

THE EVOLUTION OF MEDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PRINT MEDIA, ELECTRONIC MEDIA, AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION

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Abstract

The media has long been a strong tool for shaping public opinion, influencing political behaviour, and shaping public conversations. The shift from print, to electronic media, and now to social media, has changed the ways we create, share, and interact with information. This research project entitled "The Evolution of Media: A Comparative Study of Print Media, Electronic Media, and Social Media in the Shaping of Public Opinion," examines these three mediums comparatively, and assesses their role in influencing public opinion, and constructing shared experiences. The one consistent piece of information relevant to this research study is that we're seeing an increase in varieties of media channels, with each providing various contributions to public engagement and agenda setting. Print media has been associated to higher levels of credibility, significance, and permanence. Electronic media increased the speed (through immediacy) of transmitting information aided by audio-visual richness. However, social media fundamentally redefined trends in mediated communication by facilitating interactivity, changing consumption patterns to participatory culture, and enabling real time opinion forming and dissemination while also introducing issues of misinformation and polarization. Main goals of the study are to (1) evaluate the separate roles of print, electronic and social media in developing public opinion, (2) establish the relative strengths and weaknesses, and (3) investigate the implications of this development for democracy and information literacy. In order to do this, we employ comparative analytical techniques using literature review, case studies, and examples of media impact on political and social events. The findings of the study indicate that while print media still offers the most credible source for substantive analysis, electronic media continues to deliver timely news. Social media has been shown to positively mobilize public opinion, especially among youth, as the most impactful form of mass

communication. At the study's end we concluded that understanding this evolutionary change is important for policy makers, teachers, and media representatives in considering media credibility, misinformation, and the future of mass communication.

INTRODUCTION

Media has always been an integral part of the public discussion, forming opinions, shaping individual perceptions, and framing collective narratives. Society has used various forms of media to gather information, form opinions about it, and to deal with political, social, and cultural issues. Traditionally, print media, specifically newspapers and magazines, dominated public discussion. Next, we saw the rise of radio and television, leading to a rapid advancement in electronic media, and then to the rise of social media. No matter the form, the changes in media represent not only technological developments, but also changes in the patterns of communication and audience engagement. (Bentivegna, 2020)

Historically, print media, and in particular newspapers, formed the bedrock of journalism, as it provided validity, deeper issues, and durability to information. Newspapers formed the basis of critical thoughts about the news, and if they went deep enough, provided a thorough investigation of a news event, and ambitions to form a narrative. The introduction of radio and television provided immediacy and speed, as well as an outlet for a wider audience, and the medium allowed narrative elements and visual elements to form with sound to entertain while discussing important news events. In recent years, the rise of social media and the digital revolution have swept print media into obscurity, as it changes the way that several events circulate by emphasizing interaction and participation, focusing certain telephone communication, and transitional forms that allow audiences to be both participants of information and content creators. (Carvalho, 2018)

This raises new questions about how media influence public opinion in the 21st century. Print and electronic media are still important and self-evidentially influential. However, the emergence of social media has introduced problems of misinformation, polarization, and decreased trust and reliance on traditional news media. The potential impacts of social media suggest that we

have to be more aware and sophisticated about how to characterize media in terms of its influence on the public perception of an issue, raised implications for democratic engagement, public policy, and social discourse. (Fadilla, 2021)

Therefore, this comparative approach of print media, electronic media, and social media is aimed at understanding the pros and cons and implications of these three forms of media for the public opinion formation process. Examining these variables can help to inform ongoing discussions about the role of media to help pursue democratic values or to in still an informed and engaged society.

Background

Media development is closely aligned with the social, political, and cultural development of societies. Throughout history, print media was the foremost source of information, helped frame intellectual debates, influenced movements of social and political change, and created the groundwork of public discourse. Print media newspapers and magazines are not merely forms of information, but knowledge and opinion formation, which fostered the emergence of an informed citizenry. Their credibility and permanence provided an important foundation for supporting democracy and civic participation. (Firmansyah, 2022)

After the advent of electronic media (radio and television), communication entered a new phase characterized by immediacy, speed, and greater access. The immediacy of electronic media amplified the outreach of information, and eliminated distance and spaces. Electronic media also made news design and delivery more engaging through audio-visual impressions. In terms of media development, the world became a witness to mass audiences experiencing the real time reporting of political, cultural, and international events. By the 20th century, the forces of television and radio are evident particularly when used to influence collective

behaviour and mobilized community action, and to create national identity. (Khosa, 2021)

