



Role of New Media in Political Discussion and Changing Voting Behavior of University Students

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Abstract

This research examines the role of new media in creating political awareness among university students. Mostly students use internet for entertainment as well as political information. In current scenario new media consider as a source of information that has power to change voting behavior and perception of people and it also persuades them towards new political parties. For this purpose sample size has been taken from university of Gujrat's students. Finding represents that students discuss and share the political information with their online community or social community.

Keywords: New media, youth, political awareness, perception, voting behavior, agenda setting.

Introduction

Mass Media is an important pillar of any society. It is also considered as a tool of change. It is a mean of public communication that is being consumed to a large number of people at a time. The new Media are contributing too many things in a society and serves a variety of functions. This research is an attempt to study the role of new media in creating political awareness among university's students. New media is more progressive and it gives mostly coverage to political discussions. According to some studies media plays a significant role in shaping public perception on political issues as elections campaign are going on in Media spaces. New media are central to politics today due to immediate and instant dissemination of political issues. The need of youth in politics means involving today's young in tomorrow's democracy. Political participation by citizens is considered a pre-requisite for successful democratic society. So youngsters need to assume their responsibility as participating citizen.

The study is an effort to estimate the university student's consumption patterns of new media for political issues. Political awareness is one of the important elements of political participation. Political discussions are essential to assess the political consciousness of citizens. In order to make an electoral and political decision people should be aware of political candidate. The media are essential providers of political information. The media provide political decision on which voters base their decision on. This research is an attempt to study and observe the role of students on political issues through the survey method. As political issues are constantly discussed and it seems that the media take on the field of politics. Thus, in this new context seems the media is more gradual. New media provides with wealth of information and makes people think about it.

New Media is uniquely positioned to provide information on important political and social issues. Media promotes political knowledge and focus on political issues and events that can help users to learn and know more about current political issues. The purpose of the study political issue for research is to realize the new media role towards it. As the political issues in Pakistan has increased and the current situation of these issues has affected the whole society. It leads toward political instability. This study will help researcher to know how much affiliation and interest do university students have towards political issues and what are their preferences who seek this information. Under this study it will be noticed and observed how they present a news story and influence on the audience. How that medium holds the attention of its audience and how they influence audience on political issues and what affects does media create on the minds of its audience and do they discuss and perceive and interpret a political debate. New media is suitable choice for conducting this research because they are considered reliable and people depend on them for information and politics is an important pillar of a country. Media and politics both have a complex relationship and what impact these two elements create on nation's building and on country progress in under consideration.

Objectives of the Study: Researcher will focus on the following objectives: i. To understand the consumption patterns of new media of university students. ii. To find out the Preference of new media for consumption of political information. iii. To understand whether students discuss political issues and if yes from where they are taking points.

Research Hypothesis: i. Consumption patterns of new media affect the political awareness of university students. ii. Consumption patterns of new media do not affect the political awareness of university students.

Literature Review: The public awareness of political issues is very important outreach policy to make changes and encourage communities to engage in political debate. New media social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook, blogs and invites people to disseminate information and discuss current issues and to organize political meetings and find ways they can create change. Liberals and Marxists agree that the media play an important role in the organization of the images by which people understand the world's knowledge; the media is at the heart of modern politics. The Liberal offers a marketplace for open discussion of ideas. McComb and Shaw¹ refer to the idea that media coverage of an idea that makes people think it's an important issue. The media has begun to influence and change public opinion. Media began to raise questions in a way that created the sensationalism with its formulation in the public mind. The new way to express, so to speak as a politician in the political debates and discussion programs showed the behavior of the people of this country. New media provides citizens with information on which they can make political choices for democracy.

