sup>2</sup>. At present, network resources are used regularly by more than half of Russians. According to FOM, 82 m., i.e. 70% of adults in 2017 accessed the Internet at least once a month, and 72 m., i.e. 61% visited the Internet daily<sup>3</sup>.

For a long time Moscow led by the number of the Internet users, and though the situation is gradually changing, only Saint Petersburg so far come close. At that, the number of weekly users in Moscow is greater, coming up to over 8 million.

Table 1

**Number of Internet users**

Region	Use the Internet once a month	Use of the Internet once a week
Russia	48.4 million – 76%	46.7 million – 74%
Moscow	8.6 million – 80%	8.4 million – 78%
St. Petersburg	3.7 million – 80%	3.6 million – 78%

June – August 2017, in millions of people and in % from population, 12+

Source: Mediascope / TNS Web Index

The broadband access in the capital is the fastest and the price is among the lowest, while the price of the mobile Internet in Moscow is noticeably higher than in other regions, being costlier only for those who live in the Far East regions<sup>4</sup>. Yet, price notwithstanding, both the mobile and the Internet are quite accessible to Muscovites, considering that earning in Moscow is really high.

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<sup>2</sup> Internet world state Internet usage statistics. The Internet big picture. World Internet users and 2017 population stats. – 2017. – Nov. – Available from: [www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Internet v Rossii: dinamika proniknovenia. Vesna 2017 [Internet in Russia: penetration dynamics. Spring 2017] // Fond ‘Obshchestvennoe mnenie’ 2017 [Fund ‘Public opinion’ 2017] – June. Available from: <http://fom.ru/SMI-i-internet/13585>

<sup>4</sup> Yandex research Internet development in Russian regions. Spring 2015. Available from: [https://yandex.ru/company\\_research/2015/ya\\_internet\\_regions\\_2015#vozrastpolzovatelejinterneta](https://yandex.ru/company_research/2015/ya_internet_regions_2015#vozrastpolzovatelejinterneta)

Table 2

## Devices used for Internet access

Region	Desktop Computer	Laptop	Smartphone	Tablets	Mobile Phone	Television Set
Russia	53%	49%	75%	30%	6%	17%
Moscow	55%	51%	78%	37%	6%	16%
Saint Petersburg	51%	57%	78%	37%	6%	15%

June – August 2017, % of Monthly Reach, 12+

Source: Mediascope / TNS Web Index

On the whole, interest in the mobile Internet is very strong, the number of users accessing the Internet via smartphones and tablets reaching 66 m. in 2017<sup>5</sup>. This is especially true of people living in the North Caucasus and Far East since for most people in those areas in no other way for access<sup>6</sup>.

User age is also an important indicator, and it is worth noting that in 2014 over half of the users are younger than 35. One should also note that the share of older people is growing year on year and in 2017 more than 87 m. of users (54%) are older than 35 years.

Table 3

## Age of Russian Internet users, thousands of people

	12–17	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64
<b>Total</b>	7440	10354	22519	18363	13534	10261
<b>Women</b>	3618	5112	11406	9593	7527	6045
<b>Men</b>	3822	5242	11113	8770	6007	4216

Source: Mediascope / TNS Web Index, March-August

<sup>5</sup> Mediascope data. Available from: <http://2017.russianinternetforum.ru/news/1298/>

<sup>6</sup> Yandex research Internet developments in Russian region. Spring 2015 Available from: [http://yandex.ru/company/research/2015/ya\\_internet-regions\\_2015#vozrastpolzovatelejinterneta](http://yandex.ru/company/research/2015/ya_internet-regions_2015#vozrastpolzovatelejinterneta)

Table 4

### The time spent online

Age group	Average time spent online (minutes per day)
12-17	149
18-24	133
25-34	124
35-44	134
45-54	151
55-64	151

Source: Mediascope / TNS Web Index, August

Young people aged 12 to 17 spend online 2 hrs 29 min. or 149 minutes daily, which is the maximum for all Russia's users, the 18-24 age group coming second with 2 hrs 13 min. or 133 minutes daily<sup>7</sup>. The average time spent online is 2 hrs 18 min. or 138 minutes daily.

To compare, in 2016 average TV viewing time for the audience over 4 years of age in Russia was 4 hrs. 8 min. daily. This is the highest indicator ever for the whole history of TV audience research, which started in 1999<sup>8</sup>.

Television thus remains the main means of mass information in Russia but we can note that not all age groups put their trust in this source. Young users aged 18 to 30 trust in news websites more than others.

<sup>7</sup> Dlitel'nost' prebuvaniya v Internete socialno-demograficheskikh group August 2017, minut v den, 12-14 let // Mediascope [Duration of stay on the Internet of socio-demographic groups] – TNS Web Index. Auditoriya Intrneta v tslom. Rossiya 100 000+, Moskva, S.Peterburg [Internet audience VCIOM Russia 100 000+, Moscow, S Petersburg]. Tentative survey results. August 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Vartanova, E. L. & Kolomiys, V.P. Televidenie v Rossii v 2016 godu. Sostoyanie, tendentsii i perspektivy razvitiya. Otrasevoy doklad [Television in Russia. Status, trends and development prospects. Industry report]. Moscow, 2017, p. 30.

Table 5

### Which sources of information do you find the most trustworthy?

	Russia	Moscow	Age			
			18-30 years old	31-45 years old	46-60 years Old	Older than 60
<b>Television</b>	50%	33%	36%	44%	59%	63%
<b>News websites</b>	18%	17%	31%	21%	14%	5%
<b>Newspapers &amp; magazines</b>	8%	6%	5%	5%	9%	16%
<b>Radio</b>	8%	5%	7%	7%	9%	10%
<b>Cannot say</b>	10%	7%	2%	5%	4%	6%

*Data from FOM (Public Opinion Fund)*

Collating the above data with the results of our study we can see that our respondents, Moscow University students, are of interest as a group inasmuch as they are residents of the city with the earliest maximum Internet penetration belong to the young audience that is the most active on the Internet and put trust in it the most. It is not excluded that, in future, the same tendencies will appear in other Russia's regions.

## Methodology

Today it is clear that Internet users increasingly often devise new ways to find, filter, consume, perceive and spread news content. Creating and circulating news have gone far beyond the official media. Common users record events occurring around them on mobile devices and bring them to the public through the social media.

The goal of this study is to find answers to a number of questions that are important in the context of changing media consumption, i.e. which resources active users turn to for new content, how they limit the news flow, what

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<sup>9</sup> Weekly poll 'Fomnibus', 28-29th of April, 1-2 of May 2017. 73 subjects of the Russian Federation, 207 settlements, 3000 respondents. Available from: <http://fom.ru/SMI-i-internet/13323>

newsbreaks are of the greatest interest to the audience, and, finally, what content in the global network is identified by respondents as news.

The empirical data was based on 'news diaries' completed by the students of Lomonosov Moscow State University's Faculty of Journalism within a period of a week between February, 15th, 2016 and February, 21st, 2016. The respondents were aged from 17 to 23.

Having sufficiently clear characteristics, this age group has been identified as Millennial Generation (Generation Y), which follows Generation X (Howe & Strauss, 1991). As multiple researches confirmed, millennials considerably rely on the Internet and social media while searching for news information (Taibi, 2013), which differentiates them from the previous generations. Such peculiarity is most detectable in late millennials, who have become the respondents of the study. Characteristics of their news consumptions, as the authors of the research claim, will allow us to identify some new trends and models of interaction with the media in the near future.

Within the framework of the study, forty students had been completing an electronic questionnaire within one full week, filling in the headlines of all news stories they had been reading throughout the day. They also recorded the source where the material was found (website or social network), the time when they read it, the device used to access the content (stationary computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone) as well as the place where they consumed the information (at home, on their way, at school, at work, etc.). In addition, participants of the survey recorded a sequence of transition from one source to another (See *Table 6*).

Table 6

**Sample questionnaire provided to respondents of the study**  
**Day 1: Date \_\_\_\_\_ 15 February 2016 \_\_\_\_\_**

Time	1st source (what did you read, listen, watch?)	Device (PC, laptop, tablet, phone)	Place (home, transport, work, street, university, other)	2nd source (where did the first source lead you)	3rd	4th
8:00	Facebook: a friend's reaction ('like') to a story about strikes in Hong Kong from <i>The Guardian</i>	Laptop	Home	Looked through the article from <i>The Guardian</i>		
8:15	Still on Facebook: Friend's post of a picture from Kharkiv	Laptop	Home			
8:20	The first case of Zik fever in Russia – interfax.ru <sup>1</sup>	Laptop	Home			

It is important to note that the survey participants mentioned only those materials that they considered as 'news' themselves (not relying on scientific definitions). In this regard, the questionnaire sometimes contained social networks users' personal posts or messages as well as materials of purely entertaining nature: for example, collections of photographs such as '2 cats that suddenly became dejected' or '25 delicious and beautiful breakfasts you have been dreaming about all week'. Presence of such materials in the general list seems interesting to the authors as it suggests that modern youth's outlook on the news as a genre may differ from the traditional one and opens a new interesting field for research.

Besides news diaries, every respondent submitted a written report with the description of where and how he/she usually consumes information, what sources he/she finds the most topical and trustworthy and how he/she searches for the required information online.

The second stage of the research was connected with analysis of the data received from the respondents. The results of the survey have been processed by the researches manually, without any programs used.

The study focused on consumption of information, which could be categorized as 'news' basing on the criteria of topicality, relevance to the audience, conflict

potential, human interest element and scale of an event. The material under study included mass media, news agencies headlines, well-known bloggers' posts, and etc.<sup>10</sup>. Such online activities as shopping, video viewing or games were excluded, with the exception of cases when the respondents consumed information that could be classed as 'news'.

All information materials consumed by the respondents were divided in three categories:

1. News read on the information website.
2. News received through special news applications.
3. News read in social networks.

The first category – information website – includes materials that respondents read, viewed or listened on the websites of Russian and foreign online resources, registered as media.

The second category includes materials that students received through mobile applications of various information resources – i.e. through special software that required pre-installation on a mobile device. Such applications particularly included *Vesti*, *Meduza*, *BBC News* as well as various news aggregators (*Yandex News*, etc.).

The third category contains materials that users found on the pages of social networks, such as Facebook, VKontakte, Twitter and Instagram. The other social networks were not applied by the participants of the study.

The study lasted for one week, starting on February 15 and ending on February 21, 2016. The time period coincided with the similar surveys of students of other universities.

We are well aware that news consumption and its specificity are hard to interpret and to describe. The given sample and time period cannot fully uncover the model of news consumption by the youth. It is rather an attempt which helps to identify and describe the incipient and transforming ways of news consumption as well as confirm or deny the stereotypes of behaviour of the youth in the information environment. It is clear that journalism students' news consumption differs from that of a greater part of the audience of the same age. We believe that the students in our sample respond quicker to changes in media consumption and that, therefore, their behaviour may be seen as a precursor in the behaviour of the consumer audience on the whole.

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<sup>10</sup> News criteria are given according to M. C. Shostak (Shostak, M. (1998). *Zhurnalists i ego proizvedenie: Prakticheskoe posobie* [Journalist and his work: Practical guide]. Moscow, Gendalf, p. 98).



## Results

The study shows that the Internet is an extremely important and habitual source of information for all the surveyed. Within the week the respondents browsed 2769 resources. The gap between the frequency of visiting information websites and social networks is not dramatic, though the social networks for news are in the lead. The students learnt 810 news pieces, or 29 % of the total from the social media and 1803 directly from information websites.

Table 7

### News consumption from various resources on the Internet Results of poll among 40 students, 2016

Type of information resource	Number of scrolled articles	% from total number
Information website	1803	65 %
News from news applications	156	6 %
Social networks	810	29%
Total number of browsed resources	2769	100 %

It came as a surprise that news learnt from news applications of the information websites amounted to a mere 6%. As it turns out, very few respondents use news applications as a source, although they get 66% of the news content via mobile devices. The respondents' reports on their news consumption show that they consciously reject such services because, in their opinion, these tie up a user with some specific medium, which narrows the news agenda to a certain editorial policy. Most respondents are independent in their news agenda, using filters on VKontakte and on Facebook, turning the social network news into an adaptive news aggregator. 'Even half a year ago I filtered my list of groups and accounts I follow. This allows to find the information you need much faster without focusing on worthless news and similar accounts<sup>11</sup>, – said one of the respondents.

VKontakte ranks the solid first among all sites visited by teenagers, its share being 93%<sup>12</sup>. This shows that VKontakte is in demand among the

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<sup>11</sup> From the essay RU6W23 (where RU – main language, 6 – students number, W – sex, 23 – age).

<sup>12</sup> Issledovanie VKontakte. Portret molodezhi. 2017 [VKontakte survey. Portrait of youth. 2017]. – July. Available from: <https://corp.imgsml.ru/media/files/vk-generation.pdf>

students generally. Within a week the respondents scrolled 389 articles on VKontakte, which runs to 14 % of consumed news, i.e. twice as high as on Facebook.

The second-ranking Russia's social network Odnoklassniki with a monthly audience of 28 m.<sup>13</sup> was not once mentioned by the respondents. This also shows a tendency towards audience segmentation by various social media: today Odnoklassniki attract the older and regional audience. The Brand Analytics data indicate that Moscow is not even on the list of the top-10 regions in terms of the network's geographic spread, and that the share of authors aged 18 to 24 does not exceed 9<sup>14</sup>.

The situation with Facebook, which in Russia ranks third in popularity with a monthly audience of 19 m. users<sup>15</sup>, is different. The share of authors aged 17 to 23 on this network does not exceed 9% and the audience core (68%) is within the range of 25 to 44 years of age<sup>16</sup>, yet Moscow is the network's main seat, and the number of active authors on it in the capital is by twice higher than in all other regions of the top 10 taken together<sup>17</sup>. Our findings correlate with the statistics: Facebook does enter the list of the Moscow students' news sources but its share is very small due to low demand in this age group.

