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No end in sight – Television is here to stay

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ABSTRACT

When video began to stream over mobile and computers, speculation gusted about the end of television. Just as there were speculations about TV replacing radio or TV replacing cinema. But given the recent proliferation of FM channels and number of movies releasing every week and hitting the box office, it is clear that one media did not kill the other. The same is with the television and the new media. Technological convergence and explosion of new media did not and cannot end television. This study clearly establishes that television is alive, stronger and bigger tod.

Keywords—Entertainment, Media trust, News, New media, Television

1. INTRODUCTION

I grabbed my breakfast and moved towards a bench to sit in my university gourmet. Like always, my eyes were in the quest for a single, empty bench to have my first and perhaps the last meal of the day in peace. I sat facing none, not realizing my back facing someone or something to which my colleagues from other bench were looking at. As a reflex, I turned. I turned to watch the television set hanged to the wall in the gourmet. It is not something I wasn't aware of. But something, that has always been there. Something I ogle other days. Realizing that took a while. But what I also realized was my phone kept aside for the entire time I spent eating and watching television. Days repeated and I felt the need to observe others in the gourmet. No similar faces but similar behavior was seen. With a smartphone in hands, people still raised their heads to check the television screen while they sip or eat. Is that the big screen doing magic or is it just a habit. Definitely, they all aren't into the same experiment as I am in, or maybe? What form of indulgence it is?

'Television has been replaced by new media. No one watches television today.' Digital zealots seem to ignore that this is still, very much, The Age of Television (Precourt, 2017). Technological convergence and the emergence of new media have not led to an end to television. The incident shared above does not give a complete picture or even a small clue of it. But it does spur a curiosity to think. On thinking deeply one will find that changes have always been a part of human life and so do television. With the change in human taste, there are changes in television content. Or we can say with every new programme type on television, viewers have developed their taste. But the change in television is not limited to its content. Since history when government control over the medium and its content was taken up television underwent a dozen of changes. The statement *'television is changing'* has become rhetoric within both television studies and the television industry. Technology has never been stable. Colour television, use of recorded content, live broadcasting, remote control, VCR, satellites, and cables all marked changes within the medium from phase to phase. Changes outside the medium like liberalization, privatization, and explosion of new media shook the industry but still, it is surviving. Television still has power and is one most effective communication medium.

Television has been the 'behemoth' among all means of entertainment, consumer engagement and most powerful medium in terms of reach and frequency (Precourt, 2017). The flow of images with a relay of messages not only informs or educates people but acts as a mechanism to produce social relationships. It is the 'electronic hearth,' as Tichi (1992) explained, the center of a family, a different world that inundates every aspect of modern life. It is one mass medium most popular and colloquial at the same time very erudite and intellectual; holding a cultural significance by being a commercial medium which is experienced collectively in domestic spaces (Newman & Levine, 2012).

Television is regular in human life. Every household is it in urban or rural has experienced television viewing. Perhaps not a single day goes without switching on the television set. Be it for prime time news, entertaining daily soaps for women, cartoon for children or real love shows for the youngsters, television caters to all. Television outshines at providing entertainment. While encouraging people to stay at home, it taught national togetherness by bringing new information that covers all sections of the public (Hartely, 2009). Where it has penetrated so much into people's everyday life, controversies or criticism against it is understandable.

Controversy on television mostly revolves around its social and political functions. Critiques say television has tremendously defended conservative economic and political interests. It has been misused by the powerful. Some claim that television promotes violence, whereas there are also people who think television is promoting a democratic, egalitarian, populist culture. Television as “tube of plenty” provides a wealth of infotainment and mobilizes socialization; in contrast, it allows dominant groups and forces to manipulate the masses (Kellner, 2018).