The digital revolution and the meteoric advance of social media changed the landscape of communication in ways that depart from traditional media. Unlike traditional media, social media puts information in everyone's hands to the extent that everyone is both a producer and consumer of information, thereby creating a more participatory culture. The information shared via social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter [X], Youtube, Instagram) is extremely fast, while offering a conversational and activist space to openly dialogue, or mobilize. However, while the democratization of information is a significant development in a hyper-connected society, it introduces serious issues concerning misinformation, fake news, and diminished trust in established media. (Mutiara, 2019)

Currently, print media, electronic media, and social media overlap in complex ways; all have some influence on public opinion and all provide a distinctive, but overlapping perspective on public life, and together shape how we interpret and act in political discourse, social movements, and cultural change. This background establishes the foundation that necessitates a thorough description of the various ways in which media play a role in shaping perceptions of the public good, public space, and public life in the contemporary world.

Problem Statement

The swift transformation of media from print, to electronic, to social media completely changed how people access information and form opinions in today's world. Print once retained the ascendancy of the most credible source for in depth reporting, and as this form of media transitioned to electronic media, it shifted the priority from reliability and credibility to immediacy and visual perception. Social media has not only transformed communication, but it has introduced new unprecedented challenges including misinformation, polarization, and mistrust in journalism as a whole. (Twenge, 2019)

Prior to social media, people are saturated in a challenging media environment in which the lines between information, amusement, and propaganda continues to erode. Each of the three, print media,

electronic media, and social media influence public opinion, yet vary in terms of relative influence, credibility, and modality of engagement. Audiences find themselves in a limbo between the credibility of print, immediacy of electronic broadcasting, and the interactivity of social media, creating a fractured information environment. (Venkatraman, 2021)

The issue is the lack of a thorough comparative analysis that considers how these different media have uniquely and interdependently shaped public opinion. The bulk of existing research considers just one form of media without consideration for the impacts of all forms of media together. Understandably, this results in a diminished understanding of how print, electronic, and social media can affect political discussion, social behaviour, and public trust all at the same time. (Mutiara, 2019)

In this vein, it is important to study and compare the development of media, in particular to outline the role of print media, electronic media, and social media on public opinion. This is necessary for assessing their relative strengths and weaknesses, as well as their effects on democracy, information literacy, and future of mass communication.

Research Gap

The effect of media on public opinion has been extensively researched; however, much of this research has been mono-media oriented, emphasizing credibility in print media, the persuasive/epistemic force of television media, and participatory culture in social media. While these studies add much needed nuance, they often miss the comparative relations between media and how the inter-relational state of media in the hybrid information environment matters to the study of public opinion. (Khosa, 2021)

Specifically, in studies of print media, credibility and sophistication are foregrounded, while studies of electronic media emphasize immediacy, accessibility, and visual imagery. The work concerning social media is largely emergent and focuses on interactivity, mobilization, and misinformation. Each of these strands of literature offers the respective contributions, however, to spite the comparative power of the different media categories, there has been very little systematic considerations of the

relative strengths, weaknesses, and overlaps of print media, electronic media, and social media with a single frame of analysis.

Most existing studies suffer from geographic biases (largely focused on Western media ecologies) or topic limitations, ignoring the global shifts in media practices and their socio-political impacts. There is limited empirical research that triangulates traditional media and digital media to address how public trust, credibility, and opinion formation is influenced in hybrid media contexts in which all three facets overlap. (Twenge, 2019)

This is why there is a need for a truly comprehensive comparative study exploring the differences, as well as the similarities, between print, electronic, and social media and each of their role in shaping public opinion while permitting journalists to be simultaneously in charge of political discourse, social engagement, and democratic change. Addressing this issue could illustrate how mass communication is being disrupted in the digital age.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the impact of print media, electronic media and social media on public opinion.
2. To explore the comparative advantages and disadvantages of these three platforms of media regarding credibility, trust, and engagement.
3. To understand the scope of the impact of the evolution of media in terms of democracy, media literacy, and social discourse.

Research Questions

1. How do print media, electronic media, and social media individually shape public opinion?
2. What are the comparative advantages and disadvantages of each of these forms of media with regard to credibility, accessibility, and influence?
3. How does the evolution of media in totality shape democratic engagement, social engagement, and public trust?

Research Hypotheses

- H1: Social media shapes public opinion more strongly than print media, and electronic media, particularly among younger audiences.
- H2: Print media is considered to be the most credible of electronic and social media, notwithstanding the sharp decreases in readership over the past decade.
- H3: The combination of print media, electronic media and social media together influence democratic processes and opinion formation present in society.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this research relates to one of the major issues facing the communications sector today media transformation and how it influences public opinion. Comparative research involving print media, electronic media, and social media allows for a large contribution to knowledge around how the media forms are interrelated, competitive, and complementary in creating perceptions in the public mind.

