



8. Shifting Audience Base and Diminishing Trust of Mainstream Mass Media among Youth: An Analysis

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Abstract

Mass media has historically served as a fundamental pillar for the distribution of public information, entertainment, and social unity. The researches and general observation highlight that in recent years, the viewership for conventional mainstream media—radio, television, and newspapers—has been consistently diminishing. Concurrently, there are serious debates regarding the diminishing trust in the information provided by the mainstream mass media. This study examines the consumption of mass media by youth by deploying both quantitative and qualitative tools. Furthermore, the perceived partiality, insufficient variety, and declining faith in conventional media have estranged younger demographics. This paper analyzes the fundamental causes of this fall, its ramifications for the Indian media landscape, and solutions for conventional media to maintain relevance in a digitally dominated environment.

Key words: Radio Listener, Television Viewers, Newspaper Readers, Youth, Trust in Mass Media as Source of Information, Social Media

Introduction

Mass media has historically been fundamental to society progress, acting as an essential conduit for the distribution of public information, entertainment, and the promotion of social unity. For



decades, mediums like as radio, television, and newspapers have influenced public opinion, educated residents, and offered a shared cultural experience. Recent research and observational patterns highlight a notable shift in media consumption, especially among younger demographics. The once dominating status of traditional mainstream media is being contested by digital platforms that provide customized, interactive, and on-demand content.

The reduction in the viewership for conventional media aligns with increasing apprehensions over the legitimacy and reliability of these outlets. Elements include apparent partiality, political allegiances, and sensationalist journalism have led to a significant decline in confidence. Audiences, particularly the millennials, are becoming increasingly doubtful regarding the legitimacy and impartiality of information disseminated by mainstream media. Furthermore, the proliferation of fake news and misinformation, exacerbated by social media, intensifies the trust gap. This study seeks to examine the evolving dynamics of media consumption among youth, using quantitative data and qualitative insights to investigate the reasons and perspectives influencing these changes. This research aims to elucidate the issues encountered by conventional media by analyzing the impact of trust, accessibility, and relevance on media preferences. Ultimately, it seeks to elucidate techniques for these platforms to adapt and maintain relevance in a continually shifting digital environment.

Methodology

Objective: To study the mass media consumption patterns of youth

Population of the study: Youth population of Haryana state of India is taken as the universe of this study. The population size is considered 10000000 for an upward figure. There are various categorizations of age range for defining youth. The age group of 15 to 29 is adopted as the youth for the purpose of this study as defined in National Youth Policy of India, 2014.

Sampling: Non-random purposive sampling is done for this study. For a population of 10000000 and confidence level of 95% with a margin of error 5%, the determined sample size is 385. This



study, however, received 402 responses through online survey using a google form for enhanced confidence level.

Data Analysis: As a primary tool of data analysis, Pearson's Chi-Square test is deployed to analyze the quantitative data.

Literature Review

Newman et al. (2023) make notice of the rapid migration of audiences to digital platforms. They also stress the fact that younger demographics prefer the immediacy and involvement that can be found in online news sources. This shift has resulted in a detrimental effect on the audience base that is comprised of members of the traditional media.

The public's confidence in traditional media has decreased all around the globe, as shown by Edelman's faith Barometer (2022), which was conducted in many countries. The general public has the impression that news outlets are skewed and affected by the goals of corporations or political parties.

Research conducted by the Pew Research Center in the year 2023 indicates that there are significant differences in the methods in which different generations consume various forms of media. For example, members of Generation Z and Millennials are more likely to get information via social media and streaming services than they are from traditional media such as newspapers and television.

According to Anderson (2020), the proliferation of channels and platforms has led to the fragmentation of audiences, which makes it impossible for traditional media to sustain large viewer bases that are coherent. This was shown to be the case.



Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018) study the influence that misinformation has in eroding confidence in traditional media, particularly when content of this sort gets popularity with the internet. Specifically, the paper focuses on the impact that disinformation has on the internet. McChesney argues in his paper from 2015 that the high concentration of media ownership is the root cause of the public's pessimism about the independence and impartiality of traditional news channels. McChesney's article was published in 2015.

