CREDIBILITY PHENOMENA MAINSTREAM VS NEW MEDIA: AN OVERVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

In this millennium of information and communication technology dependency on ICTs has been increased tremendously. Similarly, different mediums and tools of new media technology are being utilized by the subscribers in order to ascertain information and news items. Mainstream media so far have been striving fighting its battle for her survival against the popularity of alternate media successfully; in order to maintain their circulation and TRP, the traditional print and electronic media has been simultaneously disseminating their respective new and cultural commodities through new media. Democracy and political communication go side by side as the mainstream and regional political parties are effectively using new media along with classical traditional media. However, consumption and pattern of political communication varies from society to society. Apart from strengths of new media, several negative implications including anonymity, questions of identity, and issue of credibility have raised serious concerns for regulators and consumers as well.

Credibility has been remained a significant feature for all forms of old and new media news commodities. It was important in past times but its significance has been increased manifold times due to vast penetration of CMC (Computer Mediated Communication). Certain questions

are being raised by the media academicians regarding credibility of news and information disseminated by alternative media channels. Since, the last decade the research scholars from the multi disciplines have undertaken research projects to explore credibility phenomena in context of mainstream and alternative media. This research article presents in-depth reviews of classical and contemporary literature related to the issue of credibility phenomena. Synthesis of available literature indicates that overwhelming majority of studies was based on quantitative research. It was also found that ruling class of technologically advanced countries do not consider the new media as great threat for the political stability of the state. Similarly, citizen of developed world rely more on new media in comparison of traditional media. In addition to it, level of trust and credibility was significantly associated with new media than old media. Different researchers identified several variables i.e. (demographics indicators, consumption pattern, and nature of government) and multiple factors (social, economical, cultural and political) with regard to consumption of news, information and trust of the audience while preferring one media over the other.

Keywords: New Media, Mainstream Media, Credibility, Political News, Computer Mediated Communication, Citizen Journalism, Political Communication

INTRODUCTION

Every day we are encountered with the bulk of information. Our friends & colleagues, the books and newspaper we read, television we see, and websites we explore are just some of the resources and mass media is contributing to the information flow. But it is not necessary that every type of information is essentially of equal importance for us. In the most of the cases, specific information appears to be comparatively better, or more reliable, than the other information.

The global informational and technological revolution has given birth to the unique ways of dissemination of news and information; mass media has become an essential part of our daily lives. In this situation, it is very important to monitor and evaluate the credibility and genuineness of news and information. As we receive information from the mass media, we are always encountered with the issue of considering which sources of information are and are not trustworthy [1].

Global Internet & Social Media Statistics:
The data gathered from different reliable sources, the global internet statistics shows that there are (3.773 billion) internet

consumers in the globe and (2.789 billion) active mobile users. In addition, WhatsApp has crossed over (1 billion) users [2]. Facebook is still considered as very popular social media platform. According to the statistics, there are currently (1.32 billion) daily active users on Facebook users and (2.01 billion) monthly active members [3]. Moreover, Twitter is also heavily utilized by the audience with total (328 Million) monthly active users and (100 Million) daily active users. Additionally, more than 80% of the Twitter users are connected through different mobile devices. The consumer of social media "Twitter" share approximately (500 million) tweets each day [4].

Historical Overview of Media Credibility:

The attention in the area of media credibility was increased in 1930s in the Second World War when the greater trustworthiness of the radio news gave the set back to the newspaper organizations. This rapidly growing attention was increased further in 1950s when the newly invented medium of mass communication, television pushed the social scientists to investigate which medium of news is perceived highly reliable according to the news audience. The researchers differentiated between the source and medium credibility. The findings of the research investigations concluded that people differentiated between the credibility of medium and source [5].

The research investigation regarding the medium credibility arouses from the concerns in the newspaper industry, initially it was regarding the increasing number of audience switching to the radio for getting news, then about the number of people relying on television. But the rapidly increasing use of internet for getting information had pushed many researchers to conduct new researches to evaluate and compare the mainstream sources with new emerging mediums of information and communication [6].

Source & Medium Credibility:

Aristotle's concept of (Ethos) credibility is dominating since the last 2,500 years which is considered as the Greek foundation of source credibility. Ethos is one of the three main ways by which the sender can persuade the audience members [7, 8]. Besides, other modern definitions related to the credibility describes it as the trustworthiness of a source, and it depends heavily on the individual characteristics i.e. expertness of the sources of information [9].