From the academic perspective of being a contribution to scholarship, we are addressing a gap in the literature as most studies have examined the medium of print, electronic, or social media in isolation; our study has amalgamated various media forms into a single study. To connect various media forms allows researchers to look at strengths and weaknesses in all media form analyses and to understand why they are interrelated, and to scholarship on issues of media credibility, trust, audience, and planning agendas. The research also provides a foundation for future research on hybrid media, at a time when traditional media and digital media still coexist.

Socially, this research is incredibly important because media has an important role in shaping public discourse, political participation, and social behaviours. By understanding how different media forms shape opinions, policymakers, educators, and civil society able to tailor plans to provide media literacies, mitigate misinformation, and enhance democratic engagement.

Practically, the findings is an important for journalists, media practitioners, and communication

strategists who are dealing with audience trust and engagement across multiple platforms. This research demonstrates not only that print and electronic media remain relevant but also that social media offers unprecedented reach and risks, which can help journalists think responsibly about the implications of their communications.

Overall this research is important because it provides a comprehensive representation of an evolving media landscape that can inform our understanding of how it affects public discourse but it also flows more broadly into the ongoing endeavour to make informed, participatory and democratic societies.

Literature Review

A background of understanding agenda setting is also critical to understanding the connection between print and digital media. Bentivegna and Boccia (2020) importantly assert that in today's media ecosystem, the making of an agenda is comprised of alternating cycles of creating and consuming content. Your personal content, that includes stories, photos, and videos, blends with the public themes or public material we see in journals or on news broadcasts, and reflects your individual identity and interests (Bentivegna and Boccia, 2020). This mixing with private and collective material is a significant change in the way media agendas are made and information is shared.

Take Twitter as an important digital example of following aggregate practices through hashtag use. Hashtags collate different types of content into a shared stream of visibility. Hashtags that are trending on Twitter, pointing to popular conversations, remind us of a type of media agenda, but do not align with a textbook definition of agenda (Carvalho et al., 2018) Hashtag activism rests on this idea of visibility to draw disruption attention from traditional media systems. The online space has expanded the role of agenda setting as well.

The power relations that are previously exercised by political and media elites have changed. People (especially digital participants) are now in a position to express opinions openly, and play influential roles. This influence often happens through rapid mobilizations, mass sharing, and retweets, thereby altering the balance of agendas. With more participants, the public sphere today represents more

voices and diversity than ever before (Fadilla & Sukmono, 2021).

A so-called "networked public sphere" has emerged as a substitute for traditional and mediated outlets, although these networks still are in conversation with the latter. Firmansyah et al. (2021) noted the agendas of outlets and news agencies, conventional spaces, partisan spaces, and non-partisan spaces are always simultaneously reliant and complementary (Firmansyah et al., 2021). Despite the abundance of outlets, the research finds a surprising amount of convergence between these different spaces in their objectives.

The continual changes of print and digital media represent a complicated tapestry of interactions and modifications. However, it raises contestations and gaps in knowledge. One important question relates to the point at which digital media enters into the agenda setting process. Somewhat more clearly than ever with sites such as Twitter and Instagram, the actual mechanisms and processes of those shifts have not yet been analyzed, in order to explain the way information flows through these networks and the contagion of those shaping mainstream news agendas, (Lin et al., 2021).

With regard to these questions, this complicated issue leads to clearer thinking about the role of networks, algorithmic processes, and the expansion of user engagement. A further source of tension is regarding the quality of content in the digital space. The normalization of fake news and misinformation leads to further uncertainty about the credibility of digital media. Most scholars would agree on the challenge of fabricated content, but differ regarding its magnitude and on how well conditions can be responded to. Here, the causes of the spread and consumption of misinformation, or fake news, and consequently the effectiveness of any remedial conditions of action should be examined (Mutiarra & Priyonggo, 2019).

It is important to close these gaps in order to maintain trust in communication in the digital age. Even though print journalism faces financial decline like never before, almost no holistic research has been conducted on potential pathways to safety in the digital political economy. Moreover, trends in changing audience behaviour in terms of consumption of content and audience choices in

selecting content are still not well documented either. Further work needs to be done to investigate sustainable advertising models for newspapers and issues arising from a range of business models online (Lin et al. 2021) and beyond economics, the social consequences of these models as they relate to supporting echo chambers and political separation.

