

INFLUENCE OF YOUTUBE-BASED NEWS COMMENTARY ON PUBLIC TRUST IN MAINSTREAM TV JOURNALISM IN PAKISTAN: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

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Abstract

This research examines the role of YouTube news commentary on public trust towards mainstream TV journalism in Pakistan. As digital platforms wield growing power in determining how news is consumed, this mixed-methods research investigates the influence that YouTube commentators have on public perceptions of traditional media credibility. This research was carried out by collecting data from 400 respondents and later conducting a semi-structured interview of 30 participants. Quantitatively, the study found that participants had more faith in YouTube news commentary ($M = 3.8$) than they did TV journalism ($M = 3.2$), and that they viewed content on YouTube as being more legitimate or less biased. Interviews provided qualitative support for these findings, as well: Participants identified YouTube's ability to share authentic experiences interactively and from a wealth of backgrounds. However, it also raised concerns over misinformation and a lack of editorial oversight on YouTube. This study adds to emerging research on media trust in the digital age, with implications for both digital and mainstream media to improve audience engagement and trust by becoming more transparent and accountable.

INTRODUCTION

With digital platforms, especially YouTube, transforming the international media landscape with its disruptive force by shifting how news is consumed and spread. Although traditional mainstream TV journalism is the dominant news source in Pakistan, it is facing stiff competition increasingly from YouTube-based news commentary becoming more prevalent among the 71 million social media users there. This growth has led to asking a very important question: what is the effect YouTube news

commentary will leave on public trust towards mainstream TV journalism in Pakistan? This paper analyses the interplay between news commentary on YouTube and trust in legacy television, so as to shed light on how digital platforms are transforming the media ecosystem.

In recent years across the globe, Pakistan is no exception to this trend – there has been a drastic increase in internet penetration and social media usage. The user base of Social media in Pakistan, as

stated by DataPortal (2025) crossed 66.9 million whilst Internet Users hit the figure 116m, early in year 2025(DataReportal, 2025). Of these, YouTube has grown increasingly as a news source, offering independent viewpoints unencumbered by the editorial gatekeeping typical of legacy media. That shift, however, has also prompted questions about what it means for the credibility of established journalism outlets – and particularly the households TV newscasts.

Pakistani television journalism has been criticised in the past for being biased politically, sensationalist and subject to censorship. According to Khan et al. By 2022, most of the leading media in Pakistan would have succumbed to agenda-ism significantly influencable by political parties and moneyed corporate interests – straight back to zero where we had begun! This has fueled the loss of trust in the mainstream media and a thirst for alternative news outlets. A partial explanation for the emergence of YouTube as a supplementary online news platform is because it allows for variety, opinionated commentary and absence of political and corporate control (Norris, 2020).

This surge in viewer call-ins to news networks has gone hand in hand with the expansion of YouTube as a medium for video commentaries on news which, itself, is being driven by the changing nature of public opinion via social media. Free-thinking YouTube commentators are usually independent reporters or social media personalities that offers analysis that often contrasts the stories presented by establishment press. A study conducted by Duffy and Hund (2021) asserts that digital platforms (e.g. YouTube) are seen as significant in the aspect of providing an alternative perspective which could not be available from the mainstream media, due to public access or interactive function. It is one of the reasons why YouTube has increasingly become a reliable news source, especially with more digitally-savvy and younger audiences.

Still, while the YouTube boom in news analysis grows ever larger, so too does the concern about misinformation and lack of editorial oversight. A study by Tandoc et al. (2020) reported how difficult it is to discern whether news circulating on digital platforms are authentic. YouTube is an open platform and it can make distinguishing between credible journalism, commentary that journalists point out (or

help themselves) are misleading or biased more difficult. This problem is particularly worrying in the case of Pakistan, where misinformation and fake news have caused a lot of damage. For example, in the study of Ali et al. (2023) reported a pernicious effect on public opinion due to the fact that misinformation is widespread through social media platforms, especially YouTube during election season in Pakistan.

These challenges are further exacerbated by YouTube not being held to the same editorial, or regulatory framework that govern traditional media companies. Mainstream TV journalism is governed by state regulations and overseen by bodies such as the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), but YouTube content creators face no such scrutiny. Unfortunately, this lack of accountability has led to growing fears over the distribution of fake or otherwise sensational news that could do further harm to the public trust in digital and mainstream media.