Meantime some respondents noticed an increasing role of Facebook as a news source. 'I found out that social networks, and Facebook in particular, are the key source of news for me'. Other respondents are ready to leave VKontakte at all. 'As for VKontakte I use it only for studies and a few times a week I look through the posts of my favorite bookstore and the group with soviet photos. But, in general, I can do without it. All business communication goes in Facebook and personal correspondence in messengers such as Telegram<sup>18</sup>'. This shift to Facebook takes place mostly in the group of students 21–23 years old.

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<sup>13</sup> Top-20 internet proektov. Aug. 2017, Russia 0+, 12-64 years // TNS Web Index: Auditoriya internet-proektov.

<sup>14</sup> Sotsialnie seti v Rossii, zima 2015-2016. Cifry, trendy, prognozy [Social networks in Russia, Winter 2015-2016. Figures, trends, prognoses] / Blog Brand Analytics – January, 2015. Available from: <http://blog.br-analytics.ru/socialnye-seti-v-rossii-zima-2015-2016-cifry-trendy-prognozy/>

<sup>15</sup> Top-20 internet proektov [Top 20 of the Internet projects]. – Aug. 2017, Russia 0+, 12-64 years // TNS Web Index: Auditoriya internet-proektov [Audience of the Internet projects].

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> From the essay RU2M21

The respondents aged 17–20 prefer using VKontakte as a main news source. The younger audience learns half of all news produced by social networks in VKontakte. ‘First of all I look through the news feed in VKontakte<sup>19</sup>’.

Twitter is another significant news source: here the students read 178 news items within the week, which is a fifth of all news they got from the social networks.

The authors of the study were quiet surprised by the relevant data on Twitter. In 2015 the respondents learnt 28% of news through this micro blog. The situation considerably changed in 2016. Younger respondents frequently use Twitter whereas respondents of 21–23 years old focus less on it. The respondents from the older group rarely refer to Twitter in their essays and the youngest students find Twitter ‘a significant source of information for a journalist and a responsible citizen<sup>20</sup>’. That may be explained by the stereotyped journalist behavior formed in 2012–2013. In general the decline of the role of Twitter as a news source correlates with the diminishing role of micro blog in media<sup>21</sup>.

The role of Instagram as a news source is almost negligible, and though the number of subscribers is quite considerable, the students’ reports show that hashtags are personal rather than newsworthy.

The respondents mention Telegram as a new source of information in social networks in 2016. But its role wasn’t so considerable for that moment and the authors of the present study didn’t take it into account. Nevertheless they noticed a growing demand for Telegram. ‘As for media consumption in general I refer mostly to social networks – Facebook first and then Instagram, VKontakte, Telegram<sup>22</sup>’. The authors are planning to focus more on Telegram in future studies.

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<sup>19</sup> From the essay RU8W18

<sup>20</sup> From the essay RU5W19

<sup>21</sup> Sotsial`nye seti v Rossii, zima 2015-2016. Cifry, trendy, prognozy [Social networks in Russia, winter 2015-2016. Figures, trends, forecasts]. Available from: <http://blog.br-analytics.ru/socialnye-seti-v-rossii-zima-2015-2016-cifry-trendy-prognozy/>

<sup>22</sup> From the essay RU18M23

Table 8

**The demand for news in different social networks  
Results of poll among 40 students, 2016**

Social network	Number of browsed news	Share in social media	Share in total number of resources
Vkontakte	389	48 %	14 %
Facebook	219	27 %	8 %
Twitter	178	22 %	6 %
Instagram	24	3 %	1 %
Total on listed social networks	810	100 %	29 %

Though interest in the social networks is a given, the users do not refuse to consume news directly from the information websites. In the space of week the respondents scrolled 1803 items on the sites which they visited directly, bypassing the social networks. The browsed recourses statistics (see *Table 8*) and text topics show that the users in most cases browsed the trustworthy media resources in search of quality content (see *Table 9*).

The list of the most popular sites includes the Internet media such as *Lenta.ru*, *Gazeta.ru*, *Meduza*, etc., electronic resources of the print media *Izvestia*, *Kommersnt*, *Russkiy Reporter* among these, and sites of such news agencies as *RIA Novosti*, *Interfax*, *Newsru.com*. The latter attracted the respondents as the sources of the latest news updates. The top 10 also included the sites of such TV channels as *LifeNews*, *Dozhd'*, and *Russia Today* which respondents visited for videos.

Table 9

**Top 10 of news resources on the Internet  
Results of poll among 40 students, 2016**

N	Name of the resource	Number of visits
1	Kommersant	176
2	Meduza	105
3	Izvestia	83
4	Interfax	67
5	RIA Novosti	59
6	Newsru.com	30
7	Lenta.ru	29
8	RBC	24
9	Gazeta.ru	18
10	Dozhd'	16

The users clearly preferred professional media content, and as is the case for the networks, many users visited one and the same resources regularly to trace the latest events.

The list of the sites which the users visited from the links on the social networks did not remain unchanged (see Table 10). *Kommersant*, for instance, moved downward while *Gazeta.ru* rose to the first position. *RIA Novosti* led in redirections from the social networks while all other news agencies aroused no interest whatever of the respondents in the social media. This may probably be explained by the low activity of these news agencies in the social networks. In this sense, *Meduza* demonstrates stability and the users saw as favoured both the resource itself and links to it on the social networks. It is evident that the alternative content media aroused greater interest of the respondents when they saw links to these on the social media.

Table 10

**Top 10 news resources to which users are redirected from social networks Results of poll among 40 students, 2016**

N	Name of the resource	Number of redirections from social networks to the resource
1	Gazeta.ru	136
2	RIA Novosti	104
3	Meduza	94
4	Dozhd, Lentach, Rossiyskaya gazeta	76
5	The Village	56
6	Iod, RT, Tjournal	44
7	Bumaga, Life News	40
8	Kommersant	32
9	Snob	28
10	Echo Moskvvy	12

Analysing the news diaries, the authors of the present study found that when the users searched for information on some event, they often did not confine themselves to visiting a single resource but continued navigation. In some cases the respondents wanted to follow some further developments and in others their interest was captured by some irrelevant headline and they went over to something else. In this connection, we tried to see the role of hyperlinks and how often the respondents use these. We denoted this phenomenon as news consumption depth.

The data show that every second scrolled news (59%) motivates the user to continue information consumption on the Internet. Redirections most often (67%) occur from links on the social networks. The 3rd redirection to get more information on an event occurred in 15% of the cases. Only 2% of the news pieces browsed on the social networks motivate the users to read at least three pieces on the outside resources. At the same time, most respondents, having studied the only article that took their attention come back to the social networks.

Table 11

**Numbers of users' redirections from one resource  
to another by clicking on a link**

	Number of direct visits	Number of redirections to 2nd resource from the 1st one	Number of redirections to 3d resource from the links on the 2nd one	Number of redirections to 4th resource from the links on the 3rd one
Websites	607	343	103	3
News from news applications*	139	17	–	–
News VKontakte	332	230	67	17
News Facebook	165	132	33	–
News Twitter	170	109	–	–
News Instagram	59	15	7	–

The situation with the websites is similar. Having scrolled an article on some resource, the third of the users (57%) click on links to further stories elaborating on the initial news. Then every third of the remainder clicks on the third link, and then only 3% of these clicks on the fourth, which is done by a mere 0.5% of those who read the initial news. We believe that this phenomenon deserves a thorough examination and the results will be covered in our papers to follow.

Our analysis of the news consumption depth indicates that the respondents show interest not so much in certain news resources as in certain events, material or headlines. After they had scrolled some text, the users showed no intention to actively consume other content of the same medium, browse additional information, or consistently browse other resources via redirections. They lost interest in the initial subject and either formulated a new query or returned to the social networks. Sometimes they simply stopped media consumption. At the same time, it is obvious the information agenda of the social networks attracts attention of the respondents and not infrequently stimulates deep news consumption.

And now the authors of the present study should stop on devices the students use for monitoring news as they have a great impact on the depth of news consumption. The authors saw that mobile phone doesn't allow getting complete news content. Smartphone users rarely pass to other links while

they look through the news feed. ‘I usually monitor headlines and leads on my phone and don’t follow a link to read the news<sup>23</sup>’. The reason for that may be the inconvenience to switch between tabs on smartphone.

The respondents give priority to smartphones when they consume news content. ‘I don’t almost use the tablet or laptop to get news. I choose them for watching movies or writing and editing texts<sup>24</sup>’. Meanwhile students of 21–23 years who may be already employed more often use laptops to look through news content in the working place. ‘I mostly use my phone but when I work I read news on my laptop<sup>25</sup>’.

The authors of the study point out that the respondents get much news outside the home. Two areas can be clearly indicated – during studies and en route. There’s a curious observation – en route that takes less time than studies students get comparable amount of news. Students say they continuously consume information the biggest part of which is news while using public transport. ‘When I go somewhere I always log in social networks and look through news feedback<sup>26</sup>’.

According to our findings news consumption depth to a great extent correlates with a news theme. There were some themes that called for several redirections on the part of the respondents to help them understand what was going on and get additional information. At the same time, some themes generated interest limited to reading a lead or a main news item. The news diaries have helped to identify the themes that generated greater interest of the audience, these being the international events (Ukraine / Syria / Migrants), emergency situations, laws/bills.

Many respondents confessed in their reports to getting tired of the news on Ukraine and Syria and stated that they tried to avoid such news and did not respond to the corresponding headlines. Yet, these respondents’ diaries testified to the contrary, wing that the topics relating to Ukraine and Syria amounted to 12% of all the themes. In this connection, the authors believe that, despite the claim of being ‘tired’ of the international themes, the respondents cannot break away from the information field and change the news consumption model. We intend to continue with the examination of this phenomenon.

As we have found out, the number of direct visits to Facebook and Twitter is close but the user goals are different. To illustrate, the respondents used Twitter almost twice as often to monitor the hot news, the figures being 59% against

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<sup>23</sup> From the essay RU14W22

<sup>24</sup> From the essay RU18W18

<sup>25</sup> From the essay RU13W22

<sup>26</sup> From the essay RU12W22



Facebook's 31%. On the other hand, those who preferred Facebook were more interested in the political content than the Twitter users with 32% and 25% respectively.

The survey identified Twitter as the promptest information source and as a kind of regulator of the news agenda which the users may control. Subscription to correspondents or news companies enables the service subscribers to follow events online, thus 67% of the Twitter users were aware of every second news reason among the latest news topics. This is by 10% more than that among the Facebook users. Together with the biggest world media, Facebook today tends towards integration of the professional media content into feed readers.

Despite quiet an active news consumption and interest in various kinds of news content some respondents have observed that they get tired of unfiltered news flow and they seek to filter their news feed. These are mostly students of 21–23 years old. Some students noted in their essays: 'It's great to know all the news on spot but sometimes I want to get nothing, switch off and not read any news'<sup>27</sup>. Others are able to control their consumption. 'I select news. I don't choose content and authors because I need to read it. Instead I prefer content that interests me'<sup>28</sup>.

## Conclusion

News consumption by the users on the Internet is practically permanent, with comparatively short breaks for sleep. It goes down insignificantly on days off and holidays. This means that the new media face a task of supplying news content round-the-clock for seven days a week to meet the demand of today's audience. Today, consumers actively use the social networks as news resources. In the period under study the respondents read more news on these resources than on the mass media websites. VKontakte is the main news provider for the given audience, Twitter lagging far behind. In terms of total news consumption, the role of other social media is rather small, demand for these on the part of Russian consumers notwithstanding.

The professional media websites such as *Kommersant*, *Gazeta.ru*, *Meduza* etc. are the most popular news resources on the Internet. This can be seen from the number of direct visits and redirections from the social networks. The audience's interest in user content on the Internet cannot so far replace the need for quality information, which, in a new environment, is characterized by timeliness, reliability, and, not infrequently, explanation. Online news consumers take an

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<sup>27</sup> From the essay RU2M21

<sup>28</sup> From the essay RU14M22

active stand; they are self-sufficient in navigating the information flow and are reluctant to turn aside from the planned route. Browsed material stimulated them to click on the link no more than twice. Clicking on the 3rd link was a rarity.

The social networks enable the audience to consume news as a background activity and thus constantly control the agenda. The news consumers are rather active in visiting the news resources to read what they need and then come back to their own pages using them to monitor news. The respondents often form their own news flow in the social media and seldom visit the official media websites. These are of less interest and even the most popular of these are visited only two or three times a day, and, in most cases, redirections are meant to read some definite material rather than to see the whole picture of the day.

In many respects a modern citizen in a digital society – as a professional, consumer, or member of a community – becomes crucially dependent on digital media. In this context a hypothesis that social networks are central for media consumption of audiences should be further elaborated. The fact that social media create personal news agendas based on individual preferences and news demand, changes not only the production and distribution of news by professional news rooms, but also the traditional theoretic understanding of the agenda setting process, its players, filters and barriers.

However, we should not overestimate the impact of social networks, if we are talking about students – future journalists. They prefer professional news sources more than social networks (65% vs. 29%), and they address them regularly, not only occasionally, they recheck news found on social networks on official news sources, including redirecting to the original source (redirections occur most often from links on the social networks – 67%), they demonstrate a critical and conscious type of media consumption – more reminiscent of professionally oriented. The phenomenon noted by us – consumption depth – proves the respondents' desire for qualitative surfing and navigation on the internet, not just the thematic expansion of the individual agenda, but its qualitative deepening (every second respondent scrolled news, 59% continued to consume the news on the Internet further). Still later most of the users returned to the agenda, proposed by the social network algorithm. So the role of social network as the initial provider of the agenda is unquestionable.