There is also a significant deficit in current literature around the impact of algorithmic curation on agenda setting and content exposure. Algorithms often act as filters under digital networks that privilege some content and silence others. Yet, challenges associated with algorithmic bias, transparency, and pluralism are still ongoing (Mutiara & Priyonggo 2019). Future research should investigate the way algorithmic suggestion and recommendation is changing agendas and content visibility.

Changes in print and digital methods of communication create a multifaceted and layered picture of how agendas develop and change. Research shows a shift from centralized decision making to decentralized, interactive, and collaborative systems. In the past, agendas are established for the most part by a select handful of media houses and political leaders. Now, agenda setting is participatory, and grassroots actors and communities are at the centre (Twenge et al., 2019). This move away from a top down approach to agenda setting has meant that a wide range of perspectives and opinions can influence public debate and discourse. The role of hashtags and trending topics on Twitter illustrates the breakdown of the difference between person and public creation and shows the process of agenda building through online networks. Trending topics on Twitter represent a significant move away from the traditional gatekeeping of selection of news. With hashtags, people, big and small, can join in publicly creating a collective stream that is sharable and visible by linking their own contributions to a common stream that unites audiences around a set of themes and actions. The mechanism of visibility is probably the most salient mechanism for influencing mainstream coverage of issues and events (Venkatraman et al., 2021).

As a result, digital media has disrupted long standing hierarchies that used to set the agenda. The emergence of the “networked public sphere” as a

useful alternative emphasizes the interactive characteristics of the current media ecology. Digital media existed alongside older media modes rather than replacing older modes. The coexistence produces symbiosis between the older and digital media forms, which influence and support each other in building meaningful agendas. In the shifting media ecology, audiences are interfacing and engaging across a variety of platforms, producing a layered and interrelated media experience (Twenge et al., 2019).

This interaction can also be regarded as evidence that digital media alone does not construct opinion, but rather that multiple media systems build the agenda. Overall, the literatures outline the collaborative aspects of contemporary agenda setting, the primary role of digital media, and the role of traditional media, and highlight the intersections and complexities of the contemporary media system from these studies. Overall, this research provides a useful basis to consider the ongoing interactions between digital media and print media, in relation to agenda setting, with greater implications for society, companies, and consumers. The widespread dissemination of misinformation through various digital platforms makes advancing media literacy increasingly critical for protecting credibility. Educational efforts can provide audiences with the tools to evaluate and navigate information both in print and online, while active fact checking is necessary to combat misinformation (Firmansyah et al., 2021).

Collaboration between policymakers and scholars is needed to create intervention models to respond to misleading information while enabling citizens to manage their news consumption capabilities in the digital environment. The transformation of the media economy presents both challenges and opportunities. Print outlets face financial constraints as they adapt to digital platforms, while digital platforms continue to diversify revenue streams. There is much research still to be undertaken on sustainable models for both forms of media. It critical to find additional revenue potential for newspapers which have lost advertising and sales, as well as examining different models for digital media including subscription, ad-supported, and model driven by non-profit status (Lin et al., 2021).

The research on these subject areas can provide information for industry actors to respond successfully based on existing best practices. There is also a social dimension to consider. Researchers need to evaluate whether these media transformations lead to more engagement in our civic discourse or more fractures in our civic discourse. It is important to examine the implications of the changes to discourse, polarization, and solidarity (Firmansyah et al., 2021). This includes studying policy opportunities (e.g., enhanced active citizenship), and threats (e.g., filter bubbles), and so on. Only through comprehension of those sociocultural impacts will we be able to implement any reasonable policies that keep people free at the same time as making them accountable.

There are also substantial implications for industry. Established print media have already been largely disrupted in many ways with shrinking advertising revenues migrating to the online world (Carvalho et al., 2018). To remain viable, they must diversify by developing paywalls, memberships and other ways to monetize their digital content. These models allow media organizations to take hold of dedicated audiences within whom they can engage their audience for reliable content. Likewise a powerful digital strategy comprised of a strong website, use of mobile applications, and effective use of social media, is required for what may be termed audience engagement (Carvalho et al., 2018).

Theoretical Framework

This research is based in several communication and media theories regarding the role media plays in shaping public opinion:

1. Agenda Setting Theory, as suggested by McCombs & Shaw (1972)

The agenda setting theorized that media did not tell people what to think, it told people what to think about. Print, electronic, and social media all can tell what issues to a person, and follow people's agenda.

2. Framing Theory, as theorized by Entman (1993)

Not just agenda setting theory but media can shape how the issue is seen and how the story is framed in a few ways. With a comparative study of print, electronic, and social media the study is able to see how each of the formats place boundaries on

meaning, measures, and how people could form different opinions.

3. Uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974)

Not only does the role of media need to be thought of as a salient factor in public opinion but uses and gratifications theory also reminds us the audience is an active participant in selecting the media which he/she/they consumes to fill desired interests like: information, entertainment, or socialization. This is most relevant to the current research study as it seeks to better understand what creates interest for some audiences to consume print media but provided interest for other audiences to have consumed through electronic or social media.

The theories described above provide a theoretical framework to develop a conceptual framework to examine the influence, credibility, and effectiveness of each media format that informs public opinion.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The design of the study is comparative research design focused on print media, electronic media, and social media and the role it plays to shape public opinion. A comparative research design allows the systematic examination of the similarities and differences in the three modes of communication.

Approach

A mixed-method design is the most optimal for this study since it uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods used to gather data on audiences perceptions of the information presented, levels of trust, and media consumption. Qualitative methods allow for in depth exploration of the stories and/or case study looking to compare and contrast different media sources.

Population and Sample

The target population for our study is adults over the age of 18 who use media. We utilized stratified random sampling in order to provide representation from multiple demographics (i.e., age, gender, education, etc.) for the study. The sample size for this study is 300 individuals, with representation from print media, electronic media and social media all

having relatively equal number of respondents from each group.

Methods of data collection

1. **Survey Questionnaires:** For quantitative data around media consumption, level of trust, and influence in the formation of opinions from media.
2. **Interviews/Focus Groups:** To capture qualitative data on how audiences view credibility and being influenced by media.
3. **Content Analysis:** To investigate upon media to collect messages/examine advertised messages, television broadcasts, and values. Posts on discussed relatable political/social issues (ex: 2012 Ontario Election).

Data Analysis

Analyzing the Data

Quantitative data analyzed to discover trends, relationships, and differences using SPSS statistical analysis software. Qualitative data analyzed thematically to uncover meaning and perspectives based on the lived experiences of the participants.

Ethical Considerations

The study promoted informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation for all participants. The data set only be used for scholarly purposes.

The findings presented in tabular and pie chart formats that allow everyone in the audience, researchers, and policy-makers to visually understand the findings.

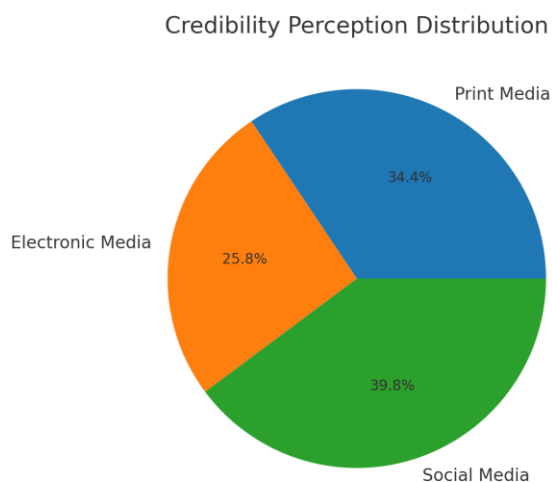


Figure 1: Credibility Perception

Table 1: Credibility Perception Data

Media Type	Count	Percentage
Print Media	32	34.4%
Electronic Media	24	25.8%
Social Media	37	39.8%

Discussion:

The results for credibility perception show that print media accounts for 34.4%, electronic media accounts for 25.8%, and social media accounts for

39.8%. This indicates a changing trend where social media is having a more powerful influence on credibility perception.

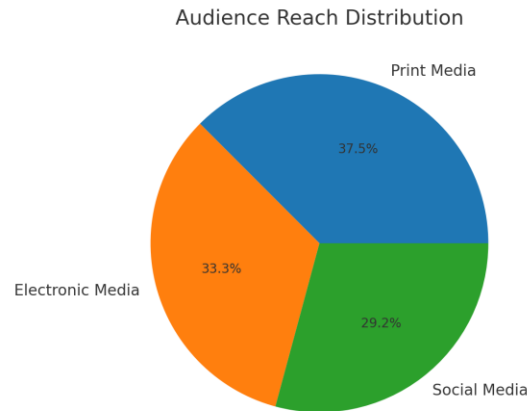


Figure 2: Audience Reach

Table 2: Audience Reach Data

Media Type	Count	Percentage
Print Media	36	37.5%
Electronic Media	32	33.3%
Social Media	28	29.2%

Discussion:

In the findings for audience reach, print media accounted for 37.5%, electronic media accounted for

33.3% and social media led with 29.2%. This tells us of a trend of change, with social media likely playing a bigger role in shaping perceptions of audience reach.