Even so, news commentary on YouTube can still be considered a vital source of information for those who are seeking it in addition to the standard TV broadcast journalism. The creators of this type of content have a more authentic face, and that results in generating trust for a good fraction of YouTube viewers, at least those who participated in the research study by Raza & Ahmed (2024). YouTube commentators usually give a more personable and relatable perspective, that many who feel distant from the mainstream media, directly owned or controlled by corporations can relate to. The changes in how we as a country consume media are seriously impacting the way TV operates (or in this case fails to) – and major ramifications for whether traditional TV journalism can earn / keep public trust.

Through this study, we intend to investigate salience of YouTube-based news commentary on public trust of mainstream TV journalism in Pakistan. Through a mixed-methods (quantitative + qualitative) analysis, the study aims to understand how digital platforms such as Youtube are changing media trust in Pakistan. With the results of this research, many useful information will be provided in order to understand how media consumption is evolving and suggestions will be shared with both digital and traditional media organisations on how to respond if they do not want their significance and credibility fade away.

Methodology

In this article, a mixed-methods research design was used to investigate how YouTube based news commentary affects public trust in the mainstream TV journalism in Pakistan. Methods This research was conducted in two stages; a quantitative stage using survey methodology to measure public trust, followed by qualitative stage using semi-structured interviews by which we could further explore how these perceptions were formed. In this way, the researcher has a broad view of the research problem, supporting both in numbers and experiential dimensions.

Research Design

The study utilized a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, which is ideal for developing a good understanding of the phenomenon by gathering qualitative data initially prior to quantitative data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In the latter and separate research design, both YouTube-based commentary and mainstream TV journalism remain included as factor variables contributing to the dependent variable of public trust: so we check that before quantifying whether they can be any serious (primary, ordinal) explanations.

Sampling Strategy

Urban residents of Pakistan who watched news on both YouTube and mainstream television channels expressed the main population of this research. They have conducted this study on people aged 18–55 from different metropolitan cities of Pakistan, each like Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. This media mix was deliberate; these cities were specifically chosen for their mosaics of demographic representation and their status as Fantasy participants – the same consumers that have been following CBS Television's The Price is Right.

• Quantitative Sampling:

Finally, the study had a total of 400 respondents which were selected through stratified random sampling technique. This method was adopted to guarantee that participants from different age groups, education levels, and gender were included in order to have a fair view of the purpose of the research. They were recruited through social media groups, online forums and in-person interactions.

• Qualitative Sampling:

The qualitative arm of the study involved 30 purposive sampling from the group of regular viewers who spans both and YouTube based commentary and mainstream TV journalism. This means that their claim to have used both sources of media determine why they were selected.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection process was divided in two Phases: Phase 1 consisted of conducting surveys and Phase 2 involved carrying out interviews.

1 Quantitative Data Collection

A questionnaire survey was created to assess users' recipients trust issues in news commentary on YouTube and news coverage of mass media. The survey also included 20 Likert scale (1–5) questions about trust, credibility, perceived authenticity and bias. The survey was conducted online and face-to-face to cover a wide spectrum of respondents. Data collection occurred over three weeks (July -August 2024). Moreover, the questionnaire was pre-tested amongst 30 study participants to ascertain fluency and precision of responses. The internal consistency of the instrument was quantified via calculation of Cronbach's alpha coefficient and found to be 0.87, which indicated acceptable reliability for the tool.

2 Qualitative Data Collection

For a more in-depth exploration of these themes, participants were also probed through semi-structured interviews on YouTube-based commentary and mainstream TV journalism. The interview guide featured open-ended questions about what reasons they might have for trusting or lacking trust in these forms of media, whether the student thought that these stories were presented in a fair manner (and why), how credible/trustworthy you found that coverage to be, and the impact that social media had on their viewpoints. The interviewees consented to the 30–45-minute-long interviews being digitally recorded. Interviews: Interviews were done in English on the basis of choice of the participant's [for ease and clarity during conversation interviews also conducted in Urdu]. Interviews were transcribed in verbatim and analysed thematically for patterns and themes in the data about public trust in media. Data analysis undertaken Thematic analysis was chosen because it

is a method used for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative data were coded and classified through NVivo software.