Despite every controversy, the medium has grown for better. If one argues that new media have challenged television one should also keep in mind that the two media with no doubt is different in many aspects. While they both augment media users' content choice, TV and the Internet are not perfect substitutes for each other (Prior, 2007). The content of the web is very detailed and can be customized to a greater extent by the users. Television has professionals solely to verify, produce and broadcast. Also one cannot choose between which serves better as accusations also exist for internet used as a source of information and entertainment. The literature reviewed here shall give a clear idea of that.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study does not aim to highlight differences between new media and television. Instead, it aims to establish that television still matters. To what extent the buzz of ‘end of television’ is true? Do people across the globe still trust television for information and entertainment? These are a certain question that the researcher attempts to answer by analyzing previous but recent studies on television. Statistical reports on people’s trust in media across the globe add to its significance. This study reviews the literature on understanding television, changes, and challenges faced and trust in the medium.

3. LITERATURE

3.1 Understanding television

Television is a ‘need-gratification’ medium state Fiske & Hartley (2003). There are five types of viewer needs, a) cognitive, need to acquire information, knowledge, and understanding; b) effective, need for emotional and aesthetic experience like love and friendship; c) personal, gaining self-confidence, stability, and status; d) social, need for togetherness with family and friends, e) tension-release, the need for escape and diversion. Functionalism explains that television is used by its viewers to satisfy all these needs consciously or subconsciously. The viewers with their social and cultural experience, the communicator and the channels used have an effect upon each other.

Television fundamentally means ‘seeing at a distance.’ Live transmission of sound and moving images from a distant event to people’s home was the vision of the medium. According to this principle, any technology that allows for seeing what is happening at some distant location can be called television says Gripsrud (2010). He emphasized that broadcast television is not dying but changing with new situations. It is now more definable as ‘an entertainment machine with news’ and an ‘apparatus of cultural production.’ Internet decentralizing television is an exaggeration. The Internet does provide a platform for putting one’s story in an audio-visual form in sites like YouTube that resembles broadcasting. But in actual it cannot be termed as broadcast as their audiences are highly specific. It is a pull type of technology with no schedule. It is a video on demand service.

Gerbner (2013) explained television in a compassionate manner. He said television is like a religion to people. Like religion, television is something that one may not have to wait for, plan for, and go out for. It comes to you directly at home and it is there all the time. It pulls together heterogeneous audiences of any age, sex, ethnic, racial, or interest groups and provides a symbolic structure that has a meaning for all. It is related to the state and its people like how the church was in ancient times. It neither demands mobility nor literacy but still has the power to interpret the world to the less educated and the nonreaders. It allows the culture of the literate to be shared to the people of the world.

There is nothing like television. If there is something anti-television than that is the internet said Sandvig (2015) in his study ‘*The Internet as the Anti-Television: Distribution Infrastructure as Culture and Power.*’ His study states that the Internet was originally considered as something opposite of television, the anti-television or like oil and water, which is un-mixable. Internet protocols allowed the transmission of data to nearby nodes, broadcasting to a larger audience was never thought of by the builders. Later it was technologically retrofitted to make video distribution possible. ‘Streaming,’ which is one most common term used for watching videos on the internet, is actually a norm for television. Internet replicated television so much that they did not feel the need to coin the term. Videos available on the internet at first were the ones from television. Television shows were not limited to only the channel but went beyond and captured the new platform. TV channels went online. Internet’s distribution structure gradually became like television. The New York Times television critic Brian Stelter (as cited in Sandvig, 2015) said, “*the Internet, which was thought to be a TV killer, is turning out to be its wingman.*”

Television conveys a more elemental message than any other mass media. Though it is a machine with the latest technology, television communicates analogically said Perkinson (2017) in his study ‘*How Television Made Civilization Moral.*’ He explained, analogic communication is that which is carried out largely by means of body movements, changes in facial expression, hesitation, shifts in tempo or voice and other body gestures. Television is digital but when it speaks, its tone, intensity, facial expressions and posture communicates. It communicates moral messages about the human role, relationships, unforeseen events of relationships and also the relationship patterns. Television has made civilization moral the author said.