Figure 3: Trust Levels

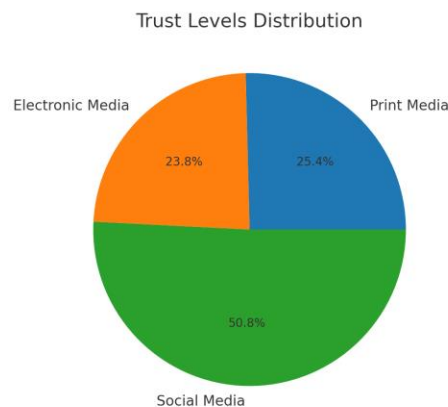


Table 3: Trust Levels Data

Media Type	Count	Percentage
Print Media	16	25.4%
Electronic Media	15	23.8%
Social Media	32	50.8%

Discussion:

In the findings for trust levels, print media accounted for 25.4%, electronic media accounted for

23.8% and social media led with 50.8%. This tells us of a trend of change, with social media likely playing a bigger role in shaping perceptions of Trust levels.

Engagement Levels Distribution

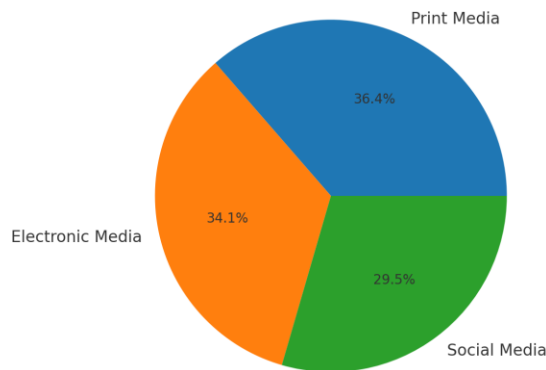


Figure 4: Engagement Levels

Table 4: Engagement Levels Data

Media Type	Count	Percentage
Print Media	32	36.4%
Electronic Media	30	34.1%
Social Media	26	29.5%

Discussion:

In the findings for engagement levels, print media accounted for 36.4%, electronic media accounted for 34.1% and social media led with 29.5%. This tells us

of a trend of change, with social media likely playing a bigger role in shaping perceptions of engagement levels.

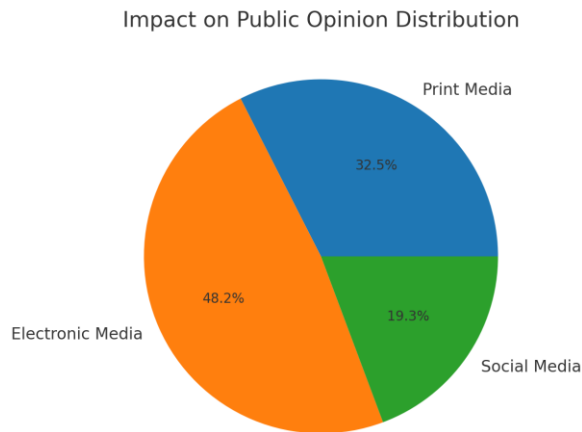


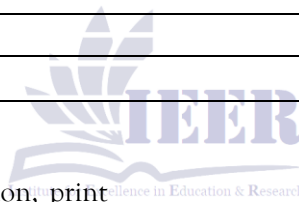
Figure 5: Impact on Public Opinion

Table 5: Impact on Public Opinion Data

Media Type	Count	Percentage
Print Media	27	32.5%
Electronic Media	40	48.2%
Social Media	16	19.3%

Discussion:

In the findings for impact on public opinion, print media accounted for 32.5%, electronic media accounted for 48.2% and social media led with 19.3%. This tells us of a trend of change, with social media likely playing a bigger role in shaping perceptions of Impact on public opinion.



Misinformation Concerns Distribution

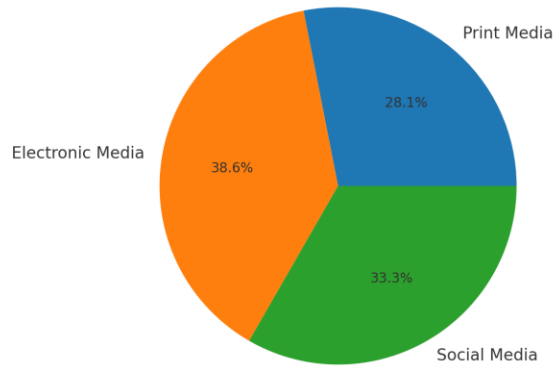
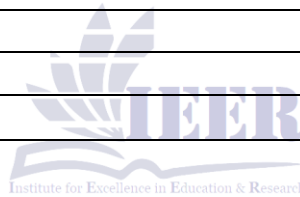


Figure 6: Misinformation Concerns

Table 6: Misinformation Concerns Data

Media Type	Count	Percentage
Print Media	32	28.1%
Electronic Media	44	38.6%
Social Media	38	33.3%



Discussion:

In the findings for misinformation concerns, print media accounted for 28.1%, electronic media accounted for 38.6% and social media led with

33.3%. This tells us of a trend of change, with social media likely playing a bigger role in shaping perceptions of misinformation concerns.