Thus, the participants of the study demonstrated the independence and criticality in choosing the ways of searching for the required information. Students were able to navigate fluently in the search engines, in information resources of network communities, but sometimes they needed a considerable amount of time to search and process the data they found. They are characterized

by a sufficient level of awareness of the meaning and content of the information found and processed and a low level of emotional and cognitive involvement in the virtual space.

Young people turned to professional news sites for information, which indicates the increase in cognitive and activating motives of media consumption, demonstrates criticality in relation to information provided in the media. This allows us to state that students consume media primarily as a source of information. This structure of motivation of media consumption allows us to speak about the mature position of students in relation to mass communication and information.

Thus, not only the level of maturity of students is reflected, but also the character of the activity leading for a given age – educational and professional. Students face the challenge of expanding and deepening their own knowledge, in the solution of which they resort to the use of media sources. They have a sufficient level of knowledge, skills, which contribute to good orientation in the surrounding media space, proves that they spend time on this type of activity productively.

Today, for a modern individual, interaction with the mass media is a certain way, a life style. He is able to do several things at the same time, while quickly moving from one goal to another. Depending on the various forms of the transmission of meanings, media is allowed to build communication practices, such as business, corporate, political, civil, interpersonal ones.

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Of course, the method of self-report, applied in this study, has significant limitations. First, of all, respondents mentioned only those materials, which they considered as necessary themselves; therefore, it's highly likely that the questionnaires present a picture of 'standard' media consumption, as participants saw it. Some materials could have been deliberately excluded from the list by respondents.

Secondly, due to a great volume of information consumed by the modern youth, it is hardly possible to record all the materials read in the news diary. It became obvious that the questionnaires reflected only a part of publications, which respondents identified as separate information material posted on web page, where they made a targeted transition. However, as follows from the essay, process of news consumption through smartphones often occurs in the 'background mode', making it hard for the respondents to notice that they consume informational content along with personal messages in social networks. This aspect clearly requires that the authors

conduct a detailed research of this problem and look for a solution of it in further in-depth studies on the media consumption by young people. At the same time, for the primary probing, presented in this article, the authors consider the method of self-report as acceptable and appropriate, since it allows making a general idea of the characteristics of media consumption of selected group of respondents and allows identifying the key media resources for it.

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# CONTEMPORARY DEBATE





# **Glocalised-television content: Interaction with local cultures and impact on audience perceptions**

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## **Abstract**

Glocalisation as a fallout of globalisation has received a lot of theoretical and empirical attention in the past few decades. Though the concept of globalisation was much evident and propagated through television in the streaming of foreign content on local networks, that content soon had to be given local flavours to captivate the local audience. Examining whether the global content just got a local twist or propagated an amalgamation amounting to novel cultures is the primary focus of the present study. Though it is evident that glocalised television content (intentionally or unintentionally) brought about significant changes in mass attitude, lifestyle and behavior, it needs to be empirically analysed and understood. Using a survey of 200 Indian-urban youth, the study measures the cultural impact of glocalised television content. This apart, the study analyses content and growth of television channels, viewing patterns of urban youth, the motivation behind using the medium, degree of attitudinal change and also the perceptual impacts on local cultural dimensions.

## **Keywords**

Globalisation, glocalisation, television, cultural impact, attitudinal change.

## **Introduction**

‘Globalisation’ has been a wide-spread concept since the 1990s. The process has brought in its folds multiple connotations, which has powerful cultural

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dimensions. The 'World Culture Theory' interprets globalisation in the intercultural perspective. The founders of the theory claim that globalised world is of course an integrated world, but the interdependence is amidst an ambience of cultural heterogeneity. The cognitive dissonance theory further accentuates the existence of sub-contrasts. The society and the prevailed culture play a vital role in the process of true interpretation of the term. The rises of multinational media conglomerates have popularised the term 'globalisation'. Television played a complicit role with an indefatigable spirit to popularise the essence and spirit of globalisation. Television has transformed globalisation into glocalisation in order to cater for the local media, the emergence of transnational channels cable television and liberation privatisation and globalisation in to the antique teeming land of India. However, the concept of globalisation failed to strike a chord among the people at its initial stages. India unlike any other country has its own archaic grandeur and culture. The 'global culture' had much less effect on the 'local culture' of India. Thus, the concept of convergence was an unrealizable dream at the initial stage of its emergence in India. However, the emergence of cable television brought a paradigm shift soon. In order to overcome the barriers that hinder the spread of 'global culture', 'glocal culture' added some local flavours. The television was able to accelerate a slow and steady cultural change among the people of India especially the media savvy youth. Hereafter, the amount of new information and communication technology accompanied with liberalization of Indian economy, this paved the way for increased household accessibility of television by the number of channels. Soon India has become the third largest television market in the world. The television channels functioning in India has been trying to make their content and presentation at par with global standards without losing the local spirit. The language localization of global channels such as MTV, Animal Planet, Discovery, and Pogo are only a few examples.

### **Globalisation impact on culture**

In this multicultural world the emergence of global culture is forcing forward new ways of simplifying things. Culture is a complex term with different meanings. Culture varies from place to place and person to person. The globalised culture may have a very little effect on the prevailed culture in India. In fact, the complex cultural fabric of the nation dictates the lifestyle of its citizens. However, since a long time ago, there have been two different coexisting cultures in India – the traditional practice and the transfixed one. The global culture had to cope with local needs and transformed into glocal culture at a certain stage. When the 'globalisation' became 'glocalisation' with its multi directional effects, the

striking rate went high, and globalisation was thus able to bring a cultural change. Tomlinson (1999) says that globalisation will lead to a single global culture effect of connectivity in terms of the economic sphere. This cultural transfusion was intentional or unintentional. Media by its inherent style of functioning dissipated the globalised culture with the needs and aspirations of the people. An analysis of the content of the channels gives an idea of the perfect cultural change amounting from the medium. Globalisation was able to create a new culture by revitalizing the existing culture. Thus, local elements coexist, but the cultural ones encounter across the frontiers and create a new kind of cultural fusion hybridity. Globalised television has become a cultural theme, a motivational or inspirational medium to accelerate cultural shift. This cultural shift can have either a positive or a negative effect. This study makes an attempt to look into the impact of globalised television on youth, as they are the prime seers of this medium.

## **Glocalisation and television**

The term glocalisation is defined by the researchers in different ways. Intuitively, glocalization is a process where globalisation adapts itself to cater for the local needs. It is otherwise a perfect blend of globalisation and localization. The globalisation concept is of a great importance to a country like India which has bounded with many cultural fashions and traditions. Glocalisation emerged as an alternative to globalisation when it failed to cater for the needs of the local people. Globalisation showed its light in the early 1990s. The advent of cable television and the emergence of transnational television in India accelerated growth and development of globalisation, but the process was still in the stage of infancy and growth. This is because of the various limitations that India faces like the conventional culture which is complex and divided at both local and national levels. India had started witnessing a perfect shift toward globalisation by the end of 2005. This was because of the penetration of television industry. The television industry was the dominant entertainment media industry in India at the end of 2005 with a share of around 42%. Western music channels also by then started ruling the globe and became a powerful force of cultural exchange (Jones, 2005). The mushrooming channels further intensified the competition among the channels. Each channel wanted to raise their TRP. In this scenario television broadcasting companies were adopting the strategies of globalisation and regional based customization to improve their viewership and this increased the return on investment and the format of global integration of programmes penetrating to every household. Many media houses captured these ideas (Waisbord, 2004). A number of Western serials, reality shows were

adapted and Indianized to meet the local culture, religious beliefs, and other ethnic characteristics of the regional viewers of India. Though this trend of foreign invasion of Indian culture was criticized, yet it managed to create its own cultural space as well as intervene in the national cultural landscape, with more deregulation and foreign investment, media industry kept the landscape expanding. Adding the local flavour to the global programmes has propelled the overall television scenario in India. Such a trend can be considered a strong manifestation of globalisation.

## **Understanding of culture**

‘Culture’ is a complex term, and understanding its perfect meaning is a difficult task. According to Kroeber, ‘culture’ is an intervening variable between human organism and environment; socialist T. S. Eliot in his work ‘Notes towards definition of culture’ relates culture to individuals, social groups and whole societies, though their interdependence is such that cultural health requires an overlapping and sharing of interests by participation and mutual appreciation.

Great Hofstede, a cultural anthropologist, defines it as ‘the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category from those of other’. Another sociologist Bogardus says that ‘culture is the way of belief of a group’.

In a nutshell culture can be understood as ‘a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of the society use to cope with the world transmitted from one generation to another’. With the understanding of these definitions we can conclude that culture is a set of certain behavior patterns that we are living with consciously or unconsciously, so a large part of it is unconsciously incorporated in our behavior patterns and lifestyle.

Culture develops from simple (in the beginning) to complex (in later). It is worth having a discussion on the other two important topics which fall under the culture – cultural diffusion and cultural theme. Cultural diffusion can be defined as the spread of culture from one area to another. This spread can be conscious or unconscious. The culture does not flow from one area to another; it is transmitted from one generation to another. Mass media and communication technologies play a key role in this process – for instance, radio and television have been the primary instruments.

Cultural theme is defined as the inspiration or motivational instrument that can direct an individual to acquire the particular culture or its elements. Television is one of the powerful cultural themes. Television is acting as catalyst in the process of cultural transmission from one place to another. In this process some adaptation may happen in the original cultural form in order to cope with

the existing beliefs and culture of the place where the cultural acceleration happens. Therefore, the globalised television in India acts as a cultural theme and creates a cultural Coup d' tat.

Cultural Coup d' tat is defined as a slow and steady penetration of alien cultural elements into a prevailed cultural fabric and accelerate a cultural change which finally result the predominance of the alien culture over the existing culture resulting a mix culture. The intrusions of alien culture into the local culture either decline or incline the existing cultural forms. The degree of cultural change emerges as a result of cultural Coup d' tat and depends on the inclination of the victims towards the cultural theme. The study makes an attempt to explore whether globalised television (the cultural theme) is able to create cultural Coup d' tat. In other words, as a case in point, there can be a person, who is exposed to television, gets enticed by a programme and then starts imitating the behavior, dress code or life style he sees on TV.

## **Television and globalisation in India**

By the LPG policy government, the television industry has come out from the clutches of Doordarshan in the early 1990s. The early DD dominated era on Indian television went for a small change in the 1980s with infusion of entertainment genres including soaps, films, and film related programming. However, the real transformation came in 1992 when liberalization allowed the entry of transnational players like Star TV.

The Indian television was owned by government channels in all 26 dialects to a multi-channel global media market till 1991 (Rodrigues, 2010). In the falloff 1991, as hundreds of unregulated cable TV operations flourished in urban areas, new channels began appearing on Indian televisions courtesy of ZTV, MTV, and all day sports channels for cricket hungry, South Asian fans, two entertainment channels carrying a heavy dose of American programming, and BBC world, which the British Broadcasting corporation launched, undoubtedly, as its answer to CNN. Practically overnight millions of Indian Television viewers, long woo to DD's staid educational programming and dramas based on Indian mythology, found themselves turning into the likes of 'Baywatch', 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty'. In the land where kissing has never been allowed in national movies or television programming TV viewers could experience the 'sex and violence' culture long decried even in the West.

When Rupert Murdoch expanded the Star Network in India, his agenda was based on a strategic commercial goal, however the initial stint of Star Network to the top slot. Understanding the cultural connotations, they started a swift change in their presentation style. There has been no looking back since then.

Adding the local flair to the global ideas has propelled the overall television scenario in India.

In early 1999, there were 20 million cable households in India, including at least the million multiple TV households and the reach of television was expanding fast. The next in the Indian television industry was expected to arrive in the country by early 2000 in the form of Direct to Home (DTH) television planned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and Indian broadcasters. The youth in India was carried away by the Western style of MTV channel 1996, stated in Juluri (2002).

Television industry was the dominant entertainment media industry in India at the end of 2005 with a share of around 42% and it was expected to grow by around 10% annum till the end of 2011. In this scenario television broadcasting companies were adopting the strategies of globalisation and regional based customization to improve both viewership and return to investment. The songs mixed in Hindi and English became Hinglish (mix of global and local languages) which started attracting everyone and gained huge popularity on TV chartbusters (Bakshi & Sarkar, 2015). Indian television industry witnessed a paradigm shift after globalisation as from on TV channels to hundreds of them competed with each other to catch the viewer's attention, there were umpteen opportunities to play with the content and serve versatility.

### **The Karnataka scene**

Doordarshan DD Chandana is the state TV channel in Karnataka. There are more than 100 channels available in Bangalore city including the transnational players like SONY, STAR world, STAR plus, STAR movies, Star news, MTV [V] music, Zee cinema, Zee Drama. Fashion TV, BBC world, CNN, Cartoon Network and so on. The major local television channels available in Bangalore city are Udaya TV, Udaya news, U2, E TV, TV9, Kasturi, Suvarna, and so forth. Many of the local channels are programming in global standards. Many of the global networks have bought the local channels. For example, the STAR network owns the Suvarna Channels. The content of these TV channels was global in spirit and local in characteristics. This is a spate of reality shows on the south Indian television that are based on Western concepts. The ideas are borrowed but the form and presentation is completely localized. Such a trend can be considered a strong manifestation of glocalization.

### **Review of literature**

The review of related literature has indicated that very few studies of impact of globalised television on youth are reported in India. However, studies on media

consumption in the form of media habits has been part of many studies and reported well in India. A number of studies have shown that demographics like age, income, occupation and sex of the audience do have profound influence on their media consumption pattern.

MC Nelly (1968) in their study on functional aspects reports that media usage plays a prominent role in the diffusion of international information, but such media behavior does not necessarily have a simple cause and effect relationship general or specific knowledge. Allen (1968) in their study on Negro residence reports that they view television extensively because it provides fantasy and entertainment programmes.