Pariser (2011) analyzes the ways in which algorithm-driven content curation on digital platforms has resulted in the construction of filter bubbles, which have further severed consumers' relationship to traditional media. Specifically, the author focuses on both the positive and negative effects of this phenomenon.

While Starr (2019) brings attention to the fact that financial restrictions have led to a drop in investigative journalism, which has historically been a key mechanism for newspapers to earn trust with their viewers, Starr also calls attention to the fact that this decrease has occurred.

In his piece from the year 2020, Picard investigates the economic challenges that traditional media platforms are now facing. These challenges include the downward trend in advertising revenue and the shift toward business models that are based on subscriptions.

Campbell (2021) emphasizes the necessity of diversity in media programming and how the lack of such variety has alienated some audience groups, which has resulted in a decrease in confidence in the media.

Hobbs analyzes the role that media literacy education plays in supporting viewers in detecting accurate information, which has the ability to reestablish confidence in the media. His paper, which was published in 2017, may be found here.

Sunstein (2018) makes the observation that echo chambers often help to increase suspicion about opposing views. This insight is made during his inquiry into the influence that polarization has on faith in the media.



Longitudinal research of trust in the media is presented by Jones (2020) in order to establish that skepticism toward the media is not a new phenomenon. The findings of this study indicate that the situation has become much more challenging as a result of digital disruptions.

One of the arguments that Schulz (2019) makes in his examination of the role that publicly funded broadcasters play in maintaining trust is that the commitment of these broadcasters to public interest journalism sets them apart from other types of media sources.

According to Nielsen (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic initially resulted in a rise in trust and consumption of traditional media; however, this effect was only temporary because of the widespread dissemination of misinformation made possible by the presence of the internet.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1

How Often Youth Listen to radio

	Frequency	Percent
How often you listen to radio	I do not listen to radio at all	259 64.4%
	Only when travelling	108 26.9%
	Less than 2 hours daily	25 6.2%
	2 to 4 hours daily	6 1.5%
	More than 4 hours daily	4 1.0%
	Total	402 100.0%

Table 1 show that 259 (64.4%) of the users mentioned that they do not listen to radio at whereas 108 (26.9 %) users mentioned that they listen to radio only while travelling. 25(6.2%) users mentioned that they listened to radio less than two hours a day. 6 (1.5%) users mentioned that they

listened to radio two to four hours a day whereas only 4 (1 % users mentioned that they listened to radio more than 4 hours daily.

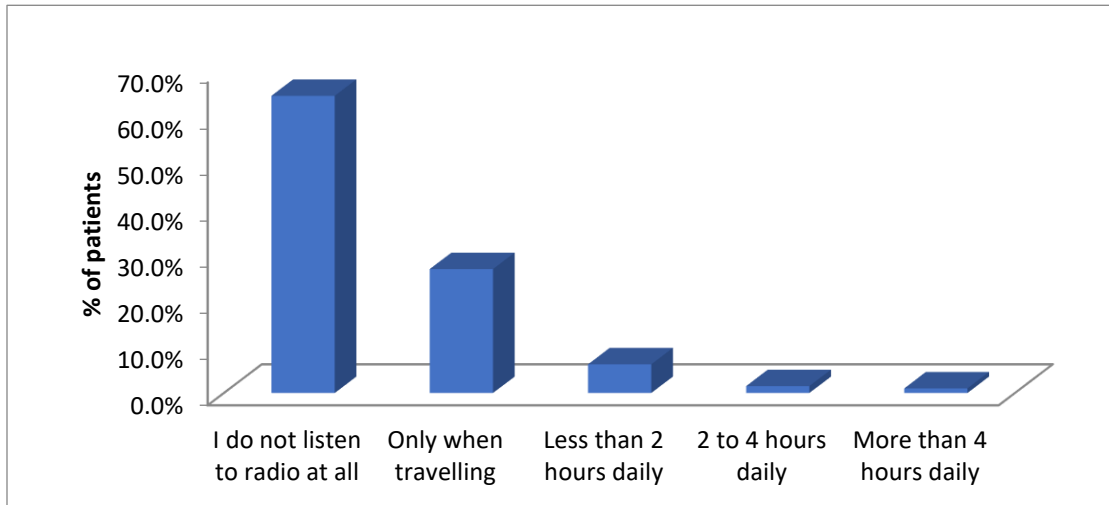


Figure 1

Figure 1 representing data on radio listening habits indicates a prevailing trend of diminishing radio listenership, with most respondents either not engaging with the radio whatsoever or just listening sporadically while traveling. This drop may be ascribed to the emergence of alternative media sources and evolving consumer tastes. Comprehending these patterns is essential for radio broadcasters to modify their plans and engage their audience more efficiently. The listeners are hence categorized in the below mentioned categories.