Influence on Democratic Participation Distribution

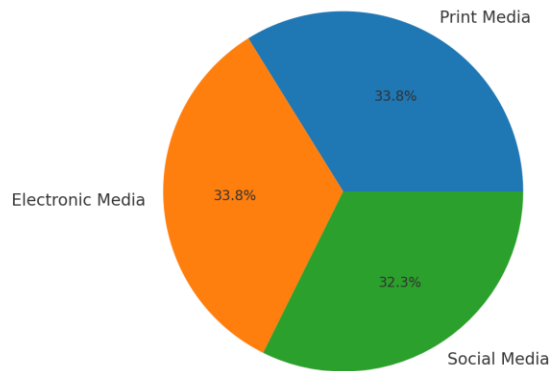


Figure 7: Influence on Democratic Participation

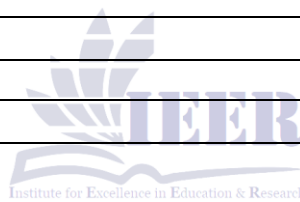
Table 7: Influence on Democratic Participation Data

Media Type	Count	Percentage
Print Media	44	33.8%
Electronic Media	44	33.8%
Social Media	42	32.3%

Discussion:

The results for influence on democratic participation show that print media was 33.8% while electronic media is 33.8%. Social media has shown a shift with

32.3%, contributing to a trend, where social media has a greater potential to influence perceptions of influence on democratic participation.



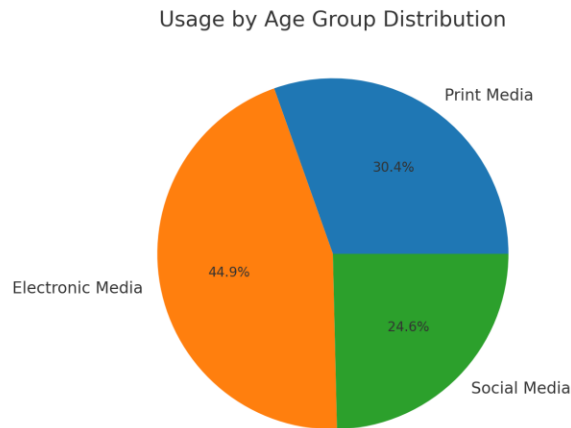


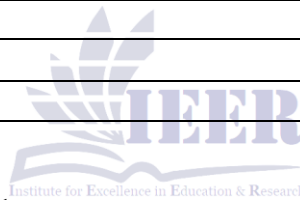
Figure 8: Usage by Age Group

Table 8: Usage by Age Group Data

Media Type	Count	Percentage
Print Media	21	30.4%
Electronic Media	31	44.9%
Social Media	17	24.6%

Discussion:

The results for usage by age group show that print media is 30.4% while electronic media is 44.9%. Social media has shown a shift with 24.6%, contributing to a trend, where social media has a greater potential to influence perceptions of usage by age group.



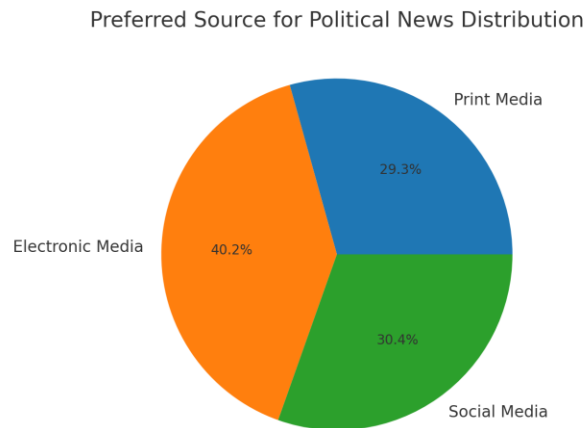


Figure 9: Preferred Source for Political News

Table 9: Preferred Source for Political News Data

Media Type	Count	Percentage
Print Media	27	29.3%
Electronic Media	37	40.2%
Social Media	28	30.4%

Discussion:

The results for preferred source for political news show that print media was 29.3% while electronic media was 40.2%. Social media has shown a shift

with 30.4%, contributing to a trend, where social media has a greater potential to influence perceptions of preferred source for political news.