The deterministic theory believes that through repeated news coverage of the media is able to set the importance of particular problems in people's minds. Internet with its easy access to people, it is easy for the media to transfer information. Internet by providing information will make things better. Blogs on the Internet opens up new avenues for political discussion. Blogs provide additional information with new. Social media is people's awareness. Social networking is a strong political tool that can bring a change in public opinion and influence. Facebook, Blogs and twitter to what extent provides opportunity to people to send receive and perceive message relating to politics. Sanson² believes that online tools are mainly used by young people such as Facebook; he concluded that "Facebook has the power to mobilize the interest of its users and person to person to create a broadcast message interest in politics and politicians through Facebook can observe and participate in a dialogue with the younger generation like never before." Through this study, it will be seen if people are more politically aware through the use of Facebook and Twitter. It provides a platform for discussion, the use of information and sending messages across the globe.

The link between media consumption and media and political issues are complex. However, political views may also influence the choice of media. While this knowledge comes from sources other than media sources are peer groups, family and society. The use of the media is one way of looking at decisions that are attached to place a person in a democracy. Because individuals have limited power, it is important to examine areas where individuals can make decisions. The use of media to help them know the interest that people have about the media and perceived lack measures needs. Sources associated with the public perception of bias in the media suggest that people are trying to overcome biasness they see.

Agenda Setting Theory: Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz believe that the content of the media set the agenda of public debate³. Both are of the opinion that the media not only tell us what to think about a particular subject but to which we should express an opinion on. This idea of mass involvement has become more prominent with the advent of the Internet and its potential to make everyone a pamphleteer. Increase in the role of citizens in agenda setting sheds light on a new direction in the traditional agenda-building research. Kim and Lee noted that the agenda-setting research on the Internet differs from traditional agenda-setting research with respect that the Internet is in competition with traditional media and has enormous capacity for contents' and users' interactivity. Lee et. Al⁴ argued that various opinions about public issues are posted on the Internet bulletin boards or the Use net news group by net users, and the opinions then form an agenda in which other Net users can perceive the salient issue. Scholars also stated that the Internet plays role in forming Internet user's opinion as well as the public space.

Their study suggests 'reversed agenda effects', meaning that public agenda could set media agenda. Maxwell McCombs⁵ also mentioned "reverse agenda-setting" in his recent textbook as a situation where public concern sets the media agenda. According to Kim and Lee⁶, agenda-building through the Internet take the following three steps: i. Internet-mediated agenda-rippling: an anonymous netizen's opinion spreads to the important agenda in the Internet through online main rippling channels such as blogs, personal homepages, and the Internet bulletin boards. ii. Agenda diffusion in the Internet: online news or web-sites report the important agenda in the Internet that in turn leads to spreading the agenda to more online publics. iii. Internet-mediated reversed agenda-setting: traditional media report online agenda to the public so that the agenda spread to both offline and online publics. However, scholars concluded that the Internet-mediated agenda-setting or agenda-building processes not always occur in consecutive order.

Methodology

In this study universe is the students of university both male and female. The researcher selected a sample. To meet the requirement of the study two-way stratification sampling was adopted and used survey method for data collection from the target population students Gujrat University. In this research the key variables that will be used are Independent variable and Dependent variable. Independent variable is Online Media Consumption where as dependent variable is Political Awareness. Concepts of the Study are consumption of new media for political awareness, knowledge gaining, political interest and political discussion. Through internet people can communicate, facilitate and exchange information on blogs, twitter and facebook for political discussions, experts and readers comments and generate new idea about an issue. Dependent variable is Political awareness which is affected and measured by consumption patterns. Political awareness by using

facebook, twitter and reading blogs. Political discussions for political affairs and political conflicts, focus on problems and solutions, comments and generate new ideas, who discuss and with whom.

Results and Discussion

Figure-1 shows the percentage of target population who consume new media for political information. 22% males and 18% females consume more new media for political information. 46% both males and females less consume new media as compare to more new media consumers for political information. 30% males and 36% females consume new media to some extent for political information. 0% male and female do not consume new media for political information. 2% males and 0 % female more disagree about consumption of new media for political information.

Figure-2 shows that whether target population ever thinks to change their political affiliation with any political party when they expose to new media. 10 % of both males and females are more agree that they think to change their affiliation with political party after exposing to new media. Whereas 34 % males and 30 % females are less agree about the thinking of changing affiliation with any other political party after exposing to new media. And 40 % males and 30 % females agree to some extent about changing of affiliation with any political party after exposing to new media. Whereas 12 % males and 28 % females do not agree about thinking of changing affiliation to any political party after exposing to new media. Whereas 4 % males and 2 % females are more disagree about thinking of changing their affiliation to any political party after exposing to new media.

