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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Foreign Media Consumption and Trust among Citizens of Indian-Administered Kashmir

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Interdiction:

The region of Kashmir, predominantly Muslim, is situated between India and Pakistan. Since 1947, Indian-administered Kashmir was governed autonomously under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. However, in 2019, the Indian government revoked this article, effectively ending

Kashmir's autonomous status. This decision was accompanied by strict military policies, communication shutdowns, and restrictions on media activities. These measures led many Kashmiris, particularly youth, to turn to foreign media for information. International networks such as Al Jazeera, BBC, Press TV, and TRT played a pivotal role in covering Kashmir's situation. This study examines the extent of media consumption and its relationship with the trust of Kashmiri citizens in these networks. The theoretical foundation is based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which posits that audiences actively select media that best fulfill their informational needs. Research in this domain indicates that when audiences perceive information as unreliable, they seek alternatives elsewhere.

Methods:

This exploratory study is applied in purpose and employs quantitative methods for measurement and analysis. The statistical population includes all citizens aged 15 and above in Indian-administered Kashmir, estimated to number over 12 million. The sample size, calculated using Cochran's formula, consisted of 384 participants. Quota sampling was used to select the participants. Data were collected through surveys utilizing a researcher-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire's validity was assessed via face validity in two stages in Iran and Kashmir, and its reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. After evaluation, the questionnaire was translated into English and distributed through email, social media, and mobile messaging applications. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, employing statistical tests such as Friedman and Spearman's correlation coefficient tests.

Discussions:

Regarding media consumption, Al Jazeera ranked highest among Kashmiri citizens with an average score of 2.61, reflecting its appealing content and focus on issues pertinent to the Islamic world. BBC ranked second with an average of 2.29. Despite its global reputation, its lower consumption compared to Al Jazeera may stem from less emphasis on local issues or cultural differences. Press TV ranked third with an average of 2.13, followed by TRT with the lowest average score of 1.87 .

In terms of trust, Al Jazeera also ranked highest with an average score of 3.48, attributed to factors such as transparency, impartiality, timely reporting, and its ability to address informational needs. Press TV ranked second (3.21), possibly due to cultural affinities between the region and Iran. TRT followed in third place (3.17), reflecting Turkey's active engagement with Islamic communities. Finally, BBC ranked lowest with an average score of 2.88, possibly due to insufficient attention to Kashmir's local issues and lingering negative historical perceptions of Britain among Kashmiris .

The Friedman test results indicated significant differences in the trust indicators (such as honesty, transparency, impartiality, and timeliness) among the four studied networks, with a significance level of 0.000. These findings suggest that key factors, such as avoiding exaggeration and news distortion, significantly impact trust levels, highlighting notable differences in the performance of the studied networks .

The Spearman correlation test revealed a direct relationship between media consumption and trust for Al Jazeera, Press TV, and TRT. Continuous consumption of these networks was found to strengthen trust. However, no significant correlation was observed for BBC, suggesting that negative audience perceptions prevent repeated consumption from fostering trust.

Conclusion:

This study underscores the critical role of international media in fulfilling the informational needs of Kashmiris, particularly when access to local media is restricted or unreliable. Trust in media, as a key performance indicator, is influenced by factors such as transparency, impartiality, and the ability to meet informational needs. The direct correlation between media consumption and trust highlights the importance of sustained engagement in fostering credibility. These findings emphasize that trust and credibility are the foundation of media influence; without them, even the most extensive outreach efforts may fall short. Trust is the key to media success. Networks that have effectively gained audience trust through transparency, impartiality, and timely, accessible reporting enjoy higher levels of consumption. Al Jazeera serves as a prominent example of such success .

Cultural and historical contexts also play a pivotal role in building trust. BBC, despite its global reputation, struggles to attract trust due to negative historical perceptions. Local and regional content relevance is vital. Networks that have focused more on Kashmir-specific issues, such as Al Jazeera and Press TV, have been more successful in attracting audiences. Continuous usage strengthens trust, emphasizing the need for networks to enhance accessibility and provide reliable content to encourage repeated engagement.

Data Availability Statement

Data available on request from the authors.

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Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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