3.2 ‘Change’ does not imply ‘end’

Livingstone (2004) in his study ‘*Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies*’ said there is no point that computers have replaced television. Just as television did not replace print; computer did not replace television. Rather people are now more engaged with the media environment which integrates print, audiovisual, telephony, and computer

media. Each media form has its own significance. In order to realize it, mediums should be well known to its users. Media literacy is likely to do the work here. The medium matters because of the message it conveys and every message demand proper way of dissemination for its receivers to get the correct meaning. The medium must not be understood solely in terms of technology, but also in cultural and political terms.

Elihu Katz (2009) in his study *'The End of Television? Its Impact on the World (So Far)'* said there is a big shift in the television industry. Earlier it was 'Television of scarcity.' Choices were limited in terms of channels and programmes and were broadcasted to families of a nation assembled together to watch. With satellite and reign of cable distribution choices expanded and 'scarcity' transformed to 'Television of plenty.' The situation of infinite choice came where viewers choose their favorites among a variety of screens and channels. It was of course not the end but television moved from a collectivist to an individualist phase. Families have gradually dispersed in individual spaces.

It is not like a nation no longer gathers in front of the television together. Sports, news and other events broadcasted on television's big screen still hold people together. The news is one genre that most people prefer to watch on television. Papathanassopoulos, et al. (2013) in their study confirms that people watching the news regularly on television is higher than people seeking news from the internet. Their study is a part of a larger international research project called *'Media System, Political Context and Informed Citizenship: A Comparative Study.'* 11 countries around the world like *Australia, Canada, Colombia, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Norway, South Korea, United Kingdom,* and the *United States* were studied. Except for *Norway* and *South Korea*, all other countries have shown television is still an important source of information. Television is the most widely and regularly conferred news source, with print and internet contesting for second place. Despite the change in nature, content, the taste of the audience and use of secondary and portable screens, audiences within the TV news remain stable. There is no evidence of audience fragmenting away from the TV space but they might be fragmenting within that space like Katz (2009) discussed individual space.

Enli & Syvertsen (2016) in their study wanted to discuss the future of television. As to what degree the impact of convergence and digital intermediaries will affect traditional television? They analyzed TV as a medium, an industry and as a political and cultural institution in relation to technological and market changes in Norway. Findings say that there is no empirical evidence to support the rhetoric of television's death. Changes in the television industry are in a cyclic form. There are changes as well as renewals that provide stability and continuity to television. Traditional TV is an economic, cultural, and socially important medium, and with every change in the structure of a social transition in television is logical. Its survival after numerous transitions demonstrates the strength, sustainability, and success of television as a medium.

One cannot deny that new media have brought changes in the television industry as well as in the lives of the viewers. But television has even adapted to it. Evan (2011) in her study *'Transmedia Television: Audiences, New Media, and Daily Life'* said television is now bigger than the TV. Television went digital to open up a number of channels to a wider number of homes and integrated with the internet. Internet became the key site for all forms of audio-visual media engagement. The mobile phone then evolved with the option to connect the internet integrated with media players. Platforms for television programmes this way multiplied at the end of the twentieth century. On a similar context Robinson (2017) in his book *'Television on Demand: Curatorial Culture and the Transformation of TV'* said the television industry is facing tectonic shifts. There are changes in production, distribution, and reception but all these changes have resulted in more consumption of television shows by people today. With time television has tailored certain web features. Television mixed with web technology and streaming is massive, more influential, popular, ubiquitous and irrevocably. It has become an "on demand" media form. The TV is getting bigger day by day with more content creators, channels, and streaming options. However, at the same time, it is becoming more niche than a mass medium.

3.3 Trust in television

Tsfati (2010) in his study *'Online News Exposure and Trust in the Mainstream Media: Exploring Possible Associations'* wanted to explore that mistrust in mainstream news media lead to the consumption of online news. However, telephone survey and an online survey conducted in his study demonstrated that the association between 'mistrust of mainstream news' and 'exposure to online news' is negative. In actual mainstream exposure is related to trust in media, exposure to nonmainstream sites is related to media skepticism. Skepticism makes audiences consume less news from the Internet. Rather than alternatives, audiences treat online news as an extension of traditional news media.