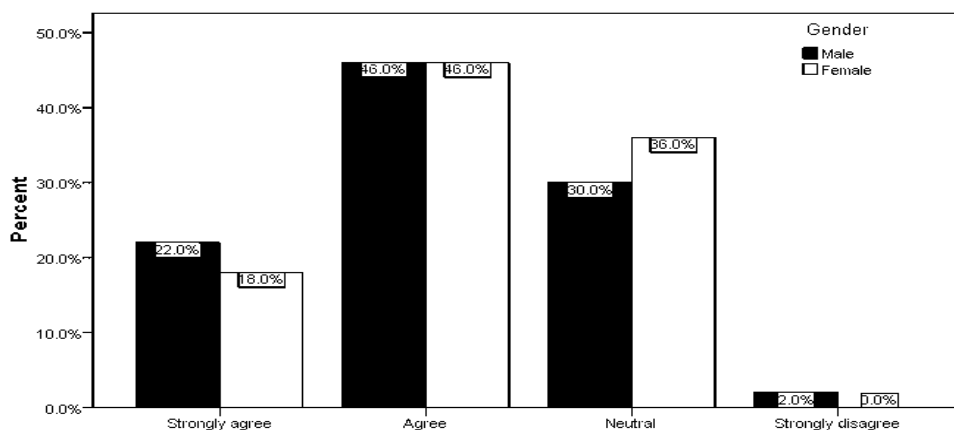


Figure-1
Do you consume new media for political information?

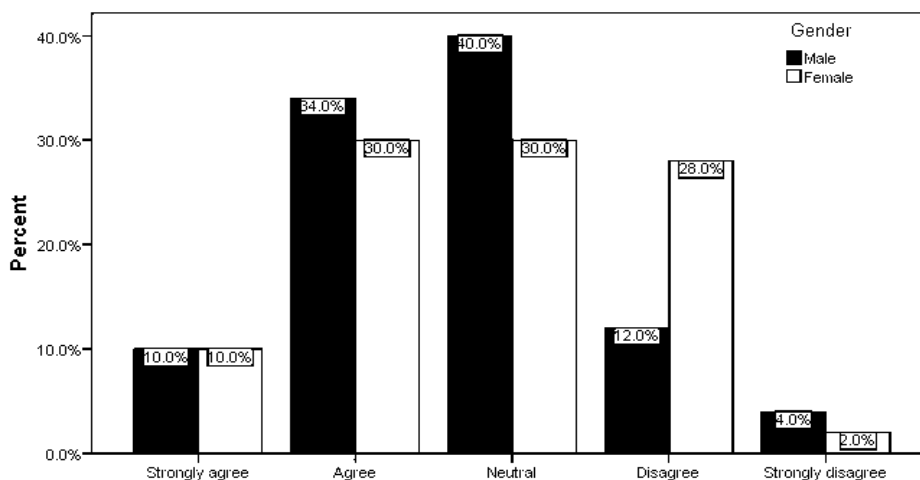


Figure-2
Do you think new media are changing your affiliation with any political party?

Figure-3 is about the changing of voting behavior of target population after exposing to new media. According to the graph 14 % males and 18 % females are more agree that exposure to new media contributes in changing voting behavior. Whereas 64 % males and 62 % females are less agree that exposure to new media contributes in changing voting behavior. And 18 % males and 10 % females are agree to some extent that exposure to new media contributes in changing voting behavior. 4 % males and 8 % females do not agree that exposure to new media contributes in changing voting behavior. Whereas 0 % male and 2 % females are more disagree that exposure to new media contributes in changing voting behavior.

