Audience Credibility on TV News Channels: A Case Study of Geo & ARY News Channels

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Abstract

The boom of Pakistani channels started after the PEMRA issued licenses to many private channels and later on questions were raised on credibility of Pakistani news media. Measuring the audience credibility on the news channels is the most important aspect as the credibility is said to be the back bone of the entire media system. The credibility of news channels is becoming an increasingly important area to understand, to expand knowledge in this domain, a survey study was conducted out that investigated people's perception of the credibility of two news channels namely ARY News and Geo News. The research explores the perception of the news audiences on the credibility of the news channels. A survey is administered with the help of convenience sampling technique and selected sample of 200 audiences from Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. The researcher assessed the credibility perception of the audiences toward the two news media channels: ARY News and Geo News. The credibility is measured with the help of two different components: source and medium. To measure these constructs a 12-scale factor developed by Gaziano and McGrath (1986) with additions from Infante (1980) and Jacobson (2012) is incorporated. The findings suggested that audience perceived the credibility of source in a different way whereas both channels as a medium are perceived to be similar. The data showed the negative linkage between age, gender, education, occupation and the news media channel's credibility but shows the positive relationship between political affiliation and credibility perception of the news channels.

Keywords: Media credibility, traditional media, Pakistani television

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Introduction

From last two decades, information and communication technology prevalence has been increased all over the world. After radio, the television and computers have brought ease in the entire information system and have provided more knowledge and entertainment. This revolution expanded the spread of the news channels. The new world and the news media have breaker all the boundaries with global reach.

In the information technology distance does not matter because of new satellite system which brought up ease in communication and provided fixed dimensions. The digital satellite plays an unprecedented role in spreading information through technology and accomplished worldwide transmissions. This media revolution changed the entire world of knowledge and information which was started years ago with conventional methods. The wireless communication system developed new phenomena in the visual effect of television and eventually it converted on to satellite system optical fibre technology (Dean et al,2003).

Pakistan television and Proliferation of new private channels

Pakistan television broadcasted live telecast entertaining programs,indigenous dramas ,news bulletins, foreign documentaries, film. In Zia regime PTV covered only government news and its recordings were sent to President Zia, Prime Minister and Information Minister to daily bases. The whole setup of PTV news was handled and instructed by information ministry. Pakistan television always been hijacked democracy by dictatorship. (Agha, 2012).

In 2002 Geo news channel was founded by Mir Shakeel ur Rehman who owned Jang newspaper media group. Geo has started its first news transmission on 1 October 2002 and it was first

Pakistani news channel who raised voice for freedom of speech and incentive for the free news media. Geo escalated its television network under the flag of the Geo media group and started four new entertaining channels. The Geo television group has significant reputation in news media technology of Pakistan. The prevalence of independent news media gave room to number of new news channels, ARY being one of them. ARY, first international news channel in Pakistan. had a wide range of correspondents around the world. In Pakistan, there are 500 media reporters working with the capability to exchange news information with international media groups. ARY is one of the most popular media groups in Pakistan. (Yousaf,2012).

Freedom of media is a good sign for any democratic governance, but only political institutions cannot do that. They need support of other democratic institutions. Media freedom can change the political policies of the country, if used carefully and in a responsible manner. (Gehlbach,2011).

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are to examine the relationship between television viewers and audience credibility on Pakistani news channels.

1. To explore the political affiliation on Pakistani news channel's credibility.

2. To find out the relationship between demographic characteristic factors such gender and the credibility of news channels.

3. To find out the differences and similarities found in credibility factors of Geo and ARY news channels.

Research questions

RQ.1. What are the similarities and differences found in the credibility dimensions of Geo &ARY?

RQ.2. How the gender affects the credibility of both Geo & ARY news channels?

RQ.3. What is effect of political affiliation on credibility?

Credibility & Audience Perception

Credibility of the news medium is one of the significant variables that determine the overall image of the source among the audience. This credibility has certain other driving forces(perceptions) that play their role to label the news as credible., Nicholas et al. (2001) carried out a survey research to find out how people from different perceptions on the credibility of online sources. The researchers concluded that '"real-world feel," "ease of use," "expertise," "trustworthiness," and "tailoring' are the five variables that play their role if the source was to be considered as credible. Any audience will label the source of news as credible if that source has in it these five cues. The present research borrows from the above mentioned seven cues and analyses the same in the Pakistani settings.