Greer & Ferguson (2014) through their study tried to answer the bigger question- Is new media replacing TV? Their aim was to find if using the iPad to watch TV is replacing TV viewing on regular sets. Results showed that time spent watching TV on an iPad did not replace the time spent watching a TV set. On the contrary, there was a positive correlation between the uses of these two technologies. They explained that this is perhaps iPad is a technology that is functionally similar to a TV set. TV audiences are using different media to view the same content. Whether a computer or mobile phone screen, content is of television.

By analyzing data from the 2010-2012 Omnibus Surveys of Life in Qatar, administered by the *Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI)*, Meeds (2015) wanted to find the changes in media consumption patterns for trusted news sources over a three-year period among Qatari Nationals and expatriate (emigrants). The study found that though the reliance on Internet news sites is increasing in Qatar, particularly among expats, television is still the dominant medium. Reliance on television as an overall trusted news source decreased between 2010 and 2012 but increased as the most trusted source for local news. Qatar TV network's expanded its local news programming and talk shows at that time. Reliance on television as the most trusted source for international news declined from 2010-2012, but the overall percentages remain high because of the *Al Jazeera* network. *Al Jazeera's* network for international news is a matter of pride among Qatari nationals.

Robinson, Zeng, & Holbert, (2018) recently in their study proved that television remains resilient as the world's dominant mediated information source. Television holds a lot more significance in the industrialized and developing world. It confronts class, tradition and religious boundaries and also presses freedom levels. Respondents from 56 countries revealed that television is used more frequently than the Internet or mobile phones as a trusted information source. The medium remains the world's most important source of political information.

3.4 Reports on Television

Reports on television are collected from authentic sources dealing with broadcast media around the world. These reports prove that television is still trusted by people across the globe especially as a reasonably credible source of information.

The *Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising* surveyed 30,000 respondents online from 60 countries of *Asia-Pacific, Europe, Africa, and America* in 2015. The idea was to measure consumer sentiment about 19 paid, earned and owned advertising mediums. Despite continued media fragmentation and proliferation of online formats, trust in traditional channels for advertisement could not be eroded. TV, newspapers, and magazines remain trusted advertising formats. Around 6 in 10 trust ads on TV that rounds for 63%, newspapers 60% and in magazines 58%. Millennial also show the highest level of trust in TV, newspapers, and magazines.

European Broadcasting Union (EBU) in their report '*Trust in Media 2017*' states broadcast media remains the most trusted media throughout Europe. 86th Eurobarometer survey of 33 countries in 2016 found Radio is the most trusted medium with 59% closely followed by TV with 50% of EU citizens trust. Due to the high circulation of fake news, trust in the internet and social networks was merely from 36% and 21% of citizens. Those who did not trust social networks outnumbered those who did in all 33 countries surveyed. A similar survey for the year 2017 was published in '*Market Insights, Trust in Media 2018*.' The report again shows a higher level of trust in the country's broadcast media. It states that higher the level of trust in the country's broadcast media higher is the freedom of the press in that country. For 2017 survey it was 59 % for radio and 51% for TV. There was an increase of a percent.

According to the *FICCI - KPMG Media and Entertainment* report 2017 titled '*Media for the masses: The promise unfolds*' TV industry experienced a steady growth of 8.5 percent in 2016 that is Rs 588.4 billion, attributed to an 11 percent growth in advertising revenues and a moderate growth of 7 percent in subscription revenues. Television in India continues to be an important medium for both broadcasters and advertisers because of superlative reach and viewership it enjoys. Though it is a medium of appointment viewing television is still watched by people at a larger scale. This indicates the robustness of the medium in near future.