Prevalent Non-Listeners: A significant majority of respondents, 259 out of 402 (64.4%), do not engage in radio listening whatsoever. This signifies a notable decrease in radio listenership within the sample group.

Occasional Listeners: A significant segment of respondents, 108 out of 402 (26.9%), engages with the radio only when traveling. This indicates that radio remains relatively pertinent during commutes or journeys, perhaps due to its accessibility in automobiles.



Minimal Daily Listenership: Only 25 out of 402 respondents (6.2%) engage in radio listening for fewer than 2 hours each day. This suggests that although certain individuals listen to the radio, their involvement is more short-lived.

Minimal Regular Listenership: Only 6 out of 402 individuals (1.5%) engage in daily radio listening for 2 to 4 hours. Furthermore, hardly 4 respondents (1.0%) engage in radio listening for over 4 hours each day. These results underscore the negligible habitual listenership of radio among the respondents.

Table 2

Frequency of Newspaper reading

	Frequency	Percent
How often you read newspapers	Never	80 19.9%
	Rarely	131 32.6%
	Sometimes	100 24.9%
	Often	40 10.0%
	Always	51 12.7%
	Total	402 100.0%

Table 2 presents statistics on the frequency of newspaper readership. The table shows that 80 (19.9%) participants never read newspapers, 131 (32.6%) said they rarely did so, 100 (24.9%) said they do it sometimes, 40 (10%) said they do so often, and 51 (12.7%) said they always read newspapers.

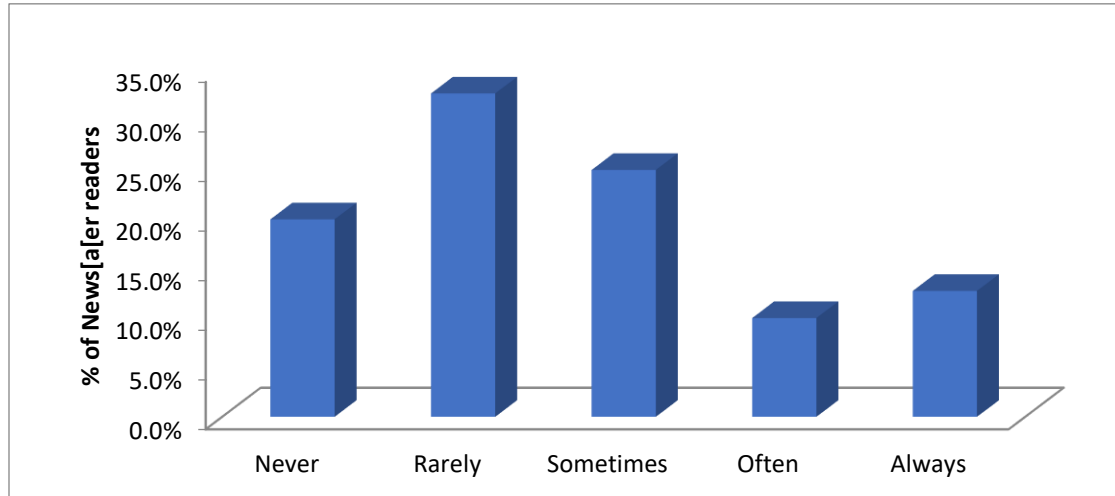


Figure 2

Figure 2 represents that a notable segment of respondents, comprising 80 persons or 19.9%, said that they do not engage in newspaper reading. Figure 2 states substantial percentage of persons (52.5%) read newspapers infrequently or not at all, while a total of 47.5% connect with newspapers to varying degrees, from occasional to regular reading. This division suggests a possible transition in news consumption, potentially preferring digital or alternative sources over conventional newspapers. The percentage of frequent readers (often and always) is 22.7%, signifying a persistent loyal readership for newspapers.