Rubin (1985) in his study on college students use of daytime television soap operas states that uses and gratifications researchers have found that motives for watching television and its programmes are interrelated both ritualized and instrumental issues have been identified.

A number of studies attempt to explore the concept of a new globalised culture, the byproduct of globalisation. Giddens (1990) names it the dialectic of the local and global, where globalisation has to be understood as a dialectical phenomenon in which events at one pole of distanced relations often produce divergent or even contrary occurrence at another, so the connecting of the local and global has been tied to a profound set of transmutations in the nature of modern life. Then structural hybridization is a factor in the reorganization of social spaces or the emergence of new practices of social cooperation and competition, which can be also new trans-local cultural expressions (Pieterse, 1995). Kirth states that the 1990s witnessed the rise of hybridity as a multidisciplinary concern over the fragmentation and fusion of cultural forms. Also, in this scenery the media groups develop a tendency of hybridity mass media cross-breeding cultural signs, values, and styles to reach transnational audiences.

To understand the transnational and global connotations of culture, A. Appadurai has divided the flow of culture into five scapes – ethnoscape, technoscape, financescape, mediascape, and ideoscape. According to this system, mediascape refers to the dissemination and flow of images and information by print and electronic media. P. Vijayalakshmi in 'Foreign television and Indian youth' gives ideas about the influence of global television on Indian youth. According to her, the televisions in Asia has been transforming since the introduction of cable and satellite cross border channels since 1991. The MTV strategy for entry into foreign countries like India based on the policy that localized programmes and localized business were made more successfully than following standardization. This directly results in the adding of local flavour to global ideas (Juluri, 2002).



## **Objectives and methodology**

The present study intends to shed light on the social and cultural implications of globalised television. The main objective of this research paper is to find out the television viewing pattern of the urban youth, to find out the motive behind using this medium, to determine the degree of attitudinal change amounting from the medium, to analyse the cultural impact of globalised television on urban youth, to examine the cultural impact of the medium.

In the present study, the independent variables are age, gender, educational qualifications. Average monthly family income and occupation of the respondents are the measure. The dependent variables – media usage and gratification – frequency of television usage, preferences over various types of channel, types of programmes preferred watching, preference over foreign and Indian channels, preference of respondents over various channel; effects amounting from the medium – preference of food items seen on TV, preference of dress/apparel seen on TV, imitation of hair style/ mannerism seen on TV, preference of branded products, motivational medium behind choosing a brand; Purpose behind using the medium – purpose of TV viewing. The survey questionnaire was served to 200 respondents chosen through convenient sampling technique. The target sample of the present research is youth generation in the Bangalore city. The youth in this study is identified as people from 18–35 age group based on the definition given by Ministry of Youth Welfare Government of India. The samples were divided into four parts of Bangalore city – North, West, East, and South. A convenient sampling method was used to collect the data from each zone where the colleges and the students should be interested in participating in the research. The data collected from the survey was then analyzed using the percentage method.

## **Findings and analysis**

The findings obtained from the analysis of the data collected by questionnaire are explained below as four sections.

### **SECTION-1**

#### **Demographic profile of the respondents**

##### **Age, gender, educational qualifications**

Average monthly family income and occupation were the independent variables concerning the demographic and disciplinary affiliations of the respondents. Data were collected from 200 respondents. Among the respondents there were 146 males and 54 females.

**Age:** the majority of the respondents 93 out of 200 fell in the age group of 23-28 years followed by the 18-23 which has 64 respondents, while 32 respondents are



between 28 and 33, 11 are aged 33 years and above. The respondents in the first and second groups (78%) outnumbered those in the third and fourth groups (21%).

**Educational qualifications:** 148 respondents are graduates and 35 respondents are post graduates and 16 of them completed another pre-university. From this we can see that all the respondents are educated well.

**Occupation:** 58% per cent of the respondents are students and 30% respondents are employed in a private sector, 7% of the respondents are government employed and remaining 5% are self-employed. Clearly the maximum of respondents belong to student community.

## SECTION-2 Media usage and gratification

Table 1

Frequency of TV usage

Particulars	Respondents	%
30 minutes –1 hour	42	21
1-2 hour	70	35
2-3 hour	48	24
More than 3 hours	36	18
Total	200	100

The data as revealed in Table 1 shows that most of the youth prefer watching television for 1-2 hours, followed by 2-3 hours. This statistic data underscores previous studies happened in this regard as majority of the youth unlike whether they are studying or employed find at least 1-3 hours for TV viewing, this also reiterates the attachment of youth to television.

Table 2

Preference over various types of channels

Particulars	Respondents	%
Entertainment	82	41
Music	33	16.5
News	59	29.5
Cartoon	10	5
Sports	13	6.5
Others	3	1.5
Total	200	100

From the Table 2 it is evident that the maximum respondents prefer watching entertainment channels (41%). Few respondents showed interest in watching music (16.5%) and news channels (29.5%) followed by cartoon, sports and other channels of their interest which contains both regional and international channels especially for sports, music, cartoon, and news.

Table 3

### Types of programmes preferred watching

Particulars	Respondents	%
News	79	39.5
Music	11	5.5
Cinema	13	6.5
Serials	18	9
Reality shows	73	36.5
Spiritual	0	0
Educational	3	1.5
Others	3	1.5
Total	200	100

Most of the respondents prefer watching news (39.5%) on TV apart from news. It is the reality shows (36.5%) that caught the attention of the youth, even serials, cinema and music have smaller percent of viewers. As for cinema (6.5%), youth prefers watching regional, national and international movies. When it comes to viewing reality shows, youth generation chooses watching regional and national reality shows which are the local versions of the international shows. E.g.: Voice of America (a similar Indian show is called Voice of India); Big Boss and Master Chef Shows, Dance shows, Talent shows, etc.

Table 4

### Preference over foreign and Indian channels

Particulars	Respondents	%
Foreign channels	93	46.5
Indian channels	107	53.5
Total	200	100

Out of the total 200 respondents 107 which is about 53.5% prefer watching Indian channels. 93 respondents which is about 46.5% of the total sample size prefer watching foreign channels. This statistic data shows that number of transnational channels viewers has increased considerably.

Table 5

**Preference of respondents over various channels**

Particulars	Respondents %
Suvarna	89
Chandana	23
Doordarshan	12
U2	64
Udaya	103
Kasturi	73
MTV	103
Sony TV	69
STAR PLUS	93
STARGOLD	79
ZEE Kannada	72
ZEE TV	79
V Channel	98

Respondents were asked to choose the channels which they used to watch from a list of selected channels. Here the channels are selected on the basis of the objective of the study that is to trace the impact of globalised TV on youth. The respondents are given a list channels which can be considered as glocalised. From the data we can see that majority of the respondents prefer watching MTV, SONY TV, Udaya, Zee TV, V channel. All these channels are good examples of glocalised TV channels.

### SECTION-3

#### Effects amounting from the medium

Table 1

**Preference of food items seen on TV**

Particulars	Respondents	%
Yes	133	66.5
No	67	33.5
Total	200	100

The respondents were asked whether they prefer to buy the food items which they have seen on TV. 133 out of 200 respondents which is about (66.5%) of the total sample size prefer buying the food items which they have seen on TV.

While 67 of them (about 33.5%) do not prefer buying. From this we can see that the respondents' food habits are influenced by television.

Table 2

**Preference of dress/apparel seen on TV**

Particulars	Respondents	%
Yes	143	71.5
No	71	35.5
Total	200	100

The data as revealed in the Table 2 shows that most of the respondents (71.5%) prefer buying the dress/apparels seen on TV. This clearly tells us that television plays the key role in people's dress code which they imitate and adapt from the global level to the local one.

Table 3

**Imitation of hair style/ mannerism seen on TV**

Particulars	Respondents	%
Yes	117	58.5
No	83	41.5
Total	200	100

Respondents were asked a question, whether they prefer imitating the TV idols' hair styles, mannerisms. Out of the 200 respondents, 117 which is about (58.5%) said they do prefer imitating while 83 respondents (41.5%) said they do not prefer. From this data it is evident that the television definitely shapes people's mannerisms.

Table 4

**Preference of branded products**

Particulars	Respondents	%
Yes	149	74.5
No	51	25.5
Total	200	100

The respondents were asked if they prefer buying branded products, 74.5% of the respondents replied yes, while 25.5 said no. That means majority of the respondents give preference to the concept of brand while buying a product.

Table 5

### Motivational medium behind choosing a brand

Particulars	Respondents	%
TV	143	71.5
Radio	4	2
Newspaper	23	11.5
Internet	30	15

The respondents were asked from which medium they get the idea of a particular brand. 71.5 % of the respondents get the idea of brand from television followed by 15% from the Internet and 11.5% from newspapers. The global brands are available in cities like Bangalore, which is more cosmopolitan in culture, and people are exposed to various forms of media.

## SECTION-4

### Purpose behind using the medium

Table 1

#### Purpose of TV viewing

Particulars	Respondents	%
Entertainment	40	20
Education	30	15
Information	28	14
All of the above	102	51
Total	200	100

According to 20% of the total samples, the purpose of TV viewing is entertainment, 15% among the respondents opinionated that they use television for educational purposes and 14% television viewing is for information. However, the majority (51%) prefer watching television for all of the purposes above.

## Discussion

The study reveals that television is still the most preferred medium of the youth, even at the time when new media has thrown up plenty of useful options and amenities. Majority of the youth dedicates daily 1-3 hours to watching television. The finding will be interesting when one connotes it with the fact that Bangalore is a metropolitan city and IT capital of the country. This also underscores the attachment of youth to television.

From the analysis we can see that the majority of youth spent their time on watching entertainment programmes. Other than news, the main programme the youth prefer watching is a reality show. Serials and music programmes also have a good number of viewers. Reality shows which run on Indian television are adapted versions of the ones which appear on foreign television channels or, as we can call them, 'globalised' programmes. Consequently, from the study it is evident that the youth are making use of globalised programmes that entertain them well. From the analysis we can see that the youth prefer watching Indian channels rather than foreign channels.

The channels which Bangalore youth prefer watching are MTV, V-channel, STAR, ZEE, etc. These channels can be considered the perfect manifestation of glocalisation. The content of these channels is global in spirit, but local in nature. If the youth prefer watching such channels intentionally, they are enamored by the content of that channel or they like enjoying the glocalised programmes. From the first part of the analysis it has been understood that the youth are making use of the glocalised channels and their content.

The third part of the analysis is pertaining to the effects amounting from the medium or the level of its influence. The majority of youth prefer buying the food items and apparels seen on TV. Food habits and dress code are part of one's culture. Culture in this context is the culture which is followed by the people of a particular place. Hence, the study shows that television alters the culture. The television thus redefined the parameters of the prevailed culture among the televised youth. The analysis revealed that the youth are interested in following the mannerisms and hairstyles, etc. of the TV idols. This finding demonstrates the slow and steady proliferation of globalised culture among the youth.

From the analysis we can see that the youth are enamored of the 'brand' concept. The brand can be one of the byproducts of globalization, which makes the 'brand' concept more 'palatable' to the third world countries like India; the youth have been influenced by the television and, as a result, have become ardent followers of 'brand'. From the study we can see that television has made the concept of brand popular among youth rather than newspapers and the Internet.

The youth make use of the medium television mainly for the purpose of entertainment followed by education and information, the second and third parts of the analysis together give the idea that the attitudinal change amounting from the globalised television is positive, the youth consider television as the medium for infotainment and education and they try to copy content in their real life. Since the users use a medium for education and use new knowledge and skills in their real life, that would definitely have positive impact on their life.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

The study focuses on how globalisation has adapted to a new culture to suit local tastes, leading to the phenomenon called glocalisation. The youth prefer watching more foreign channels in local languages as it makes them better understand a new culture modified in a local way, thus introducing the theory of globalisation and glocalisation stronger. The respondents of the present study enjoy the cuisines from other countries which are extremely popular all over the world but love them more in a local interpretation. Today, we also see our national versions of burgers and pizzas that become more popular if they have more local spices among the ingredients.

The study tried to understand the impact of globalisation and glocalisation in terms of food, clothes, styles, etc. The study focused only on the impact of its adaptation on youth generation in Bangalore city. It does not state the negative aspects of the global-glocal culture nor did it ask about any negative state of the impact. In the future, the research may reveal the negative aspects of globalisation among local cultures.

As television is still one of the most influential types of the media, the study has many objectives that are to give an insight on how youth make use of TV as one of the major mass media, their reasons for watching TV and cultural change amounting from the medium. The outcome of the study has brought some newsworthy results: globalised television is being utilized efficiently to inform, to educate, and to entertain in a healthy way.

Apparently, TV has created cultural acceleration through its consummate artistry. People, especially the youth, graciously and gracefully accept the programmes disseminated by television. The study reveals that Indian television is under the clutches of glocalization. Glocalized television is imparting an intractable and ostensible cultural change. Youth of our country are enamored by the programmes of the glocalized television, try to accept and bring its content into their life. Glocalization was successful in bringing the essence of globalisation in a locally acceptable way. The study has thrown light on the fact that youth have taken the concept of glocalization positively and effectively carry out its implications in their everyday life.

As mentioned before, more detailed studies of glocalization and its impact on culture have not been conducted. In India, sociologists and social science researchers need to shift their focus to glocalized culture, which would have definite results in some noteworthy findings. Obviously, glocalization plays a complicit role in shaping our culture so as to fit according with the changing trends and technological advancements. Also, there is need for an elaborate study on the negative effects of glocalization, this will definitely open up new

discussions and debates. This study recommends further in-depth research in the area of glocalization and cultural transformation.