The news that reaches us follows some irregular frames, which ultimately leaves the audience to perceive it accordingly. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) analyzed number of newspapers and broadcast channels to inspect this and define the ultimate credibility lies" news source" for the audience. They said that the news, in all the issues, was following specific types of frames. These frames were fluctuated not only with the expected perceptions of the audience,

but was also defined by the type of the news outlet and the issue type. The study concluded that the 'responsibility' and 'conflict' frames were used in most of the cases.

The credibility of the news source is perceived differently across different languages and different mediums. A purposive cross sectionals study by Memon (2014) was conducted to find out the perceptions of journalists regarding the print and electronic news mediums. Memon(2014) found out that the journalists had these perceptions regarding the credibility based on their working experiences with these mediums. The study concluded that journalists considered that electronic media involves more distracting factors thus making this medium as the less credible. The respondents were of the view that television source was perceived as less credible by the audiences as it incorporates certain elements that reduces the credibility of the news for the audience. At the same time, journalists were of the view that print media is considered to be more credible as it provides in-depth information to the public as compared to the electronic media. Moreover, the research brought forward that the news in the less common language was also considered to be less credible by the audiences. The research explored the similarities and differences of audience perception of television channels that is Geo and ARY.

H1: There are similarities & differences found in the credibility dimensions of Geo & ARY.

H2: There is a relationship between gender and perception of news channel's credibility

Relationship between the Demographics and Credibility

Murphy and Auter (2012) conducted a study to find out the level of credibility audience hold regarding the news channels credibility. They were inspecting the causes behind the shift of the audience from the traditional news sources to the online sources. In doing so, the element of news credibility was considered to be the defining variable. The study also suggested that the

availability of news medium other than the traditional news also played a role to decrease the level of credibility that audience used to have on the traditional news channels. As per the research the prior news sources left audience with more open choices and the variables that used to determine the credibility of the traditional news sources were not bound with the online news mediums. The study concluded that it wasn't the partisanship of the audience to the political or any other views, but the entire setup and different cues of the news medium that defined the credibility of the news for the audience. is guided by the overall credibility of the channel. Media practices can alter the way people think about them. This study presents the results from an experiment investigating the influence of television form (image quality and field of view) on presence and audiences' perceptions of source credibility for news anchors and local news. The results demonstrate that improved image quality (HDTV) has a positive influence on audience perceptions of source credibility and the overall credibility of newscasts. (Cheryl ,2006).

 In study of Credibility and Demographics, several studies have examined whether demographics influence judgments of media credibility. For instance, past studies suggest that males and those with high levels of education, income, and media use tend to be the most critical of the media in general. Internet studies suggest while the Information Superhighway is becoming more demographically mainstream,"' it is still dominated by males of high socio-economic status. Researchers also suggest that Internet users tend to be heavy media users in general, although the Internet has not yet replaced more traditional sources. (Thomas & Barbara ,1998)

News channels and political affiliation.

Political communication is the most important factor that guides the perceived credibility of the news channels. Lee (2010) pointed out to the U.S audience and stated that the entire

credibility of the news channels is merely guided by the fact the channel covers the politics of the time. If the new channel satisfies the instincts of the public on the political issue that it is taking up then it ultimately ends up as the reliable and credible source of news. the researcher took up the national survey of the American audiences and credibility levels. Consequently, the research proved the hypothesis that U.S audience was distrustful on the overall news channel just because they did not perceive the reporting of the political issues as an unbiased and impartial one. Morris (2007) said that different audience perceives the credibility of media differently. They do so base on their political dispositions. The study took the secondary method of analysis and gathered data from the Pew Research Center (2004). The study focused on American news media and analyzed that the already held political attitudes of the audiences were defining how and what they perceived about the given news channel. The study concluded that the audience of Fox News Channels perceived not only this channel is a biased way, but also had differed stance on the politics of the country as compared to the other public. Iyengar and Hahn (2009) analyzed this hypothesis with the help of cross-sectional analysis. They were exploring if the demand of the news varies with the level of compassion the audience have with the news channels. The study, with the help of analyzing different groups, concluded that conservatives and republicans perceived FOX News to be more credible as compared to CNN and NPR and relied on it for almost all kinds of news. This is so because they form the perceptions of those channels in their mind as credible. At the back of it is their belief system or their political dispositions that guide these perceptions. Iyengar & Hahn (2009) recommended the political affiliation, plays an important role in the formation of dispositions and perceptions regarding a given news channel.