Another research conducted by *YouGov* in 2018, commissioned by the *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism* found that use of social media for news has declined. Usage is down by six percentage points in the US, UK and France compared to earlier reports. The reason is said to be a decline in the discovery, posting, and sharing of news on Facebook. 54% of people are skeptical about the use of the internet for news because of the proliferation of fake news on the internet. Television remains a critical source of news for many but declines in the annual audience. 51% trust the news media they themselves use most of the time like traditional forms. By contrast, 34% of respondents trust news they find via a search on the internet. Merely 23% trust the news appearing on social media.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In today's world information is everywhere. Media have the authority to capture process and disseminate this information in order to carry out effective communication. Different forms of media at different times have proliferated into the lives of people. But there are no cases of one replacing or displacing the other. The literature above signifies the same. As Cinema did not kill theatre, radio did not kill newspaper and television did not kill radio; internet did not kill television nor can it in the future. There is media coexistence. Every emerging technology initially shapes up to challenge those already in power. But each communication medium is coexisting with the other because of distinct significance each one of them holds. Every communication media is unique when it comes to delivering messages. The medium, not the message makes the meaning of the message stronger. The medium influences how the message is perceived (McLuhan, 1967)

Television is said to be a 'need-gratification' medium. Cognitive needs of viewers have gratified consciously or subconsciously television. Needs include seeking information, building relations, gaining self-confidence etc. Television gratifies it all.

Television is expanding and there is no end in sight. It has come out of its rigid structure that we place at home or hang at one corner of a public place. Today every technology that allows you to watch audiovisual content is 'television.' Television means 'seeing at a distance.' As per that principal our smartphones or notebook or iPad with an internet connection, making us watch videos or live event taking place somewhere in the corner of the world is television. Not the structure but its technology and functions define the medium. The industry has embraced the growing popularity of digital media and is creating cross-platform content. Almost every television channel is online today. It now has a multitude of content distribution outlets and opportunities to innovate across genres and platforms are more than ever before. The Internet is not displacing or killing television, in fact, it is serving as the television's 'wingman.'

If one has to compare between television and new media the basic thing that is important is television allows the flow of knowledge from literates to other people. It neither demands mobility nor literacy but still has the power to communicate and sensitize less educated. Television or say any traditional media have professionals solely to verify, produce and broadcast content. It is no more linear communication as interactive television has come up today and programmes at this digital age offer communication from the audience part. New media provides an extreme/ excessive version of it. There is excessive availability or flow of information by an

excessive number of channels and interactive platforms for users. Anyone can post information opening a website of their own that lack editorial hand and moreover professional and social pressures are less for online media (Johnson & Kaye, 2004). There are several reasons suggested by critics as to why the online sources should be judged as less credible. Reports discussed in this study also explain why television is trusted more over new media.

Importance of television in society goes deeper than this. Television is a medium that improves the world, triggers the imagination, raises curiosity, encourages education and gathers millions around common interests. Television content is a conversation trigger that physically connects two or more people into a confined space (Wohn & Na, 2011). However one cannot say the same for social media as a shared experience of group viewing here is without being physically together.

Television has a variety that allows viewers to gratify their needs for required content, entertainment, escapism, and other cognitive desires. The multiplicity of channels and content has moved a television from a collectivist to an individualist phase. Viewers might have dispersed from groups to individual spaces but this fragmentation is within television and for its content. Findings also say that television outshines entertainment but the news is what most people prefer to watch on television. Studies by Papanthanasopoulos, et al. (2013) Meeds (2015) and Robinson, Zeng, & Holbert, (2018) proves television is still most watched and trusted source of news and all other forms of information.

Literature above in every way suggests that television is not being displaced. Rather, their functions and status are shifted with the introduction of new technology (Jenkins, 2006). Television in a real sense has long-drawn-out. Content whether presented by means of linear television or streaming on the internet indicates that production of shows for television can never stop. Television entertainment is here to stay. The future may bring different kinds of screen and innovative modes for distribution, but television is here to stay (O'Donnell, 2016). Television has grown for the better.

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