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# ARTICLES



# Culture of impunity and safety of journalists: Is safe journalism a distant dream in Pakistan?

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## **Abstract**

Pakistan's journalists confront fatal safety risks in the line of their duty and are at the mercy of various types of pressure and extremist groups that threaten, kidnap and even murder them with almost total impunity. Despite the growing violence against journalists in Pakistan, there is a dearth of national academic studies that offer insights into threats to journalists' safety and the country's rampant culture of impunity. Therefore, using the system theory, this study explores Pakistan's issues of impunity and threats to journalists' safety in conflict and non-conflict situations. The study also analyses the country's laws for the protection of journalists' rights to freedom of expression, access to information, online and offline safety, fair trial and equal pay-scales. In addition, the study unpacks the journalists' lived experiences of safety risks in Pakistan and their perceptions regarding the country's culture of impunity. To achieve these objectives, this study uses the qualitative methods of document review and in-depth interviews (face-to-face). Moreover, the study uses thematic analysis to analyse the gathered data.

## **Keywords**

Impunity, safety risks, journalists' protection, legal system.

## **Introduction**

Violence against journalists is a routine problem in Pakistan. Especially, the country's conflict areas of Khyber Phaktunkhwa Province, North and South Waziristan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Baluchistan Province are hotspots of journalists' killing and kidnapping. In tribal areas within the Peshawar border region of Pakistan and along the border with Afghanistan, investigative journalists confront fatal safety threats. Pakistan's journalists are not only at risk of organized crimes in the aforementioned conflict areas,

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but they also face diverse safety risks in the country's major cities including Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta. Consequently, the Pakistani journalists are not able to practise their right to freedom of expression and they are unable to work safely (Jamil, 2017).

Reports by international organizations monitoring freedom of expression and journalists' safety levels in Pakistan suggest that the biggest challenge for local journalists is the country's existing 'climate of impunity' despite diverse threats to them (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2017). According to Committee to Protect Journalists' Impunity Index, the country ranks in the top ten of those countries that do not probe and prosecute journalists' killings and violence against them (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2018). In only two cases have the murderers been convicted by the courts including the murder cases of Daniel Pearl<sup>1</sup> and Wali Khan Baber<sup>2</sup>, suggesting that the operators of judicial system are apathetic towards countering the impunity towards crimes against journalists.

Notwithstanding the increasing violence against the Pakistani journalists, there is a dearth of academic research that explores the issues of journalists' safety and impunity in Pakistan. Thus, drawing on the system theory, this study aims to fill this gap in the literature by providing insights into three research questions: (i) Do Pakistani laws protect the journalists' rights to freedom of expression, access to information, online and offline safety, fair trial and equal pay-scales?; (ii) What safety threats do Pakistani journalists experience while covering conflict and non-conflict situations?; (iii) How do Pakistani journalists describe the country's culture of impunity? To investigate these research questions, this study uses the qualitative methods of document review and in-depth interview (face-to-face) and thematic analysis to analyse the gathered data.

Hence, this article firstly reviews literature into social system theory and journalists' safety issue in Pakistan. The article goes on explaining the methodology and results of this study. Finally, it presents the conclusion and some recommendations to counter impunity and threats to journalists' safety in Pakistan.

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<sup>1</sup> The Wall Street Journal's reporter, Daniel Pearl, was kidnapped and later assassinated in 2002 in the Southern port city of Karachi. In the same year, four local people were sentenced for the assassination of Daniel Pearl, especially when Pakistan's government confronted immense international pressure.

<sup>2</sup> Wali Khan Babar was killed in Karachi in 2011. The victim was *Geo Television News* correspondent.

## **Literature review**

### **System theory**

System theory builds itself on premise that a system is comprised of interlinked parts or sub systems. Any alternation in the operation of one sub-system does affect the function of other sub-systems and on the system as a whole (Bertalanffy, 1968; Fuch & Hofkirchner, 2009; Ziemann, 2007). The theory has been widely used in many disciplines such as sociology, political science, economics and journalism. This study draws on Luhmann's social system theory that emphasizes the interdisciplinary study of a social system. He classifies social system at three levels: societal systems, organizations and interaction systems. Luhmann suggests that societal systems (such as religion, law, art, education, science, etc.) are interrelated and are 'closed systems consisting of different fields of interaction'. He defines organizations as a 'network of decisions which reproduce themselves'. And interaction systems are 'systems that reproduce themselves on the basis of communication rather than decision making' (Seidl & Becker, 2004: 35-42; Vermeer, 2006). This study posits that journalists are part of a broader social system comprising of other sub-systems (such as legal, political and cultural systems). Their protection and safety are dependent on the proper functioning and effective networking of decisions and communication among other correlated systems (especially legal and political systems). Thus, in this study, the rationale for using the system theory is that it helps to understand the ways Pakistan's social system and other sub-systems shape or influence the journalists' experiences of safety risks and the country's climate of impunity.

### **Journalists' safety and impunity: The need for academic research in Pakistan**

In the past decade, Pakistan's media industry has considerably developed and transformed. Despite diverse challenges, the country continues to have a vocal and vibrant media landscape in the Southeast Asia. Open television discussions on issues ranging from national politics to social and cultural affairs have helped to foster informed citizenry and the culture of democratic discourse in the country. Nevertheless, there are also certain areas where the media and journalists find their freedom heavily restrained, most notably in reporting on security and religious issues (Jamil, 2014; Siraj, 2009). In addition to a lack of freedom of expression, Pakistan's journalists confront fatal safety risks in conflict and non-conflict situations both. The country is one of the most dangerous countries for journalists and it has become difficult for them to work in a safe environment (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2017).

Pakistan's growing religious extremism and its role as a front line state on war against terrorism have resulted in a polarized society with people lacking a sense of safety and peace. Particularly, the areas bordering Afghanistan including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Balochistan province and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are the most dangerous ones for journalists because of the existence of militants and religious extremist groups. Incidents of journalists' killings and violence against them clearly indicate the severity of the situation in the country. According to a recent report by Committee to Protect Journalists (2018), 60 Pakistani journalists have lost their lives in the line of their duty since 1992. Unfortunately, those who are involved in crimes against journalists enjoy impunity and the victims do not get justice. As a result, Pakistan ranks in the top twelve of those countries that do not probe and prosecute the cases of journalists' killing and violence against them (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2018).

UNESCO effectively emphasizes the necessity of academic research within the field for promoting awareness of possible risks that journalists may confront in conflict and non-conflict situations. This is followed by the UNESCO's effort to combat impunity towards crimes against journalists. Previously, a number of international academics have also paid attention to analyse the journalists' safety issues such as: journalists' protection in conflict situations from practical, legal and humanitarian perspectives (Lisosky & Henrichsen, 2011); organized crimes against journalists in Mexico (Relly et al., 2013); typology of digital risks to journalists (Henrichsen et.al, 2015); journalists' killings and physical targeting (Cottle et al., 2016); threats to journalists' safety in Kenya (George, 2016); challenges to journalists' protection in Nepal (Adhikary et al., 2016); freedom of expression, impunity and journalists' online and offline protections (Carlsson and Poyhatari, 2017; Larry, 2017).

In Pakistan, a very few scholars have conducted academic research that analyses threats to journalists' safety. For instance, Rana Rizwan (2014) in one of his recent studies on *Media Safety in Pakistan* has analysed various types of threats and challenges that are confronted by the Pakistani journalists. His research brings into discussion the nature, intensity, variety and level of threats advanced to the journalists and the ways in which they are exposed to those threats'. Rana's research underlines the role of Pakistan's security agencies, media organizations and the journalists' unions in providing protection to them for performing their job safely and continuing with the profession. The most significant aspect of this research is the identification of diversity of threats posed to journalists in different parts of the country. However, the author believes that there is a need of unpacking journalists' lived experiences of diverse threats and

their views about Pakistan's culture of impunity. Therefore, this study analyses the issues of journalists' protection and impunity in order to identify the existing legal and other challenges that hinder safe and free journalism in the country.

## Methodology

This study has used the qualitative methods of document review and in-depth interviews (face-to-face) in order to investigate three research questions, namely: (i) Do Pakistani laws protect the journalists' rights to freedom of expression, access to information, safety, fair trial and equal pay-scales?; (ii) What safety threats do Pakistani journalists experience while covering conflict and non-conflict situations?; (iii) How do Pakistani journalists describe the country's culture of impunity? Initially, different types of documents have been reviewed for this study including the Constitution of Pakistan (1973), Access to Information Law (2004), Wage Board Award<sup>3</sup> (2013), the proposed Bill for Journalists' Safety (2016) and Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2010).

A total of 35 male and female journalists<sup>4</sup> from five ethnicities (i.e. Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashtu, Baluchi and Urdu-speaking) and of religious sects (i.e. Shia and Sunni) have been interviewed to investigate their lived experiences of safety risks and views about impunity to crime against them. In terms of gender bifurcation of interviewees, the study includes 8 female and 27 male journalists. The interview questionnaire encompasses the questions relating to journalists' lived experiences of nine types of safety risks including: (i) physical risks<sup>5</sup>,

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<sup>3</sup> Wage Board is a committee that is formed by the government of Pakistan for the purpose of fixing the rates of wages for journalists in the country. The board is constituted after each five years. Up till now eight boards have been formed. When Pakistan came into being there was no law for the salaries of journalists so at that time the government formed a press commission in 1954 to look after the working conditions and the wages which were being paid to the journalists at that time (*The News*, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Concept of journalists in this study: 'journalists' as the subject of this study have been considered as individuals who are employed by Pakistan's mainstream newspapers and television news channels; and who are engaged in the jobs of reporting, news gathering, news monitoring, news anchoring, editing, news and current affairs programs' production and administrative jobs (such as a director and news controller).

<sup>5</sup> 'Physical risks here refer to the risks of being injured and of being subjected to any kind of physical attack that may lead to death, physical disability and harm' (Jamil, 2017).

(ii) psychological risks<sup>6</sup>, (iii) financial risks<sup>7</sup>, (iv) legal risks<sup>8</sup>, (v) social and emotional risks<sup>9</sup>, (vi) gender-specific risks<sup>10</sup>, (vii) digital risks<sup>11</sup>, (viii) topic-specific risks<sup>12</sup>, (ix) the public risks<sup>13</sup>.

In order to select the interviewees, this study has used purposive sampling that refers to the 'selection of certain groups or individuals for their relevance to the issue being studied' (Gray et al., 2007: 105). While the interviewed journalists are from the most well-known newspapers and television news channels in Karachi (i.e. total 22 media organisations), they do have work experience in more than one city of Pakistan. For ensuring the variety of responses, journalists of diverse beats (such as politics, crime, judiciary, defence, sports, business, social and religious affairs, health and education) have been selected for this study. The names of interviewees have been replaced with numbers (ranging between 1 and 35) so as to ensure their confidentiality and safety. Moreover, the gathered data have been analysed thematically by using the research questions' themes.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Psychological risks here refer to mental stress, trauma and pressure that may affect a journalist's ability to perform his/her job freely and safely' (Jamil, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> 'Financial risks mean the threats of job insecurity, pay-scale disparity and forced job termination' (Jamil, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> 'Legal risks include the existence ineffective laws fostering impunity for crimes against journalists; unfair trial against journalists; manipulation and abuse of laws against journalists and the existence of stringent media laws' (Jamil, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> 'Social and emotional risks include the risks of anxiety, fear, depression, offence and lower self-esteem that mainly arise from the country's social context or a journalist's surrounding environment (i.e. workplace's environment and socio-political environment)'. (Jamil, 2017)

<sup>10</sup> 'Gender-specific risks refer to those threats that a journalist may encounter by virtue of his/her gender such as sexual assault, rape, gender harassment, discrimination and blackmailing' (Jamil, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> 'Digital risks refer to online threats that result from hacking, abusive or threatening e-mails or mobile messages and abusive comments on social media' (Jamil, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> 'Topic specific risks refer to the threats that result from covering any specific topic' (Jamil, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> 'Public risks refer to the threats that result from the violent, unethical and abusive attitudes of local inhabitants towards journalists, such as face-to-face or online verbal abuse and physical harm or attacks' (Jamil, 2017).



## Results and discussion

### **Journalists' legal rights to freedoms of expression, access to information, fair trial, safety and equal pay-scale in Pakistan**

Document review suggests that the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) guarantees the rights of freedom of expression and access to information with certain restrictions. The Articles 19 and 19-A (under the 18th amendment 2010) of the Constitution state: 'Every citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, *subject to any reasonable restrictions* imposed by law in the interest of the security of Pakistan, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence. (Article 19 of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973)

Every citizen shall have right to have access to information in all matters of public importance *subject to regulation and reasonable restrictions* imposed by law'. (Article 19-A of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 – under the 18th amendment, 2010).

The aforementioned constitutional provisions for the protection of freedom of expression and access to information in Pakistan suffer from lacunae in terms of their explanations. The Article 19 of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) does explain the nature of restrictions on freedom of expression, which is somehow similar to the Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights<sup>14</sup>. However, the Article 19-A of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) that guarantees the right of 'access to information' does not explain the phrase 'reasonable restrictions'. The section X of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) empowers the government with 'emergency rights' to suspend the fundamental human right of freedom of expression. For example, in November 2007, General Pervez Musharraf imposed emergency in the country and suspended fundamental human rights by using the section X of the Constitution of Pakistan<sup>15</sup> (1973). Thus, Pakistan's

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<sup>14</sup> The Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) states that (a) 'everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers'. (b) 'The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others'. (See Article 19 Memorandum, 2002)

<sup>15</sup> See also Dawn newspaper's report at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1050371/fia-launches-probe-into-nov-2007>

Constitution (1973) restrains the journalists' rights to freedom of expression and access to information.