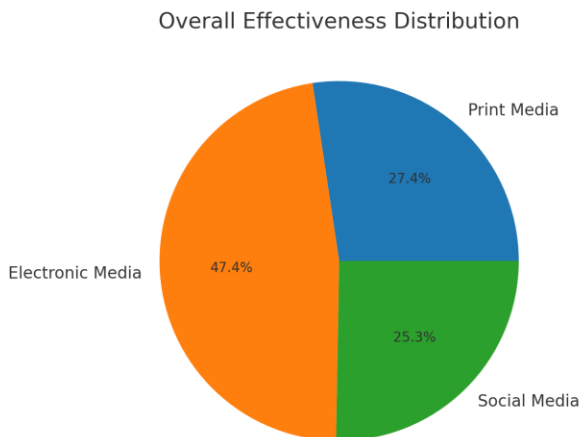


Figure 10: Overall Effectiveness

Table 10: Overall Effectiveness Data

Media Type	Count	Percentage
Print Media	26	27.4%
Electronic Media	45	47.4%
Social Media	24	25.3%

Discussion:

Overall effectiveness shows that print media was 27.4% while electronic media is 47.4%. Social media shows a shift with 25.3%, contributing to a trend, where social media has a greater potential to influence perceptions of overall effectiveness.

Findings

- Perception of credibility:** Print has always been the most credible medium, but with readership getting weaker, its credibility continues to decline.
- Audience Reach:** Electronic media has the widest audience reach in its entirety. But social media's reach is the broadest reach in a more global sense.
- Trust:** The highest level of trust is in print, limited trust in electronic media, and less trust in social media due to misinformation.
- Audience engagement:** Highest engagement comes from social media, second comes electronic media, and lowest is in print.
- Influencing public opinion:** Social media has established itself as the single strongest mechanism for shaping opinion in real time, particularly with youth.
- Misinformation impacts:** Misinformation and polarization from social media and trusted print media.
- Democratic Engagement:** Social media provides information to citizens with protests, campaign and movements, print media and electronic media provide better education and more orderly formal discussion.
- Use by Age:** Young generations more focused on social media use and engagement, middle generations mostly use electronic media, and older generations mainly use print.
- Political News Source Preference:** Social media preferred by youth and education shift the mean response to a middle aged

group, television shift the mean response to a middle aged group, and newspapers shift the mean response to older citizens.

10. **Overall influence:** Social media has more the most influence, electronic media is 2nd

level of influence, print media had the least level of influence and is the most shallow and least credible.



Conclusions

- The dynamic ecology of media has delivered us into a **hybrid space** where all types of media (print, electronic and social) overlap its adaptations while still serving their own means.
- **Print media** has traditionally possessed trust and authority now less apparent as readership decreases.
- **Electronic media** offers timeliness in news yet credibility issues due to sensational reporting complicate the trust and authority of electronic media.
- **Social media** continues to gain momentum as the dominant medium for transmitting public opinion, rallying communities to action, and now, shaping political debate and future communications albeit not without the accompanying ability to fuel misinformation and polarization.

- It is imperative now more than ever to consider a synthesis of the three media types for an informed democratic society.

Recommendations

1. **Enhancing Media Literacy:** It is important that government, education, and the non-profit sector encourages critical thinking skills and media literacy to help audiences identify trustworthy sources from untrustworthy sources and contradict misinformation.
2. **Policy and Regulation:** The regulatory regime continue to increase accountability for social media platforms, without repressing freedom of expression.
3. **Hybrid Media Strategies:** Policy makers and journalists should begin to use hybrid strategies that embrace the depth of print,

the immediacy of electronic media, and the interactivity of social media.

- 4. **Rebuilding Credibility:** Media organizations should invest in fact checking and process based transparent reporting, to attempt to rebuild trust with the public.
- 5. **Engaging Youth:** Due to the aspects of social media, youth rely heavily upon it, and it is essential to target their exposure through awareness campaigns, regarding their use of social media, advising them against

misinformation, and social media, more generally.

- 6. **Cross National Approaches:** It important to create cross national collaborative approaches and solutions that target misinformation, disinformation and digital manipulation.
- 7. **Future Research:** Further comparative analyses should seek out additional new platforms, (e.g., podcasts, news through AI) to identify how they may shape opinion.



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