Out of total 402 respondents, the predominant group, consisting of 131 persons or 32.6%, reported that they read newspapers rarely. This indicates that a significant portion of the population are not habitual readers, however they do interact with newspapers intermittently. About 24.9% (100 persons) engaged in reading newspapers. This category represents infrequent readers who may occasionally read a newspaper but do not engage in this activity regularly. Forty respondents, or 10.0%, reported that they frequently read newspapers, signifying a modest but discernible cohort of regular readers. Consistently, 51 participants, constituting 12.7%, said that they always read newspapers, signifying the fundamental cohort of regular readers who presumably depend on newspapers as their principal information source.



Table 3

Frequency and Duration of Television Viewing

		Frequency	Percent
How often you watch Television	I do not watch Television at all	132	32.8%
	Once or twice in a week	110	27.4%
	Less than 2 hours daily	128	31.8%
	2 to 4 hours daily	25	6.2%
	More than 4 hours daily	7	1.7%
	Total	402	100.0%

The table presents statistics on the frequency of television viewing among a sample of 402 participants. 132 (32.8%) respondents said they do not watch television at all, while 110 (27.4%) said they do so once or twice a week. 128 (31.8%) said they watched TV less than two hours daily, whereas 25 (6.2%) said they do so 2 to 4 hours daily, and 7 (1.7%) said they watch TV more than 4 hours daily. The data indicates a prevailing trend of declining television viewership, with a substantial segment of the population either abstaining from television entirely or engaging with it sporadically. This drop may be ascribed to the growing prevalence of digital streaming services and alternative media platforms. Comprehending these patterns is essential for television networks and broadcasters to modify their tactics and interact with their audience more efficiently.

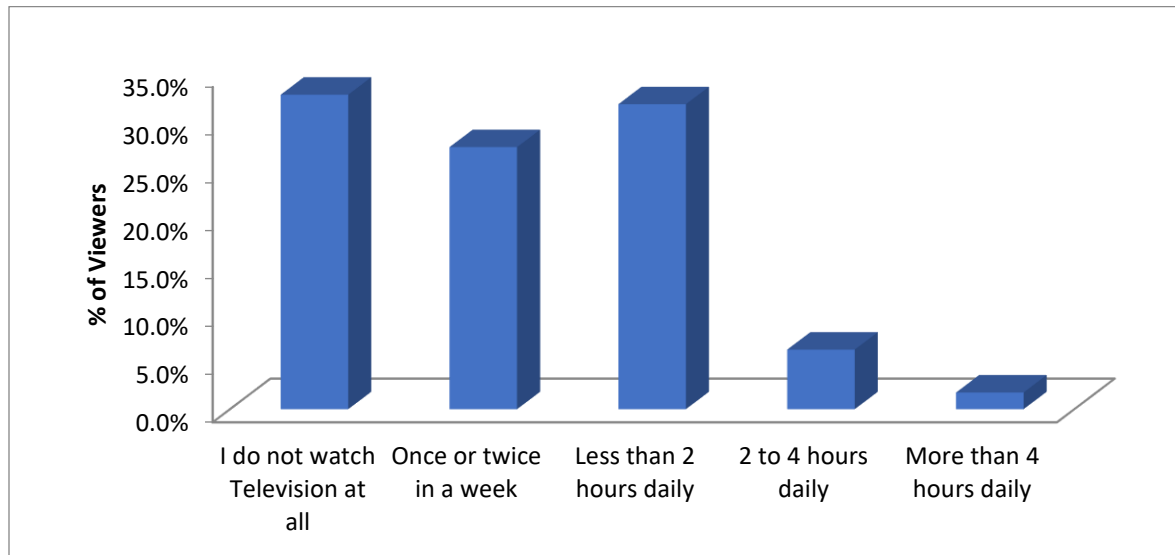


Figure 3

Figure 3 shows the following important aspects:

High Percentage of Non-viewers: A substantial proportion of respondents, 132 out of 402 (32.8%), do not engage in television viewing whatsoever. This signifies a significant departure from conventional television viewing, perhaps attributable to the emergence of alternative media sources.