Moreover, Article 10 (A) of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) provides the right to fair trial to the Pakistani citizens. Nevertheless, not all cases of crime against journalists are registered, investigated and fairly prosecuted in the country. In addition to the climate of impunity, this study reveals 'no proper laws' that provide protection to the Pakistani journalists especially from enforced disappearances; physical, financial, legal and digital threats. Journalists' response, in this study, highlights the ineffectiveness of laws relating to the journalists' financial protection (i.e. the Wage Board Award) and physical safety (i.e. the proposed Bill on Journalists' Safety, 2016; Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010). This study unpacks that there have been no recent reforms made in laws relating to freedom of expression and journalists' safety by the Pakistani government. With regard to this, a news director of a local television news channel states: 'We do have Safety of Journalists Bill (2016) and Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2010). Practically, these laws are ineffective because both male and female journalists confront physical, financial and psychological risks <...> Sadly, there has been no reform and any recent change in laws that ensure journalists' rights to freedom of expression and access to information. These rights are restricted in Pakistan <...> As far as journalists' financial protection is concerned, the notification for eighth Wage Board Award was handed over by Maryam Aurenzeb (former Information Minister) in 2018 <...> but let me tell you that most of the media owners pay journalists as per their own choice and journalists are not paid salaries on time in many media organizations <...> I think Pakistan's journalists' are not well-protected legally' (Interviewee number 2).

These findings suggest that Pakistan's legal system is not functioning adequately and the practice of safe and free journalism is not possible without implementation on necessary legal reforms by the country's government and judiciary.

### **Journalists' lived experiences of safety threats in conflict and non-conflict situations**

Interviewed journalists' response, in this study, reveals that they experience physical, financial, psychological, public, social and emotional, gender-specific and legal risks most while carrying out their routine jobs. For example, all male journalists, in this study, underline the severity of physical and financial threats to them. Interview findings suggest that the public has emerged as a potential source of physical, psychological and emotional threats to journalists in Pakistan.

For example, almost all journalists (i.e. 32 out of total 35) highlight the ways they confront pressure, physical attack and abusive language by the public. A majority of male and female journalists (i.e. 29 out of total 35) mention media organizations as a source of threat to them. They highlight that their financial and psychological well-being is heavily affected due to owner's pressure, forced and un-notified job terminations. When talking about the legal risks and issue of impunity, both male and female journalists (i.e. 29 out of total 35), put the onus of responsibility on government for being indifferent towards introducing effective measures. Noticeably, a number of male (i.e. 19 out of total 27) and some female journalists (i.e. 3 out total 8) mention digital risks of threatening e-mails and WhatsApp messages, surveillance of their mobile phones and online communication, social media and e-mail accounts' hacking.

Findings suggest that the Pakistani male journalists confront physical threats of killing, kidnapping, injury and assault more than their female colleagues. The threat mostly comes from political parties, religious and militant groups, public, intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Participating journalists, in this study, identify certain areas that are most dangerous for the physical safety of journalists including: Khyber Phkatunkhwa Province, Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), Balochistan Province, Interior Sindh and Karachi. They highlight that investigative journalists are mostly attacked, and it is always difficult to cover a news story about any particular group or institution directly. According to one male interviewee: 'I suffer from anxiety and depression because of Pakistan's fearful environment. Covering political, security and religious issues means that a journalist should be ready to face pressure from political parties, military, government and extremist groups. Sometimes pressure groups approach our owner and emphasize to censor the news content and journalists often face direct death threats. I do receive life threats through mobile calls and messages <...> Pursuing investigative journalism is extremely dangerous in Pakistan – especially in Karachi, Balochistan Province and the Northern part of the country <...> And I think the state control is weaker in these areas as compared to the other parts of the country' (Interviewee number 22).

The author opines that the two wars in Afghanistan, non-state militant organizations' involvement in on-going fight across the Line of Control (LoC), military operations in the Northern part of the country and increasing incidents of crimes have all combined to make it increasingly difficult for journalists to carry out their routine work safely anywhere in Pakistan, resulting in their practice of self-censorship. For instance, a female news producer from a local television news channel suggests: 'In Pakistan, one cannot write freely because of threats from different corners. There is a fearful environment, which causes difficulties

for us. We have to write thoughtfully. Some people give us direct threats too. They try to access our family. So far, many journalists have been targeted and killed <...> We do not have freedom of expression and we are compelled to self-censor the news stories to protect ourselves. Several times I self-censored news stories of religious events because I didn't want to be a victim of any particular group <...> *Also, investigative journalists have disappeared without any clue and no proper investigation is done by Pakistan's law enforcement agencies.* This is very apprehensive <...> Another major problem is the public's aggressive attitude. Journalists are beaten by the masses even while reporting on issues of water or electricity shortage. This is just one little example. Sometimes, writing a single line on any cultural or religious affair can trigger public's reaction, which can lead to life threats. The problem is that we have to work in a social system which is religiously and culturally complicated and restrained' (Interviewee number 8).

These findings indicate that physical threats to journalists are not just linked with their location of work in Pakistan and any specific source of risks (such as military, political parties, religious organizations, militant or terrorist groups and so on). But it is also correlated with the nature of journalists' job or assignment that results in topic-specific threats to them. Moreover, unlike male journalists, the Pakistani female journalists suggest that they do not confront serious physical threats except of injuries and attacks while covering mob protests and political rallies. This is not surprising because the proportion of female journalists is much less in Pakistan's journalism profession, and they are not usually given assignments in risky areas (International Federation of Journalists, 2015).

Noticeably, all male and female journalists highlight their experiences of financial threats of job insecurity and forced job terminations, and unpack how it affects their mental health and news content. According to two male journalists from local television news channels:

1. 'I have suffered forced job termination once and I don't get salary on time from my current employer. We do face a lot of pressure from our owners to break the news and at times to manipulate information for their political and business interests. International organizations monitoring journalists' safety in Pakistan have no idea of how much psychological pressure we bear' (Interviewee number 31).
2. 'I have spent almost nine years in this profession. It is not easy to work freely in Pakistan. If luckily you are safe from any sort of physical threat, financial pressure can kill you. Journalists are asked to leave the organization without any prior notice, if a news story does not please the

owner or any political party or religious group. This has happened to me once. I had to suffer severe trauma after losing my job <...> Even in big media organizations, journalists are not paid salaries up to three to six months. And the financial situation of journalists working in small cities and rural areas is miserable. How can we work with such mental stress? Are we really watchdogs of society? Frankly, no! We work to protect our jobs and lives' (Interviewee number 13).

Findings reveal that the Pakistani journalists are not able to work with mental harmony because of physical, financial, psychological, public, social and emotional risks. While government's restrictions and the surveillance by intelligence agencies is an old tradition of causing psychological pressure to journalists, the public and media organizations have emerged as potential threats to their psychological and emotional well-being in Pakistan. In this regard, interviewee number 28 states: 'Government, intelligence agencies, militants and political parties are always considered as the main sources of threats to journalists. Let me tell you that the public in Pakistan itself is a big threat to them. I have been beaten by public twice while covering political rallies, and the public's messages and language on social media are depressing. At times, I feel like to quit the profession because I cannot live a fearful and disrespectful life <...> Within media organization, the pressure of job termination kills psychologically' (Interviewee number 28).

Furthermore, in this study, female journalists highlight that they are socially targeted and discriminated because of their gender. For example, a female news reporter suggests: 'I feel depressed due to the attitude of public when doing outdoor assignments. People do not respect my gender while passing abusive remarks and hitting me and my camera man, especially during the coverage of political rallies. I have realized that journalism is a very tough profession for women in Pakistan. Social conservatism and safety risks often become obstacles for female reporters to cover conflict stories' (Interviewee number 14).

The author believes that a lack of education and growing societal extremism are two possible reasons for the public as an emergent source of threat to journalists in Pakistan. There is a pressing need to analyse the social attitudes towards violence and underlying factors of people's conservatism and aggression in the country. And more importantly, the author emphasises research and initiatives for protecting the mental health of journalists, in addition to promoting their physical and financial protections. In a conservative society like Pakistan, people hesitate to talk about their emotions – especially related to their job. The author views that most of the Pakistani reporters are probably happy just to have their jobs. The Pakistani journalists are highly aware that if they show any 'weakness'

or vulnerability or talk about disorders such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)<sup>16</sup>, somebody else will be more than willing to have their job. Therefore, they keep on bearing emotional and psychological risks that actually affect their ability to perform journalistic roles meaningfully. In 2014, Peshawar University's Departments of Psychology and Journalism have established a 'Competence and Trauma Centre'<sup>17</sup> in collaboration with Deutsche Welle Akademie, which is a German media company. However, the establishment of more counselling centres is required in other provinces of Pakistan – where journalists can consult for free on their psychological and emotional problems.

Moreover, a number of journalists express their apprehensions regarding the legal system of Pakistan, which is fostering *legal risks* and the culture of impunity in the country. According to one of the interviewees: 'Pakistan's major problem is that laws can be easily manipulated or politicized. So, a journalist should be very careful to avoid legal risks of defamation and blasphemy. I say so because media organizations and journalist's union do not come forward to provide legal assistance for longer periods of court proceedings <...> We do have *the right to fair trial* on paper. But the Article 10 (A) of the Constitution does not ensure the elements of transparency, decorum and *judicial propriety* that are the basic ingredients of fair trial. One more important aspect is lawyers' and judges' conflict of interests should be disclosed in any court trial' (Interviewee number 16).

Thus, drawing on the system theory, this study reveals that Pakistan's journalists are working in complex social, political and legal systems that lack proper functioning, transparency, values and propriety. This indicates that the scope of safe journalism is limited in Pakistan until initiatives and reforms are made at various levels.

### **Journalists' description of culture of impunity in Pakistan**

This study reveals that impunity for crime against journalists has become institutionalized and systemized in Pakistan. When talking about Pakistan's culture of impunity, some interviewed male journalists suggest:

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<sup>16</sup> US Department of Veteran Affairs defines PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder) as 'a mental health problem that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening event, like combat, a natural disaster, a car accident, or sexual assault'. See details at: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/ptsd-overview/basics/what-is-ptsd.asp>

<sup>17</sup> Peshawar Press Club and the Khyber Union of Journalists refer journalists with issues of trauma and stress for counselling in the Competence and Trauma Centre. Therapy is free for journalists there.

1. 'Pakistan is a safe place for criminals because they are set free without any court trial. In my knowledge, not a single person has been ever convicted for forced disappearances of working journalists. Impunity is an institutionalized concept in Pakistan' (Interviewee number 23).
2. 'Safety is not an issue for journalists only, but it is a problem for each and every person living in Pakistan. Criminals commit crimes and they are hardly apprehended by police because the law enforcement agencies neither work efficiently to pursue cases against them nor judicial system is strong enough to let this happen. We do not have a well-established national system for registering and monitoring the cases of violence against journalists. The culture of impunity is thriving well in Pakistan and I would not surprise if Pakistan ranks first in terms of impunity for crime against journalists soon' (Interviewee number 9).
3. 'Pakistan's law and order situation is pathetic. Crimes and violence occur when people lose their vision to educate and enlighten themselves. Neither there is an existence of effective law enforcement machinery nor the presence of strong judicial system to handle this situation. Laws are frequently abused and there is no concept of fair trial <...> I really feel disappointed to see Pakistan as converting into an illiterate, extremist and unsafe country. It is sad that Pakistan's government does not seem to be interested in bringing social, legal and political reforms to counter the problem of impunity' (Interviewee number 13).

This study finds five key reasons besides Pakistan's problem of impunity, namely: (i) no proper system to register crimes against journalists; (ii) weak judicial system; (iii) ineffective laws; (iv) the government's uninterested attitude towards reviewing laws, introducing legal reforms and establishing database for monitoring the cases of violence against journalists; (v) manipulation and politicization of laws. For most of the journalists (i.e. 32 out of total 35), in this study, the key problem is that cases are not reported and registered properly, which is flourishing the climate of impunity in Pakistan. For example, a female news reporter from an English-language's newspaper states: 'We all know that Pakistan is a conservative country and violent incidents are a routine problem here. There is a lack of education and societal tolerance in the country. But these are not just the only factors that are watering impunity in Pakistan. Journalists' unions have repeatedly urged the government to establish a system for proper investigation and effective prosecution of crime cases at federal and provincial levels. Journalists are killed, injured, disappeared or kidnapped in Pakistan and there is never actual record of such incidents. We cannot just rely on statistics provided by international organizations. Government and



judiciary both need to play their respective roles efficiently' (Interviewee number 24).

The author opines that one effective way is to establish a judicial database specifically for crime cases against journalists and to appoint dedicated prosecutors for dealing with such cases at provincial and central levels. But it may seem like a distant dream in Pakistan – where the law and order machinery and the lower courts are in shambles because of extensive corruption and ineptitude of those who maintain these institutions.

## **Conclusion**

This study reveals a very limited scope of safe journalism in Pakistan because journalists experience diverse safety threats that affect their physical, psychological, financial, legal, social and emotional state. The study highlights Pakistan's public and media organizations as the emerging sources of threats, in addition to militants, government, political parties, intelligence agencies and religious organizations.

Findings suggest that Pakistan's legal system and judicial framework is weak enough to provide protection to journalists and to counter the country's culture of impunity. The author believes that currently safe journalism is a distant dream and countering impunity towards crimes against journalists is too challenging in Pakistan. Therefore, constant and mutual efforts must be made at various levels with some indispensable measures. The government, media organizations and journalists' unions should pursue mutual efforts for: (i) long-term follow up of cases of journalists' killings and other cases of crime against them in order to see whether cases are adequately registered and fairly prosecuted; (ii) journalists' safety and first-aid trainings and their guidance on how to report in a violent environment; (iii) journalists' free consultation on how to recognize and deal with routine pressure, stress or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD); (iv) legal support to journalists in court cases; (v) the provision of financial and digital protections, medical and life insurances, safety equipment (including bulletproof jackets and medical kits); and the provision of financial compensation to journalists' families in case of work-related death or injury by the media organization and the government.