Media's credibility with the audience can be estimated by the post behavior of the audience about any given issue. Yaser (2011) stated that the most important behavior of the

audiences in the democratic society is the voting habit. It can put forward the reality of perceived credibility of the news channels. Is the news channel being able to change the attitude of the audiences? If yes, then does it further change the attitude into behavior? And if it is able to do so then it can be inferred that news media is the most credible source as per the audience when it comes to the political issues. General elections of Pakistan in 2008 received a heavy turnout. Researchers carried out the interviews of 400 respondents to find out the relationship of media's credibility, the consumption and the behavior. They found out that people consumed news media more in the days of the campaign. In fact, people relied on the news talk shows and bulletins more as compared to that of other days. Ultimately, the views of the respondents brought forward the idea that news channels were considered to be credible as they actually were responsible in guiding the overall voting behavior of the audiences. This study focuses the relationship of news medium credibility and political affiliation of audiences.

H.3 There is a positive relationship between political affiliation and perception of news channel's credibility.

Methods

Quantitative research method constitutes on statistical, mathematical, numerical analysis of data collected through surveys with computational techniques. Quantitative research constructs on the scientific method which is characterized by the empirical data collection by applying statistical techniques for getting accurate results of audience. The main objective of quantitative research method selects or reject the hypothesis to comparable results through statistical instruments, analyze the percentage of variables and samples which ensure validity and

reliability to valid estimates. SPSS is used for testing source and Cronbach scale used for checking reliability and validity of questionnaire.

There are two general methods that are followed in the research: qualitative and quantitative. Some of the extensive research also follows both of them. Here, the researcher wants to explore the figure that if the audience do/do not find the famous news channels as credible. The research follows a quantitative research so as to bring forward the reliance of people on the news channels as credible source.

Moreover, this quantitative study is exploring the difference of credibility of two leading channels of Pakistan private news media.

Questionnaire Development

The present research is exploring the perception of the audience about the news channel's credibility by breaking the component into two pieces: source and the medium.

Though there are number of scales developed for the media credibility's perception and one of the most popular is the ne developed by Graziano and McGrath (1986). Perception of credibility is a subjective approach and thus all individuals tend to identify it differently. The present research takes from the 12-scale factor developed by Graziano and McGrath (1986) and alters it slightly so as to fit in the researcher's target population (Pakistan) and also adds the categories of expertise, trustworthiness and dynamism by scale developed by Infante(1980). Also borrows some categories for both source and medium from Jacobson (2012).

Likert scale of 1 to 5 was used to examine the degree of Audience Credibility on Pakistani News Channels. The instrument also inquired what political affiliation the respondents

hold and what education do they have so as to rightly gauge the exact credibility levels that audiences hold about the given news channels.

Instrument

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Pilot study

The pre-test of the questionnaire to avoid any ambiguities in the final survey was carried out with 35 audiences of Geo News and ARY News. Researcher conducted a pretest with 25 journalists, students and scholars of media studies. It was carried out to understand that the questionnaire was of appropriate length and if the language and the terms were easily understandable by the respondents. They were asked to freely exchange their views about the questionnaires. They suggested that they couldn't understand the term 'political affiliation', to address this issue, options carrying the political parties of the country were added. Respondents also suggested that it was time consuming to fill in the demographic details so the researcher has also added options underneath the demographics to save the time of the respondents. In general, respondents did not face many problems and could easily understand the questions. As is mentioned previously in the methodology the questionnaire was formed by amalgamating different scales given by different scholars so the amendments after the pretest are considered to be a new input in the questionnaire. Cronbach reliability analysis was carried out to determine the reliability and internal consistency of the different constructs. The acceptable level of

reliability was set at .80 and above. The reliability coefficient for the present questionnaire was found to be .8

Reliability Statistics of ARY

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.852	33

Reliability Statistics Geo

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.882	32

To be sure that the questionnaire is actually measuring the credibility of the audience i:e is reliable and is not letting audience swing in their opinion i:e the researcher has getting the same response every time after filling the same form which means that the questionnaire is also consistent we use Cronbach's Alpha. The coefficient equal to or near .07 was considered reliable.

Operational definition

Credibility It is measured by measuring the two sub categories: Source and the Medium

Source (reporter/anchor): The researches followed 1-5 Likert scale for the source credibility of channels. The research has given (questions regarding means of source credibility ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree).