Moderate Weekly Viewers: A significant cohort, 110 of 402 respondents (27.4%), engages in television viewing once or twice weekly. This indicates that although these folks do watch television, it is not a consistent component of their daily regimen.

Limited Daily Viewership: A significant portion, 128 out of 402 respondents (31.8%), engages in television viewing for under 2 hours each day. This suggests that everyday television viewing remains prevalent, but restricted to brief intervals.

Minimal Regular Viewership: A limited cohort, including 25 of 402 respondents (6.2%), engages in television viewing for 2 to 4 hours each day. Furthermore, just 7 respondents (1.7%) engage in television viewing for over 4 hours each day. These results indicate a negligible consistent watching of television among the respondents.

Table 4

Trust on information from media and other sources

		Frequency	Percent
Which of the following source of information of posts you trust?	All my connections on social media	92	22.9%
	Connections whom I know and trust personally	168	41.8%
	Mass Media (Radio, TV, Newspapers etc.)	75	18.7%
	Famous personalities	47	11.7%
	No one	89	22.1%
	Total	402	100.0%

Table 4 represents information on the sources of trust among a sample of 402 participants. 92(22.9%) respondents said that they trusted all their connections on social media. 168(41.8%) respondents said they trusted all their connections they personally know. 75(18.7%) said they trusted the mass media including radio, TV, Newspaper etc. whereas they 47 (11.7%) said they trusted famous personalities and 89(22.1%) said they trusted no one.

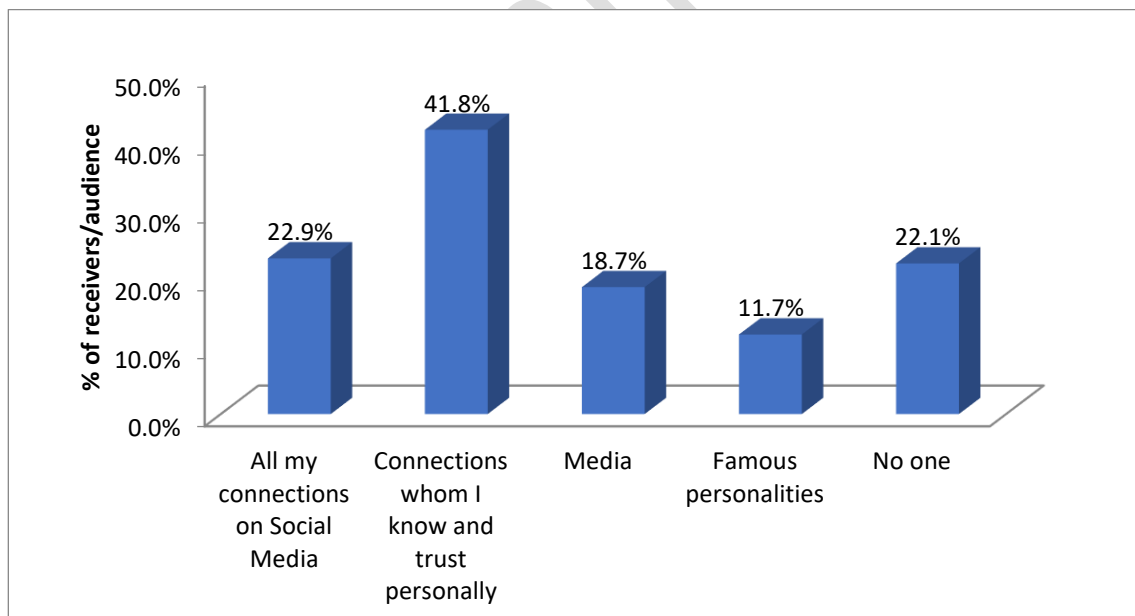


Figure 4



Trust on Media and other Sources

The research reveals that the media are increasingly regarded with skepticism, as a significant segment of the populace demonstrates an overarching suspicion. So are the credibility of what the celebrities say is poor among the youth. Comprehending these trust dynamics is crucial and results could be concerning for the media industry as to establish credibility and engage successfully with their audience is essential for media. Personal connections are the most trusted sources, succeeded by a considerable dependence on all links.