Furthermore, within the context of Pakistan, the author thinks that the culture of impunity can only come to an end when there is a tangible progress towards the fair trial of perpetrators for their despicable acts. And safety risks can be reduced to some extent, if Pakistan's journalists exercise caution for the foreseeable risks in conflict and non-conflict situations.



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# From interaction possibilities to real engagement: Paradoxes of media participation and the case of *Banda Ampla*, from the public Catalan television TV3

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## Abstract

The concept of citizens' participation in everyday life has strong roots in the ancient Greek culture, commonly accepted as the birth of the occidental civilization. Especially from the 4th century BC to the 5th AD, assemblies and public opinion courts were part of this democratic ecosystem, where citizens could express their views on current topics. Inspired by the typical starting expression of such reunions – ‘Who would like to talk?’ (Sinclair, 1999) – this article tries to contribute to the general topic of public intervention in the media scope. In this sense, what kind of motivations led citizens to participate and interact with media institutions? What kind of troubling issues have been drawn by the scientific literature in this regard? Do real opportunities for participation differ from real audience participation? Thus, in an empirical framework, we analysed the overall social and mental representations of one sample of individuals who have participated in *Banda Ampla*, a public opinion programme broadcast in Barcelona, Spain. This article questioned participants about their personal motivations to participate as well as other generic thoughts on media and participation. Conclusions suggest an important paradox: participants somehow tend to neglect digital possibilities to interact with media, although the majority argue that it is essential for democracy that citizens have their say on current topics within society.

## Keywords

Participation, citizens, public opinion, TV3, Catalonia, *Banda Ampla*.

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## Introduction

It is widely reported that the birth of the occidental thought is profoundly rooted in the ancient Greek civilization, in a movement that had travelled first to Italy then to the rest of the European space. Especially important in the context of empowering citizens to engage with public affairs, Greek public forums and assemblies were fundamental to spread out the importance of democracy in the decision-making processes. In such amphitheatres, oval and/or round buildings with tiers of seats around a central open area, as those used in ancient Rome for gladiatorial contests, public matters were brought into discussion, widely participated by the Greek citizens, including a range of topics which included law and war, for instance (Sinclair, 1999).

It has also been acknowledged that since the Homeric period, around 4th century BC to the 5th AD, Greek Kings had legal determinations to promote such reunions with citizens, who had the opportunity to share personal thoughts and opinions towards the topics raised during the meetings. Nevertheless, the official recognition of a 'citizen', in this context, prevented women, slaves, children and foreigners from participating in the discussion.

Habermas famous suggestion of coffeehouses as spaces for interaction and participation is also often considered in the social realm of participation: 'This process offered the critical foundation for the expression and legitimacy of a truly democratic, and a truly reasonable, public opinion' (Cowan, 2004). These were indeed the practical idealization of the Habermasian landmark of public sphere, where activities of newspaper reading, political discussion could be decisive for engagement, awareness and participation.

Taking into account this historical inspiration, it is our ambition to draw some sort of comparison with some features of media in present times. For instance, this article assumes that public opinion programmes – or audience discussion programmes – may represent some of this democracy ideal. These spaces, often spread on radio and television, invited audiences to participate in the media, starting from an old classical telephone to more recent and advanced communication tools, digital and online ones.

## The ocean of definitions in the concept of 'participation'

The dictionary<sup>2</sup> identifies a very simple way to define 'participation': 'the fact of taking part, as in some action or attempt'. The verb 'to participate'<sup>3</sup> is defined

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<sup>2</sup> Dictionary.com. Available from: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/participation>

<sup>3</sup> Dictionary.com. Available from: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/participate>

the following way: 'take or have a part or share, as with others; partake; share'. Although we might identify some ambiguity, we have to admit that there is an implication to a communicative performance, recognizing an active role posed to someone.

In addition, the context of 'participation' defines its nature. This is why Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) stated that the concept of 'participation' has a 'floating signifying'. From politics to the media scope, citizens' engagement is probably an active behaviour, which conveys different aspects towards its nature. Recognising its centrality to our discussion, citizens' participation in the media has been claimed by a completely new post-electronic generation. Following Martins, such generation 'is developing human interaction, based on internet chats, electronic games, new social media, Second Life, Facebook and Twitter, for instance, which have shaken traditional and steady positions of family and community' (Martins, 2011). Academic research is still trying to acknowledge if such new possibilities of socialization represent an improved feature of social movements, with empirical consequences in communities and groups.

In the grasp of some theoretical contributions to this concept, Espen Yterberg defines citizens' participation in the media as 'a set of performance roles that are given by the production context and by the requirements of the format' (Yterberg, 2004). Gunn Sara Enli states that letting people participate in the media is positive for the democracy and the perception of its value: 'participatory formats are especially created to attract audiences and multi-platform formats are thus increasingly being embraced as one solution to the current challenges facing PSB associated with deregulation, digitalization and convergence' (Enli, 2008). Learning aspects are also brought in by Enli, as 'audiences were encouraged to climb the great ladder of culture, to move from darkness to enlightenment' (Enli, 2008).

Participation is hence seriously involved with a personal dimension of life. The subject is relevant for the emancipation towards participation. This is probably the reason why Kiwan includes the concept of 'motivation' as a decisive fragment for people to get involved in the media: 'understanding what motivates people to participate is crucial to developing an inclusive conception of citizenship' (Kiwan, 2007). Previous studies have pointed out possible outcomes of this motivation (Ribeiro, 2008) – expressing opinions, strong political background, spending time – but several studies highlight that only motivated citizens are able to participate in the media.

Evelina Dagnino considers that the concept of participation has most of its signifying nature outside the political scope. Instead, the media should fulfil the role of questioning public affairs such as social inequality and poverty,

so that real intervention of people in these contexts of broadcasting could produce real changes in daily life. The Brazilian researcher also notes that citizens' participation in the media should be included in the field of moral, 'in the terms of solidarity, the great claim of this redefined participation, disconnected from its political and collective meaning, in order to establish firmly in the private territory confined to moral' (Dagnino, 2004).

Participation is not a concept free of criticism. Rosa Alfaro Moreno (2006) explains that most media institutions are keen to integrate citizens' voices in their domains as to only gather a faithful audience for commercial purposes. According to Moreno, this 'media marketing' deals with participation as a tool to ensure some certain level of audiences, making sure that this feeling of interaction is promoted all the time, creating a consistent image of such formats in audiences' routines with the media.

Besides motivation, technology embodies a definitive tool for the empowerment of participation itself. New digital and communicative landscapes, hand-by-hand fast, updated and live content, have been promoting the idea that participation is all around. Howard Rheingold (2008) once highlighted that text, audio and video alongside blogs, podcasts and video casts would be able to offer real chances for people to get involved in the media discourse. This possibility deals with countless studies that have been questioning people's abilities and perceptions on devices and participative formats, in the broad area of media literacy studies (EAVI, 2009; Pérez-Tornero, 2004).

## **A conceptual framework: 'Participation' within media literacy studies**

As communication is strongly rooted with democracy it is obvious that some political institutions, such as the European Commission, make a particular call on citizens' participation towards the media. The US-based Center for Media Literacy claims that participation is an extension of citizenship and democracy. According to Thoman and Jolls, 'media literacy is one dimension of the typical education developed in this 21st century. It provides a structure of access, analysis, evaluation, content creation in different ways, from print sheets to video or Internet. Media literacy builds the comprehension of the media role in social terms, as well as other essential abilities to question and participate, perceived as key elements for democratic citizens' (Thoman & Jolls, 2005).

In a semiotic point of view, media (re)build meanings and interfere in many of our social representations. However, it remains unclear why we should address a specific discipline of education towards the media scope. This has been the concern of many researchers. David Buckingham (2003) explained that media

are large industries, generating employment and most of our information about the political process. Media institutions are the largest platforms for cultural expression through communication, by replacing family, church, school, as the strongest socialization agents in contemporary societies.

The concept of participation has been part of several media literacy studies. In the *Study Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Levels* published in October 2009 by EAVI (European Association for Viewers' Interests), citizens' participation in the media is described as a social competence, a communicative skill, alongside content creation and social relations, in the top of the pyramid of Media Literacy Criteria Levels. Hence, the document assumes that media do develop a vital role in the promotion of the democratic values throughout Europe, namely by encouraging social cohesion, ethnic diversity and plural access. EAVI also points out that the importance of 'more spaces opened to the civil intervention in the decision making processes, which tend to create a healthier public life', is now clear to several international organisms, such as the European Commission, European Parliament and the Europe Council.

Jos Manuel Pérez Tornero (2004) also has an important study on this subject. In his paper about digital literacy, the Spanish researcher considers that this is a key concept in the information society, as an opportunity to address a new meaning of citizenship, based on responsibility and participation, in a cultural and humanist spirit. In this context, Pérez Tornero does not forget how important it is to consider motivation as a decisive step for people to interact more in the media. Raising critical consciousness, along with cultural and institutional innovation is one of the major tasks brought by participation, the author says.

### **Observing live *Banda Ampla*<sup>4</sup>: Getting to know perceptions on participation**

*Banda Ampla*<sup>5</sup> was an audience discussion programme from public Catalanian television TV3, ended in 2012 for budgetary reasons. Since 2009, every Thursday night a group of citizens, selected by the producers, was invited to come live to the studio and talk about public and current matters of this Spanish region. According to the data provided by the media<sup>6</sup>, the programme was weekly

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<sup>4</sup> This case study was part of the author's PhD research project, held temporarily in the Autonomous University Barcelona, in Spain, in the PUBLIRADIO research group, supervised by Professor Juan José Perona. In addition, *Banda Ampla*'s uniqueness within the Spanish television scope played an important role in this study selection.

<sup>5</sup> *Banda Ampla*. Available from: <http://www.tv3.cat/bandaampla>

<sup>6</sup> Ara.cat. Available from: [https://www.ara.cat/media/TV3-prescindeix-programa-Banda-ampla\\_0\\_643735725.html](https://www.ara.cat/media/TV3-prescindeix-programa-Banda-ampla_0_643735725.html)



followed by an average of 172.000 viewers. Hosted by Lidia Heredia (previously with Toni Cruanyes who had left the format), some invited specialists on the topic were also included to provide scientific or expertise approaches during the broadcasting.

In order to identify more precisely some of the most common aspects of *Band Ampla*, this research carried out a non-participation observation method into one of the broadcastings of the programme. On the 13th of January 2011, the programme was focused on then-called new legal framework of smoking in public spaces in Catalonia. This study highlights some of the technical procedures of the show and, in the second part, deals with a small survey over a sample of citizens who participated in that specific show.

*Banda Ampla* was held in the TV3 headquarters, Studio 1, in Sant Joan Despí, Barcelona. This large and modern studio was able to gather almost 100 participants, divided in three rows in two sides. In the centre of the set, the hostess Lúdia Herédia was conducting the show with the main topic of discussion on a wide screen. This was a 1h30 long programme (Figure 1).

Figure 1

*Banda Ampla* studio overview



Source: <http://magufos.crearimagen.com>



Participants could talk in Spanish, but Catalan language was at the main core of the show. This was also a consequence of the selection of citizens to participate, as they lived in the vast region of Catalonia.

### **Production details: Selecting participants and live on air**

This was a television format which broadcast for the Catalan population, from Andorra, Catalonia, Valencia to the Balearic islands. According to the Government of Catalonia – *Generalitat de Catalunya*<sup>7</sup> – 10 million people live in this space. The problems that were arisen tended to discuss pertinent and up-to-date topics of this area.

Following information provided by the Head of Producers, Trinidad Espejo, the overall participants were selected according to three ideas: 1) invited specialists on the subject (in this case study, the production invited some owners of bars, restaurants or even discos, who had to deal with smoke restrictions according to the already-mentioned new law); 2) contacting people who signed up for participation via e-mail or telephone; 3) contacts made by local Catalan associations in order to participate as well. This selection took almost a week beforehand.

Invited specialists came to the studio on their own, the rest of the participants did not. They usually arrived two hours before the beginning of the show, in one or two buses provided by the local organizations and/or the production. Welcomed by the staff, some snacks and light drinks were available to the group. Some young ladies were also in the room to help participants feel comfortable, providing assistance if requested. As time went on, one hour was left for *Banda Ampla* to be on air. Then, participants were requested to be in two lines to enter the studio. No telephones were allowed. No photos could be taken inside. Receptionists took a close look on the participants' behaviour, making sure that rules were followed including one key aspect. Citizens were asked to hand over a statement on their image rights, claiming that TV3 could use images of them to properly broadcast the programme, as well as for the post-production team, after the ending of the show.

### **Minutes before on air: How the participation works live**

Right after collecting all the signatures, the participants started to sit down in their seats in studio, red and white coloured, following *Banda Ampla's* lettering

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<sup>7</sup> Generalitat de Catalunya. Available from: <http://www20.gencat.cat/portal/site/Llengcat/menuitem.1d08009f459b71e7a129d410b0c0e1a0/?vgnnextoid=ef40f9465ff61110VgnVCM1000000b0c1e0aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=ef40f9465ff61110VgnVCM1000000b0c1e0aRCRD&vgnnextfmt=default>

and icon. Participants did not sit wherever they wanted, as the production told them where exactly to sit, probably as a way to ensure a good representation of the audience in the studio. So, there was a paper informing where to sit down. It was later explained that this practice was regarded in order to allow the hostess to know exactly where a specific participant would sit down and then interact live, knowing the name and the most important data to frame TV viewers about it, concerning to the debate development.