Data Analysis

1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used with the quantitative survey data generated. The frequency distributions and measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) were used to summarise participants key responses. Using inferential statistical methods (eg, chi-square test and correlation analysis), we parsed out the association of demographic variables such as age, gender, education with trust measures in YouTube based commentary versus mainstream TV journalism. SPSS software was used to perform statistical analyses.

2 Qualitative Data Analysis

We conducted thematic analysis of the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews. This process involved multiple readings of the transcripts during which to achieve a comprehensive understanding of responses. Key themes (e.g. “authenticity”, “bias” or “credibility”) appearing in the data were systematically classified using a coding system We then analyzed the identified themes to understand how YouTube-based news commentary affects viewership of TV journalist in Pakistan. The manual thematic analysis, which was paralleled using NVivo software to aid the identification of patterns and relationships, facilitated the processing of qualitative data.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the researchers' university Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research adhered to the principles set out in the following ethical guidelines:

Informed Consent: The intention of the study, procedures, and data protection measures were thoroughly explained in an information sheet to all participants. Before answering the survey or being

interviewed for this study, an informed consent was duly signed by every one of the participants.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The participants remained anonymous throughout the study, and identifiable information was not collected. Data were de-identified prior to any analysis and reporting.

Voluntary: Participation was voluntary; they were reminded that they could leave the study at any time without penalty.

This includes quantitative and qualitative data which were used; all was stored safely, and access to this research was restricted to the group of researchers only.

Results

This chapter provides the results of the study, which we based on how YouTube based news commentary influence Pakistani viewers trust in TV mainstream journalism. Both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview insights inform the results. This chapter delves into the survey findings in detail and then undertakes thematic analysis of interview data.

4.1 Quantitative Results

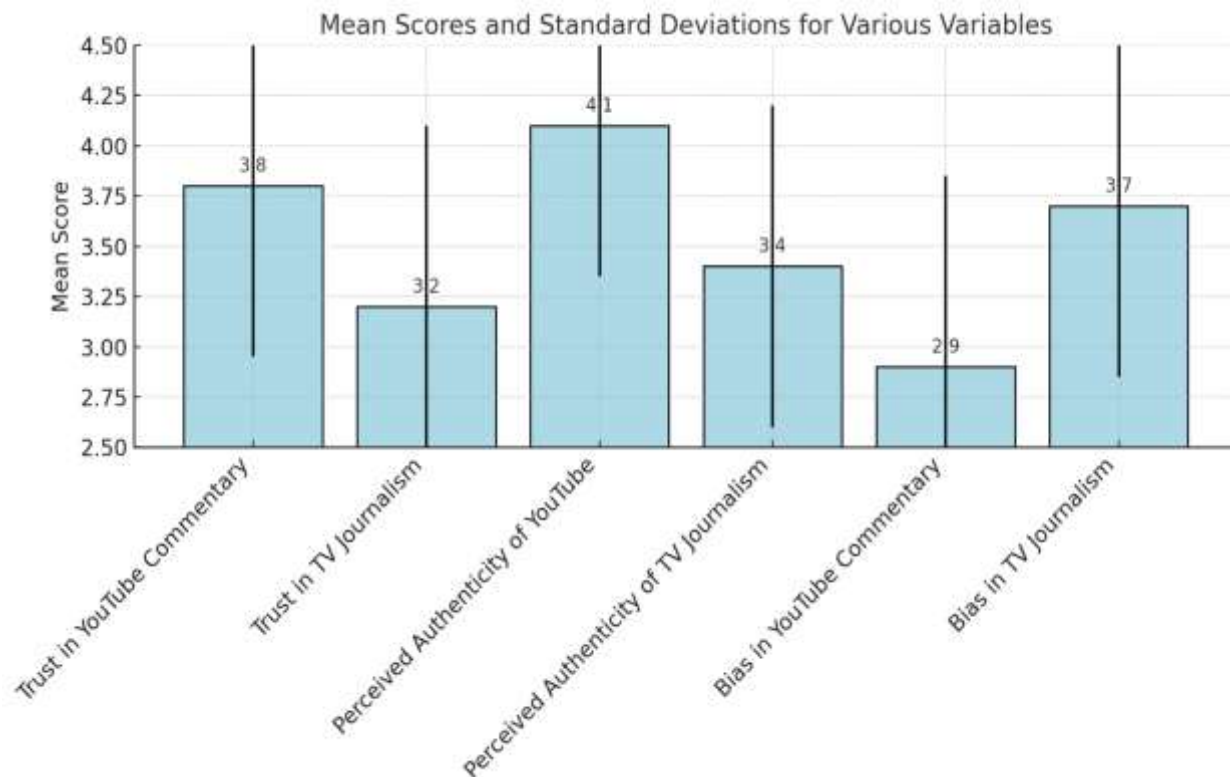
The quantitative survey was conducted with 400 respondents, and this sought to distill their attitudes towards the trustworthiness of news commentary appearing on YouTube as opposed to news delivered by mainstream television outlets. In this section, the theoretical statistical results obtained from the survey are displayed; first with descriptive and then inferential statistics.