Figure-4 is about the new media as if it persuades the minds of target population towards any new political party. According to the graph 14 % of both males and females are more agree that new media persuade minds towards any new political party. Whereas 50 % males and 44 % females are less agree that new media persuade their minds towards any new political party. And 14 % males and 20 % females agree to some extent that new media persuade their minds towards any new political party. Whereas 20 % males and 22 % females do not agree that new media persuades minds towards any new political party. And 2 % males and 0 % females more disagree that new media persuades minds towards any new political party.

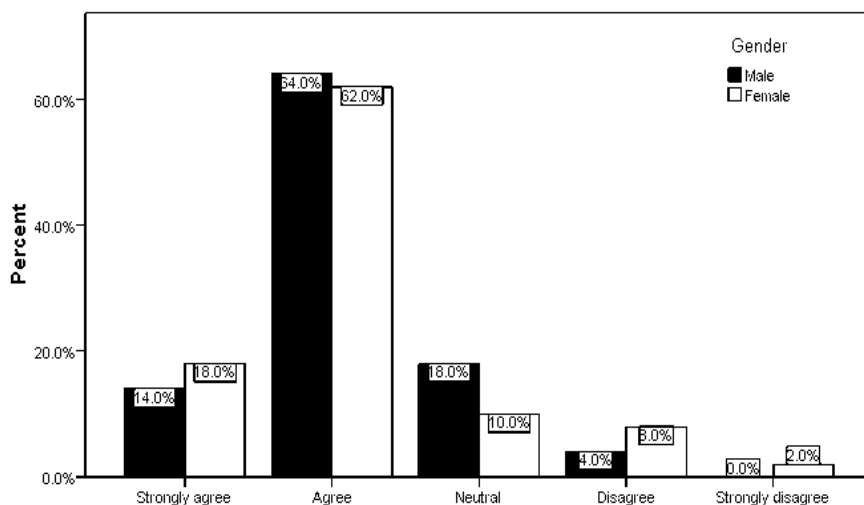


Figure-3
Do you think new Media contributes in changing voting behavior?

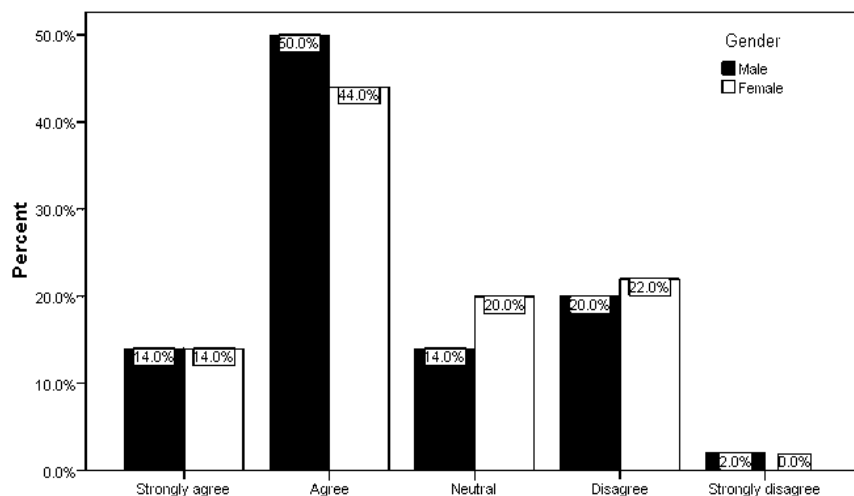


Figure-4
Do new media persuade your mind towards any new political party?

Figure-5 is about the social networks that target population prefers for political discussions. 64 % males and 66 % females prefer face book for political discussion. 8 % males and 14 % females prefer twitter for their political discussion. And 28 % males and 20 % females prefer blogs for political discussions.

Figure-6 is about the elements of social media on which target population pays more attention. According to the figure 38 %

males and 46 % females pay more attention on entertainment on social media. 18 % both males and females pay more attention on the education on social media. And 38 % males and 24 % females pay more attention on information on social media. Whereas 6 % males and 12 % females pay more attention on time pass on social media.