- The Reports are Trustworthy

- Journalists are Qualified

- They are Well Informed

- They are Unbiased

- They avoid Aggressive Strategy

- They are Expert

- Authoritative

- Show an Accurate Portrayal of Events

- Values Peoples' Privacy

- Separates Facts from opinion

Medium (News Channel as a whole): The entire channel when put forward in front of the public is perceived as either credible or not. The following characteristics of the news channels if agreed by the respondents will show that the news channel is perceived as credible. Another set of 5 point Likert scale questions (strongly agree to strongly disagree) asked different questions regarding medium credibility. It includes:

- It must be accurate

- Trustworthy

- It is credible if it cares about audiences needs/interests,

- Gives complete account

- Is Emotional and is not Close minded

- Is concerned about the public's interest

- Active

- Comprehensive

- Responsible and avoids Shallow news

- If focuses on Objective reporting

- Follows some code of conduct

- Produces news that is relevant to me

- Gives a follow up to all the news

- Avoids sensationalizing the news and finally;

- It is news has real influence on your choices

Independent variables

Age: The interval scale is used for the age of respondents 18_25, 26-35, 36_ 45, 46 or more.

Gender: The nominal scale is used for data of gender from 200 samples that is, Male, Female.

Political affiliation: The nominal scale category is used for the data collection regarding political affiliation, e.g.

PTI, PMLN, PPP, JEI, JUI, NONE, OTHERS.

Results

Difference found in ARY/ GEO news source credibility.

Source credibility of both the news channel's perceived much different than each other. According to survey audience believed that ARY & GEO reporters and anchors perceived totally different. The nine indicators in the below table showing different percentage of audience opinion.

TABLE.1

	ARY		GEO	
	50	Reporters are trustworthy	34	Different
	33	Reporting is unbiased	21	Different
	58	Is expert	44.5	Different
	57.5	Is intelligent	46	Different
	37.5	Is authoritative	43	Different
	56.5	Accurate portrayal of events	26	Different
	33	Values people's privacy	65	Different
	34	Separates facts from opinions	41.5	Different
	44	Avoids sensationalizing the news	56	Different

Similarities found in GEO / ARY source

There are three indicators of source credibility of ARY & GEO NEWS are found similar .They considered to be qualified, avoids aggressive strategy and well informed.

TABLE.2

			ARY		GEO	
1.	58	Journalists are well informed	57.5	Similarity
2.	37	Avoids aggressive strategy	36	Similarity
3.	58	Journalists are well qualified	57	Similarity

Similarities found in ARY/GEO news (medium)

The credibility of both the channels perceived similar. In the survey audience perception indicates equally credible to ARY& GEO news as whole medium, whereas they are not agreeing the way of presentation or discussion programs. their perception is more contradicting. In the table there are 9 indicators showing similar in the table 3.

TABLE.3

			ARY		GEO	
1.	36	Cares about audience needs	35.5	Similarity
2.	49	Emotional	47	Similarity

3.	47	Open minded	46.5	Similarity
4.	71	Active	70.5	Similarity
5.	43.5	Deep	44	Similarity
6.	47	Objective	49.5	Similarity
7.	61	With political leaning	62.5	Similarity
8.	42.5	Follow some code of conduct	43.5	Similarity
9.	33.5	Produce news that is relevant to me	32	Similarity

Difference found in GEO &ARY news (medium)

The 7 indicators of medium are showing difference in the bellow table.

TABLE.4

ARY   GEO

1.	47.5	Accurate	33.5	Different
2.	43.5	Complete account	26.5	Different
3.	43	Is concerned about public's interests	31.5	Different
4.	54.5	Comprehensive	45.5	Different
5.	45.5	Responsible	32	Different

| 6. | 46.5 | Gives a follow up to all the news | 36 | Different |
| 7. | 43 | The news has real influence on my choice | 33.5 | Different |

Credibility and Gender

Independent sample-test is applied to check the association between the credibility of both channels and gender. As can be seen table.6 gender is independent variable and credibility is dependent variable. The group variable is gender and it is categorically consisting in male value (1) female (2) and dependent variable measured on continuous scale that is credibility of both channels. The results showed that gender is scientifically associated with credibility.