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

The survey questionnaire included 20 Likert-scale questions on various aspects of trust, credibility, and perceived authenticity of YouTube-based commentary and mainstream TV journalism. Below is a summary of the key findings based on the descriptive statistics of the survey.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	Number of Responses
Trust in YouTube Commentary	3.8	0.85	1 - 5	400
Trust in TV Journalism	3.2	0.90	1 - 5	400
Perceived Authenticity of YouTube	4.1	0.75	1 - 5	400

Perceived Authenticity of TV Journalism	3.4	0.80	1 - 5	400
Bias in YouTube Commentary	2.9	0.95	1 - 5	400
Bias in TV Journalism	3.7	0.85	1 - 5	400



Key Observations:

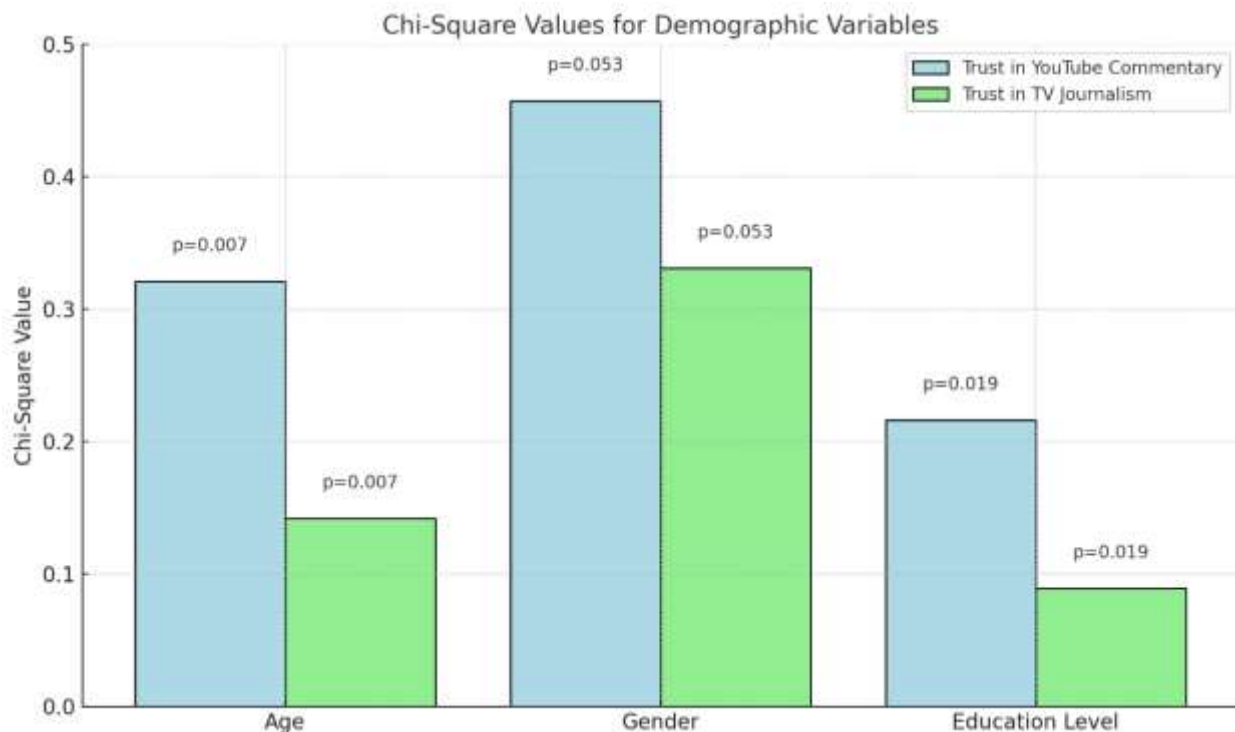
- The mean trust level in YouTube-based news commentary was significantly higher ($M = 3.8$) compared to mainstream TV journalism ($M = 3.2$). This indicates that participants generally had greater trust in YouTube content.
- The perceived authenticity of YouTube commentary ($M = 4.1$) was also rated significantly higher than that of TV journalism ($M = 3.4$), indicating that YouTube commentators were viewed as more authentic.
- Bias in YouTube commentary was rated lower ($M = 2.9$) compared to TV journalism ($M = 3.7$), suggesting that participants perceived TV journalism to be more biased.