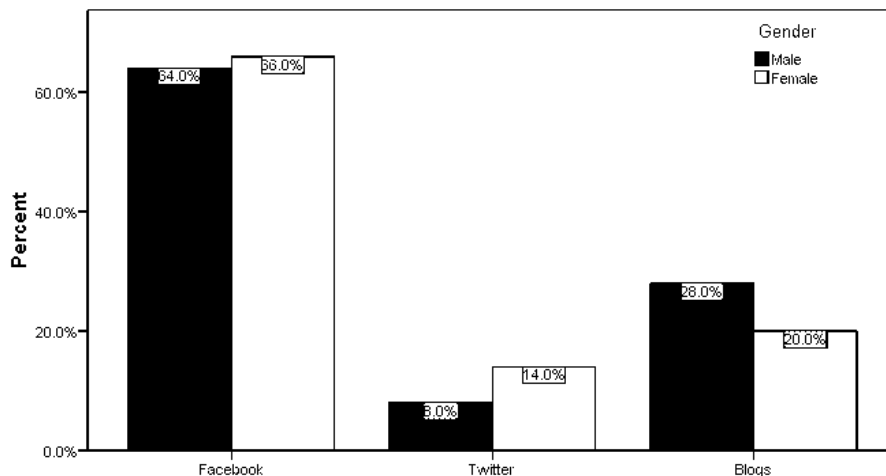


Figure-5
On internet, which social network do you prefer for political discussion?

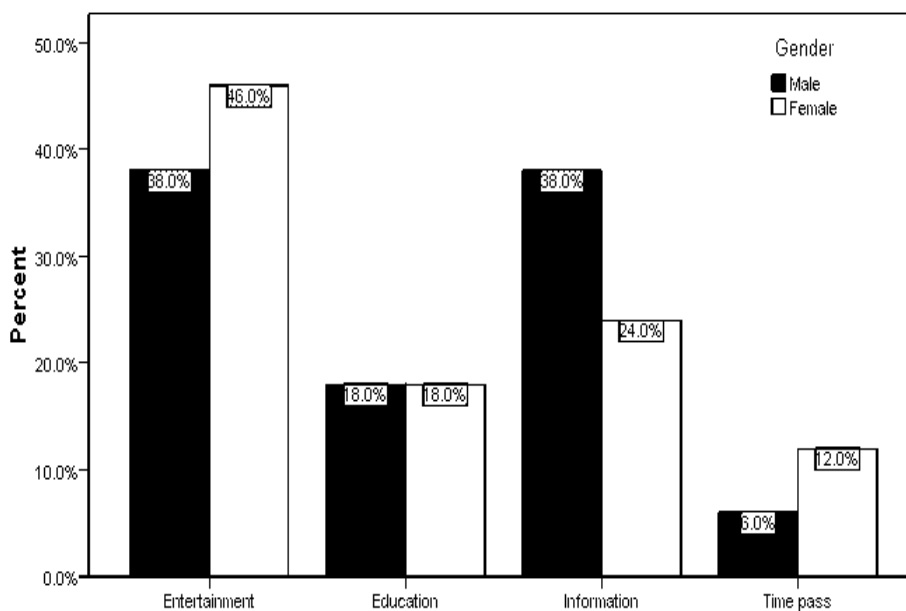


Figure-6
On which thing do you pay more attention on social media?

Conclusion

The findings suggest that New Media plays a powerful and influencing role in creating political awareness among university students. Political interests are defined by political discussions and also by exposition to new media. This study revealed that students of university like to consume social networks. Mostly internet is used by university students because of entertainment factor and facebook is the most popular medium for it. Facebook consumer's rate is higher because of new media's higher consumption rate. And mostly university students like to consume facebook for political information. Students also affiliate themselves on the basis of political issues and leaders. Mostly students to some extent think of changing their affiliation with the party after being exposed with the new media. Mostly students agreed that media plays a key role in changing voting behavior. Students of university also think that media persuade people towards new political party. On Internet most of the target population prefer to use facebook for political discussion and some like to consume twitter and blogs but their ratio is not that much high. Researcher analyses and examines that students of university are politically aware and facebook is most popular medium for political information among most of the target population of university. They rely and depend on political pages for the political information within the frame and public agenda set by the political pages.

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