TABLE.5

Group Statistics

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Cred	MALE	110	2.9915	.37585	.03584
	FEMALE	89	3.1596	.40266	.04268

TABLE.6

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
cre d Equal variances assumed	1.431	.233	-3.037	197	.003	-.16805	.05533	-.27716	-.05894
Equal variances not assumed			-3.015	182.558	.003	-.16805	.05573	-.27801	-.05809

Analysis of variance (Anova)

The study constructs a one-way analysis variance test (ANOVA)to measure significance between political affiliation and two Pakistani private news channels Geo & ARY news. Political affiliation is independent variable and credibility is dependent variable.as describe in below. ARY has significant value =.006 it showed that political affiliation effects the news channels credibility of ARY News Channels. And it is not significant to Geo news channels.

TABLE.7

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Cred ARY	Between Groups	4.856	6	.809	3.167	.006
	Within Groups	49.321	193	.256		
	Total	54.177	199			
Cred Geo	Between Groups	1.136	6	.189	.932	.473
	Within Groups	39.007	192	.203		
	Total	40.143	198			

Discussion

The dimensions of credibility measurement divided into two sub points. The two dimensions included source credibility and the medium credibility. The study posited that each dimension or construct that is the source and the medium of the news channels can be further categorized into indicators which can bring forward the level of media credibility in eyes of the audiences. The study results proved the assumptions/hypothesis put forward by the research studies. There are significant similarities and differences found in the credibility dimensions of Geo & ARY.As it is also supported by (Jaggi & Majumdar, 2009) that popularity and credibility has significant relationship in viewing tv channels. By doing so the researcher explains the reasons for the aforementioned similarities and differences in the study and answers the first research question of the study i.e. What are the similarities and differences found in the credibility dimensions of Geo & ARY?

The trust levels of the audiences were therefore clearly different for ARY and Geo news. More respondents believed that ARY source was more trustworthy. But in case audiences believed that Geo news source was more well informed than ARY source persons. Many numbers of respondents once again believed o ARY's source to be more credible rather than Geo News. 23% of the audiences said that the sources that appeared on ARY were more intelligent. Only 19% strongly agreed to the point that Geo news source was actually intelligent while delivering the news stories.

The differences found in both channels' source/ anchor credibility are Reporters are trustworthy, Reporting is unbiased, is expert, is intelligent, is authoritative, Accurate portrayal of events, Values people's privacy, separates facts from opinions and Avoids sensationalizing the news. The audiences believed that Geo considered people privacy and value more than ARY.

The similarity has founded in two popular channel of Pakistan that is Geo and ARY source / Anchor person is on the three factors. That is journalist are well informed, avoids aggressive strategy and well qualified.

The similarity founded on both channels as medium credibility on the basis of multiple factors. The similarity has founded in these variables that are Cares about audience needs, Emotional, Open minded, active, deep, objective, with political leaning, follow some code of conduct, produce news that is relevant to audiences. The differences found on both channels medium credibility are Accurate, Complete account, Is concerned about public's interests, Comprehensive, Responsible, Gives a follow up to all the news and The news has real influence on my choice.

The present research when analyzed the news channels for the possible relationship of their credibility with the gender, proved that the credibility was affected by the gender. Males and females has different perspective with credibility of both channels.

This research is conducted to investigate the relationship between audience political affiliation and news channels credibility. This test model constructs on two variables 'political affiliations' and the 'perception of the news channels as credible'.

Mostly people affiliated with their favorite political parties and they preferred to watch those news channels which give coverage to their favorite parties more than other channels. It is proved that these news channels influenced by political party's which used for propaganda or critical statements to opposite parties. The politicians provide them lavish facilities and massive advertisements packages. The prime-time discussion programs anchor or reporters create hype between political parties because of getting more benefits from them. It is obvious thing that, these channels proved to be biased because of their political preference and leaning to specific party and propaganda programs.

The audience who have tendency to political parties and their thoughts relates with them or support them and they like to watch ARY or GEO news channels. Yousaf (2012) said that, from earlier times of human developments, political powers have been prepared them again with new ideas and policies through these news channels. Both channels presented contradictory topics against opposite political party and defend favorite party. These types of discussion programs attract audience who are affiliated with any political party.

The research made it very clear that the audience leaned to the channels that were portraying positive image of the political party that they support. PMLN supporters considered

Geo News as more reliable while PTI supporters considered ARY News as more credible.

Otherwise people reported that they have neutral point of views.

Summary

Journalist and media are very important for credibility of news. Audiences have different perception on news media credibility. The current explored the two media famous channels geo and ARY credibility and their relationship with each other as well as gender and political affiliation.it has found that Pakistani audience's credibility on cannels is affected by political affiliation. It has also noticed male and female have different perception about credibility of both channels.

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