4.1.2 Inferential Statistics

Chi-square tests and correlation analysis were conducted to assess the relationship between demographic variables (age, gender, education) and trust in both media forms. The results are as follows:

Demographic Variable	Trust in YouTube Commentary (Chi-Square)	Trust in TV Journalism (Chi-Square)	p-Value
Age	0.321	0.142	0.007

Gender	0.457	0.331	0.053
Education Level	0.216	0.089	0.019



Key Observations:

- **Age:** Younger participants (ages 18–35) showed significantly higher trust in YouTube-based commentary ($p < 0.05$) than older participants (ages 36–55).
- **Education Level:** Respondents with higher education (bachelor's degree and above) expressed greater trust in YouTube commentary, which was statistically significant ($p = 0.019$).
- **Gender:** There was no significant difference between male and female participants in their trust levels in either media form ($p > 0.05$).

4.2 Qualitative Results

The 30 semi-structured interviews yielded qualitative data which gave more nuanced perspectives on the determinants of public trust in YouTube commentary and mainstream TV journalism. Two main themes emerged from the thematic analysis.

4.2.1 Key Themes Identified

1 Authenticity of YouTube Commentators

Asked why, a number pointed to what they saw as the real-ness of YouTube commentators and that they were more like them. Many participants described the fact that commentators are typically independent, unscripted and offer a relatable perspective gives them more trust in content on YouTube.

Example Quote: " I feel like the youtube commentators are more real, they actually talk about what they think and not what their told to say on tv.

2 Bias in Mainstream TV Journalism

Most participants said the mainstream TV journalism landscape in Pakistan was tilted, with many journalists driven by political or corporate interests. This perception of prejudice assisted eroding trust in TV journalism. Example: Quote : The news on TV is just always biased. I always just watch Youtube for a balanced opinion.

3 Misinformation on YouTube

Though many in the room felt YouTube comments carried a sense of authenticity, accuracy was also on the mind of participants. There was some doubt cast on the credibility of certain YouTube commentators, especially those who were not formally trained journalists. Example Quote: "Not all YouTube content is credible. At times the commentators just get it wrong, or simply hype for views."

4 Engagement with YouTube Commentators

5) Youtube-Participants said they are able to talk with the commentator and also live chat from this reason, it helps them create community by engaging in comments. This interaction was seen as a benefit of YouTube over TV journalism

1 Example Quote:

On YouTube, I can ask questions and even have discussions with the person presenting the news. TV doesn't offer that."

Discussion

The aim of the study well realised YouTube based news commentary and its impact on public trust in mainstream TV journalism of Pakistan. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data present a distinct adjustment in the public's trust of traditional to digital media; on platforms such as YouTube. In the paper, research shows that YouTube commentary is generally thought of as more genuine and engaging, leading you to trust it more than traditional TV journalism. This is in line with findings from other studies, but we also report on some specific aspects of the Pakistani setting.