Moderate Trust in Media: A limited cohort, including 75 of 402 respondents (18.7%), expresses confidence in media sources. This indicates a modest degree of trust in both conventional and digital media channels.

Diminished Trust in Prominent Figures: Only 47 out of 402 respondents (11.7%) express trust in prominent figures. This indicates that celebrities and prominent personalities are less effective as sources of trust for the sample.

Distrustful Segment: A considerable proportion of respondents, 89 out of 402 (22.1%), exhibit a complete lack of trust in others. This indicates a degree of skepticism or distrust within a significant segment of the sample group.

Personal Connections Are the Most Trusted: The majority of respondents, 168 out of 402 (41.8%), place their faith in those with whom they have personal links. This indicates that personal ties provide the primary source of trust for most responders.

Substantial Trust in All relationships: A significant portion, 92 out of 402 respondents (22.9%), expresses trust in all their relationships. This signifies that a substantial segment of the sample has an extensive trust network.

Analysis based Pearson's Chi-Square Test

The data was later analysed using the Chi Square Test. The purpose was to find significant relationship between various variables further achieving the objectives of the study. The test



brought to light that neither gender nor age subgroups were found to have a significant relationship with television viewing, according to the findings of the investigation. Hence all age groups were found to be disinterested in TV as a mass media to fulfill any of their media needs. This shows the decreasing interest of youth in TV and further shows that TV may turn out to be a medium of the past.

It has been noticed that there is a significant variation in the frequency and length of radio listening among young people based on gender and generational age groups. Radio still was a medium of some interest to the youth given the appeal FM radios have on youth. This shows that the kind of language FM uses attracts the youth along with the non-nonsense music that is a reason of attraction for the youth. Radio specifically FM radio has managed to catch the attention of the youth and is kind of reviving itself.

It has been discovered that there is a considerable variation in the frequency of newspaper reading among the respondents depending on the various age groups that may be found between the ages of 15 and 29. When it comes to individuals who regularly read the newspaper, those in the older age groups have a greater number of readers than those in the younger age categories.

Individuals who are 18 years old but under 21 years old make up the biggest percentage of respondents who do not read the newspaper at all. This is followed by individuals who are older than 15 years old but less than 18 years as the second highest number. Thus newspapers are serious mass media that find attention only among older readers and not among younger readers.

Conclusion

The study reveals a decline in radio listenership among the population, with most respondents either not engaging with the radio or listening sporadically while traveling. Radio listeners are classified into several categories, including predominant non-listeners (64.4%), occasional listeners (26.9%), minimal daily listenership (6.2%), and minimal regular listenership (1.5%). A significant portion of respondents (80 persons or 19.9%) do not engage in newspaper reading. Out of total 402 respondents, 32.6% rarely read newspapers, while 47.5% connect with newspapers to varying degrees, from occasional to regular reading. A substantial percentage (52.5%) read



newspapers infrequently or not at all, while a total of 47.5% connect with newspapers to varying degrees, from occasional to regular reading. The data also shows a declining television viewership, with a significant portion of the population either abstaining from television entirely or engaging with it sporadically. A significant proportion of respondents (32.8%) do not engage in television viewing, while 27.4% engage in television viewing once or twice weekly. Limited daily viewership (31.8%) and minimal regular viewership (6.2%) indicate that everyday television viewing remains prevalent but restricted to brief intervals. Trust in media and other sources is increasingly regarded with skepticism, with personal connections being the most trusted source. A limited cohort (18.7%) expresses confidence in media sources, while 11.7% express diminished trust in prominent figures. A distrustful segment (22.1%) exhibits a complete lack of trust in others. Personal connections are the most trusted source, and a substantial portion (22.9%) expresses trust in all of their connections, whether known or unknown to them personally. There is no significant relation between television viewing based on gender or age subgroups. However, there is a significant difference in newspaper reading frequency among respondents between 15-29 years of age.

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Year-7 Volume: I, January-March, 2025 Issue-25 ISSN: 2582-1296 (Online)

The Asian Thinker

A Quarterly Bilingual Peer-Reviewed Journal for Social Sciences and Humanities

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