All sat in chairs, the Chief of the *régie* Eduard Calvó warned participants how to interact wisely during the show. Calvó addressed them all, ensuring that no one would misbehave according to the rules defined. He stressed out the concept of 'healthy participation', letting others talks, not interrupting active discussions, respecting time and the hostess instructions to talk. He noted that microphones were all over the seats, so getting the chance to talk on the topic would be perfectly possible for anyone. Calvó also presented the general guidelines of *Banda Ampla* and how it would be carried out in the two-hour long show: debates with specialists, participants' interventions, video interviews in bars and restaurants to be broadcast during the show as to enrich the debate on the topic. The producer emphasized the importance of language correctness of participation, avoiding slang or dirty words. Attacking others' views and opinions would not be allowed, the production stated.

After these recommendations Lídia Herédia walked down the studio. Participants applauded her as she waved and smiled. She was concerned about technical aspects, rehearsing with cameras and sound checking all suitable devices. Minutes before it all started, Herédia addressed the participants, reminding them some of the same aspects of 'good participation'. After this brief intervention, Lídia recorded the short video teaser of the then-upcoming programme, about sports and doping. The show was then all set to start.

## **Understanding social representations about media participation**

As a complement research tool of the non-observation method mentioned above, a small questionnaire was handed over to a sample of participants before they joined the main studio of the show, in order to identify some critical opinions on several issues towards the intervention of citizens in the media, especially in this kind of public opinion formats. In this contact, from almost 90 participants, 51 have answered to the questions. This research tools intends to reveal early motivations and social constructions of participants in the process of engaging in the public opinion programme on television.

Following Quivy and Campenhoudt, ‘the questionnaire deals with an enquiry a group of individuals generally representative of a population, about their social, professional or familiar situation, as well as their opinions, attitudes regarding the options or human and social questions’<sup>8</sup> (Quivy & Campenhoudt, 1992). This technique is no stranger to some disadvantages, as the authors warn about the potential harm of shallow answers, superficial and very little detailed ones: ‘The results are often presented as simply descriptions, without dependent elements to fully understand the questions itself’<sup>9</sup>. However, if a specific research question requires a certain number of answers, regardless of possible complex and long explanations, then the questionnaire is the most suitable technique, as stated in this article.

The focus of the questionnaire was to analyse social and mental representations of public opinion programmes. Hence, 13 questions intended to observe, for instance, what kind of evaluations are to be made about new communicative technologies, as respondents explained if they participated in other public opinion formats within the media. In addition, motivations to participate were also regarded, troubling issues and other questions on the importance of these programmes in the media.

## Results and analysis

Questions were answered by 51 participants of this survey, 29 men and 22 women. When it comes to age, two categories emerge: from 16 to 47 years old (27 individuals); from 48 to 80 (24 participants).

In the first group of questions, generic aspects within the relationships between citizens and television were observed. 39 in 51 individuals watch television ‘every day’. Regarding *Banda Ampla*, 5 participants said that they watched TV ‘every week’, as most of the respondents said that ‘rarely’ followed the show (20) and 5 had not known about the show until the moment they were invited to come to the studio and participate.

Measuring interaction with the show, 45 out of 51 respondents confirmed they had never participated in the show. Only two did it through e-mail and the show’s official page on Facebook. Thus, it was not possible to study in depth the potentialities of participation outside the studio, evaluating their overall perceptions. Furthermore, dealing with the obstacles of participation, *Charts 1 and 2* provide insights on participants’ views about troubling issues which may prevent people to participate more in this programme:

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<sup>8</sup> Author’s translation based on the Portuguese edition of Quivy & Campenhoudt (1992).

<sup>9</sup> Author’s translation based on the Portuguese edition of Quivy & Campenhoudt (1992).

Chart 1

## WHY PEOPLE DO NOT PARTICIPATE?

(ONE ANSWER PROVIDED)

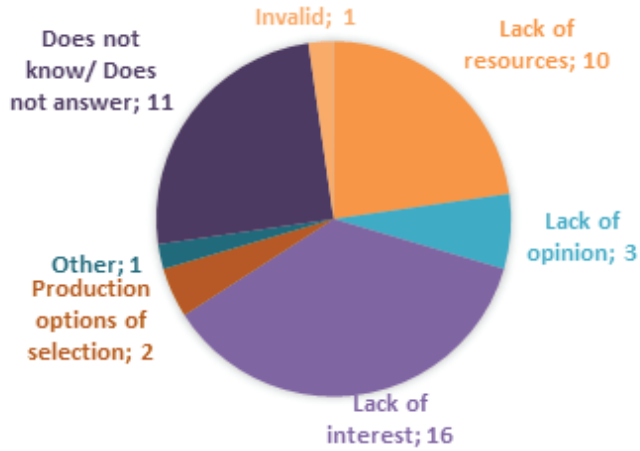
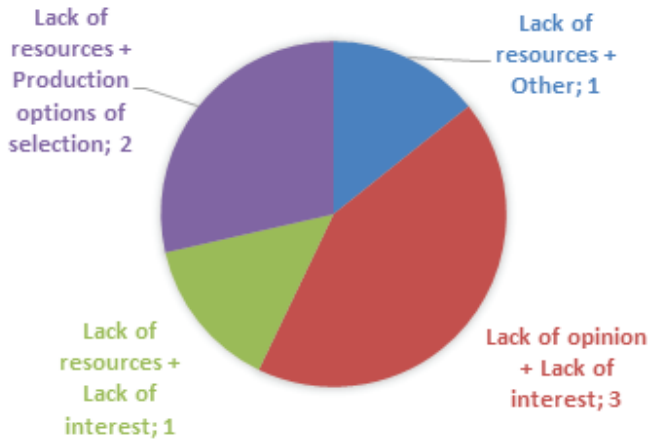


Chart 2

## WHY PEOPLE DO NOT PARTICIPATE?

(TWO ANSWER PROVIDED)

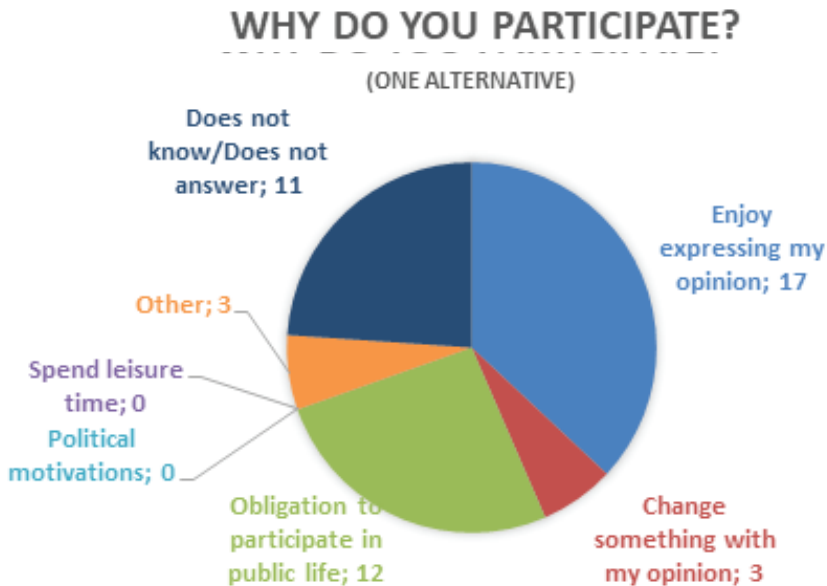


Following *Charts 1 and 2*, given that 12 participants did not answer this question, 32 of the overall sample chose one answer and 7 two possible explanations for the stated interrogation.

In the first group, results indicate the following: 10 answers mentioned the lack of technological resources; 3 referred the lack of citizens' interest, while two blamed the production selection of participants. As in the second group, results show: the pair 'lack of opinion' and 'lack of interest' was the most chosen one with 3 individuals, followed by 'lack of resources' and 'programme's selection of participants' with 2 answers. In a wider perspective, the explanation of 'lack of resources, such as technological ones' was the most selected one, with 17 responses, whilst 'lack of interest by the citizens' gathered 14 votes. These were the two greatest obstacles underlined by this sample of participants in *Banda Ampla*.

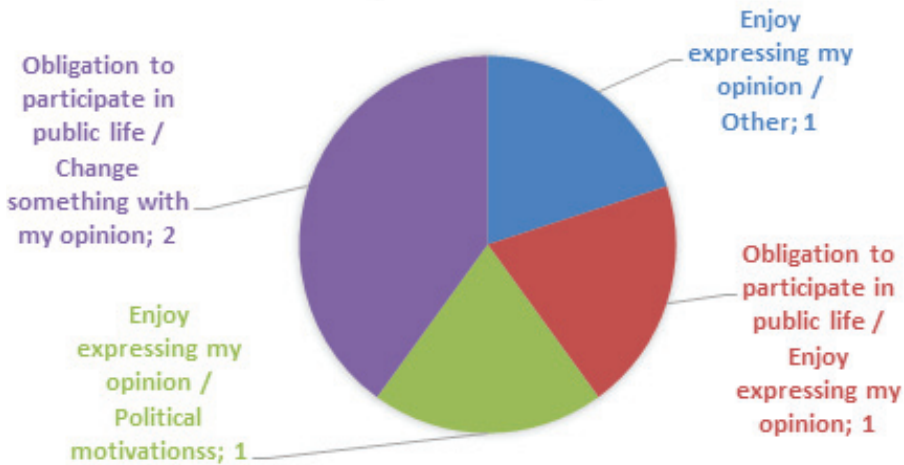
One of the critical aspects of the interaction between citizens and media deals with the definition of the motivations and constraints that lead people to media participation or prevented them from it. Following the previous question, respondents could answer providing one or two statements, as regarded in *Chart 3*:

*Chart 3*



## WHY DO YOU PARTICIPATE?

(TWO ALTERNATIVES)



Considering that 11 participants did not answer, 35 of 40 respondents chose one alternative and the remaining 5 – two possibilities. In the first case of a single justification, 17 individuals recognised that their intervention is motivated by their joy to express their opinions in these programmes. Thus, 12 confirmed that it is part of our obligation as citizens to participate in public life, especially in the media. Far from these levels of popularity, 3 respondents feel that their participation can change something in social life, in other peoples' minds. In conclusion, 'joy to express opinions' (17) and 'obligation to participate in public life' (16) are the most alternatives combined.

The last part of the survey evaluated the relationship between participants and television. Hence, all respondents acknowledged that television should continue to promote this type of programmes. Justifying their views, 17 of them underlined the importance of citizens in the media productions, or as stated 'everyone has the right to give an opinion', 'citizens are the mirror of reality'. 4 of them did emphasize the public opinion programmes as active platforms for public to interact, 2 highlighted the active role of television in the social scope and 2 defended the rights to participate in public life or freedom of speech. Such an analysis was provided after a careful textual analysis.

In this research, few possibilities of crossing variables can be observed, as a great number of respondents confirmed that they had never participated in the programme before. This prevented further analysis to match results between

those who participated from their homes and, consequently, developed their views of some participative technologies, for instance.

However, both men and women underlined the very same reasons to participate (joy of expression of their opinions and obligation as citizens to participate in public life). In the obstacles to a wider participation, there is also some balance, as both men (10) and women (6) are most concerned in the lack of interest by citizens to justify low levels of popular intervention in these programmes. It was also possible to analyse that the individuals who confirmed that they watch television every day – 39 out of 51 – pointed out the lack of interest and technological resources as main obstacles to a wider citizens' intervention. It states clear that watching television does not indicate *per se*, that these audiences feel motivated to participate.

## **Final remarks**

It is also common sense to acknowledge that history tends to repeat itself. As it was stated in the first part of this study, Greek democratic societies revealed an important dimension in the access to participate in the public space. Women, slaves and foreigners were amongst those who could not attend public hearings promoted by the official representatives within the government. Moving the question of access a bit further, to the most recent context in the media ecology, access may be an important issue, but motivating citizens to participate has become critical for media institutions. The possibility to interact with media is real, happens on a daily basis, but motivating citizens to be part of such context of a public dialogue remains a very troubling issue, as many of them do not seem to be interested in engaging with digital tools, for instance, in public opinion programmes, as stated in the study. Hence, Habermas' widely studied coffeehouses seemed to have a possible comparison with these new media formats. The main differences lie in access and wide scope: coffeehouses were the place for intellectuals and elites to discuss current topics; public opinion programmes in television suggest an indiscriminate target and tend to reach wider audiences. However, both are defined by the same nature: discussing public affairs within citizens.

*Banda Ampla* was an important space to pose some questions regarding public participation in the media. It was considered that only a deep understanding of how these spaces work, may shed some light on doubts in this area.

However, it is clear now that this research only seeks to initiate part of a debate about plenty of possibilities to come. As Dahlgren (2006) stated, the disaffection between citizens and politics is a crucial debility in modern societies. Media may be a viable strategy to overcome this distance. Citizens' participation

can find in the media plenty of possibilities of implementation, probably more direct than the ones provided by the traditional field of politics.

Although we may admit that some answers brought a few unravelling surprises, this was a contribution to share some of the social representations of a sample of citizens towards public participation in the media. Motivation to participate plays a decisive role. At the same time, the majority of respondents had not previously participated in the show, despite numerous technological opportunities for interaction. It is somehow obvious that only motivated citizens may participate in the media. Further research on this topic should analyse social and psychological motivations that may conduct or inhibit citizens to participate in the media, according to randomly defined in-depth interviews with citizens.

In the survey, some answers were curious, as well. Few, yet reliable, citizens explained that they had participated in *Banda Ampla* only as a way to learn more about a television set. Answers like these may indicate shallow perceptions on participations, but it is essential to understand that participation is more than that: it is about building a democratic society based on an interactive discussion. Key dimensions in our daily life deal with influence, knowledge and information. Also, if participation is designed to promote information, awareness and consciousness, one would expect that social influence could be triggered by these ways of people to have their say on public matters.

If information age is a reality, we do suggest that participation and social interaction play an active role in knowledge dissemination. However, the question of motivation, a permanent working task for media, shall also focus on those who do not participate, those who are still in social silence, in the shadow of participation.

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