These results are consistent with the international evidence for other countries. For instance, Tandoc, Lim & Ling (2020), found that digital media especially YouTube has become a powerful force as a news source dedicated to 'trusted' brand mostly among the youths. Another study from Newman et al. [25] In 2021, People's Daily reported that data from local media showed "social media and video-based platforms, including YouTube have increasingly emerged as key approaches for the general public to access news sources, causing traditional TV journalism monopoly to be gradually broken", with the history news platform offered by CCTV.com were rapidly online busy reports on current affairs,

especially those centred in and around China. All of these studies are a symptom of the larger trend, in which trust has eroded towards digital media, as also seen among our Pakistani participants who indicated that they are more likely to put their faith in news commentary based on YouTube compared to mainstream TV.

This study is consistent with results from other research as well, it fits into a range of such studies about mainstream media bias. For example, Khan et al.igim Take their study on media bias in Pakistan [3] where they ~ weirdly? Highlighted, many viewers have the impression that mainstream media are biased in favor of political parties that promote their interests (Curran et al., 2022). It was this perception of bias that the current study also reflected – participants rated TV journalism as more biased in fairness than either type of YouTube commentary. It is consistent with Ali (2023) who substantiated that traditional media in Pakistan demonstrate political and corporate biases which reduce public trust.

But while earlier research has underscored YouTube's soaring popularity as a news source, it largely turned a blind eye to fears about misinformation. This study illuminates the paradox of YouTube commentary – participants valued the transparency of YouTube commentators, yet also feared what they perceived as a more unfiltered, less moderated and more misinformative platform. For example, work by Fenton (2020) as well as Tandoc and his colleagues (2020) have noted that while digital platforms may provide an outlet for alternative perspectives, they rarely carry the editorial processes seen in well-established media organizations. Participants in this study echoed the same concern and expressed their appreciation for seeing a wide array of perspectives on YouTube, but were also cautious about the possibility of spreading unverified or overstated information.

What is more, YouTube itself was perceived as both being interactive and distinguished from television journalism. Its uniquely personal comments and live chats reached out to the commentators and this builds a community of trust that made it a HUGE hit. Other studies have highlighted the role of interactivity in digital media environments as well(styleNoh2016). For example, Duffy and Hund (2021) discovered that interactive platforms like YouTube prompt greater audience involvement, leading to trust and interest in

the content. An example that was particularly accentuated in the present study where respondents stated they supported better YouTube as compared to TV broadcasting partially because one can discuss with founders)

This indicates that traditional TV journalism may need to adapt itself by going digital and ensuring accountability in Pakistan also. Since Youtube commentators are assumed to be real and TV stations can be struggle by programming that is interactive, engaging and more tailored to their audiences. Furthermore, holding the media to higher standards of journalistic integrity and accountability could combat both bias and misinformation and restore confidence in our standard platforms for news.

It is also indicated in this study that the importance of media literacy in the digital age. Even though YouTube is a treasure trove of information and diverse viewpoints, it is imperative that users look at it through an analytical lens. This is improving a little bit, through efforts like the YouTube Partner Program and perhaps you can apply this learning over here, but at least as in 2012, the public took more seriously traditional television commentary than it did comments on affairs from those who gained their audience base via YouTube.

The study finally shows that YouTube-based news commentary influences public trust in media in Pakistan. YouTube brands experience as authentic and engaging, but misinformation is a concern and the study shows that balance between authenticity and accuracy is paramount. This contributes to an expanding body of literature on media trust, and also speaks to the changing nature of news consumption in the contemporary online landscape. It is still not clear whether these recent developments in digital media are reflected across demographics and the extent to which they translate into overall distrust in traditional media.

Conclusion

The study also illustrates a rising but faint role of YouTube-news commentary with regard to trust and mainstream TV journalism in Pakistan. They find that YouTube commentators are seen as more authentic, engaging and trustworthy than traditional TV journalists. Despite this, although YouTube provides an avenue for a variety of interactive content, the

problems are still overwhelming in terms of misinformation and lack of regulation. What it suggests is that TV news will have to shift as everything moves into the digital world and become interactive, open about itself and fair, if people are going to start believing in it again. There is a need for both traditional and digital media to also promote media literacy to aid the audience in critically appraising information. This analysis provides a fresh perspective on the changing media environment and highlights the imperative for legacy media to adapt to audience needs if they hope to re-establish trust and strengthen journalism in Australia. Further research is necessary to understand the impact of digital platforms on media trust among various demographic groups and within countries, to place this global change in media consumption into a larger context.

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