Source credibility is a concept that is used to suggest that the positive characteristics of communicator or source which in result influence the receiver attitude and affect the

receiver's acceptance of the communicated message (Ohanian, Roobina, 1990). But according to many others this definition of credibility should also include the institutions or organizations as well as the individuals as communicators [10].

Generally, different names are assigned to the concept of credibility like credibility assessment, perceived credibility, and credibility perception. But historically, the research regarding credibility is normally divided into two main domains: source credibility and credibility of medium of channel. Source credibility can be defined as the characteristics of sender which can influence the processing of messages by receivers, where the concept source is usually defined as the person or mass communicator, for instance a newscaster or a leader.

On the other hand, channel or media credibility research focuses on the medium by which the message is delivered to the target audience [11]. Media credibility is the trustworthiness of news medium or channel. It is different from the concept of source credibility, which only focuses on characteristics of the person or group communicating the message or the message. Also, the focus of media credibility is not related to the characteristics of the individual

communicator like expertise and trustworthiness [12].

Audience and Control over Media Messages:

The selection of the channel or message is controlled by the readers in the mainstream media but on the other hand, they don't have control over the message themselves. For instance, in traditional broadcast like radio and televisions the audience tune on different channels according to their choices but their role in this regard is limited but in contrast, the online setting gives freedom to the user to select and reply to the message making it a customized and interactive experience [13-15].

Credibility of New Media Sources:

In early researches, it was already recognized and acknowledged that the credibility is not directly related to the source [16] but it is the judgment or evaluation done by the receiver on the basis of different factors of the host which includes accuracy, trustworthiness, fairness, bias, depth, reliability, believability and completeness [17,18] and also websites attractiveness and convenience of use (Metzger, 2007).There are multiple convenient ways of sharing information via internet like social networking sites and blogs so consequently, the internet based bulk of information usually cannot be filtered

and scrutinized by the professional media gatekeepers as it is in the mainstream media like in newspapers and television channels. Furthermore, decision about the internet sites credibility lies more on the users because of the lack of traditional factors to determine credibility and authenticity of information like reputation and identification of the author [19, 20].

Genre Credibility:

Internet is the combination of many components like blogs and SNSs. Because every component is different from one another in relation to use, method retrieving information, synchronicity, interactivity and the expectation of the users, therefore, the credibility of every component is evaluated by different criterion [20, 17, 21] The terminology of "genre credibility" is referred to the evaluation of credibility of different components of internet [22]. Genre credibility distinguishes between the components of internet on the basis of the different characteristics. For instance, few components of internet like instant messaging and chat which are comparatively more synchronous and interactive are utilized for one-to-one online communication, in contrast to it, the internet websites which are used for help and searching information are

less asynchronous and interactive one [23, 24].

SNS Use and Credibility:

SNS sites like Facebook and YouTube are among most famous top three sites visited by users of internet from United States [25] and e-mail address is the mainly used ways of identification which connects with other online users [26]. It is the reality that the nature of information disseminated through SNS are so complex which circles among the millions of internet audience daily, it is difficult to quickly distinguish between the news and information, fiction and fact, scientific forecast and speculation. Consequently, it is only understandable that evaluating the credibility on SNS is very complex phenomena because the bulk of information coming from the multiple information sources, ranging from professionally vetted articles, from well reputed websites and publications in journals, to visit referred by the friends whom we have never met.

In addition, social media sites permit the users to seek political information and share their political opinion which make the users the producers and consumers of internet based political information. Besides, on the SNS there are multiple formats in which the shared information can appear ranging from

wall posts, status updates, articles, videos linked to the individual user and groups. The users can initiate the political debate or arguments in favor or against the shared news or information regarding political candidate or issue by commenting in the provided space, this feature of SNS provide the distinct point of view or reinforce previous values or user may select to entirely ignore the communicated information [27, 28].

Personal Characteristics and Credibility Perception:

It was already established from the early stages of credibility researches that audience consider those sources of information as believable which has the characteristics of expertise and trustworthiness while judging and evaluating the credibility [29, 30] in the same way in the case of online information processing the early requirement of judging the credibility appear to be true [31]. The internet audience probably connects those website and messages which are supported by their beliefs [32]. If the information is received from those sources who shares common interests and values then the credibility of information disseminated through SNS would enhance. On the whole, the information which is in accordance with and supports the world view of the receiver

would be confirming and convincing consequently that information would be regarded as judged as more credible and genuine than the information which is challenging and opposite to the receiver values and beliefs [33].

The users of SNS are strengthened with the greater control over the selection of friends and usually they become friends with those users who are acquainted to or familiar with offline as a result, there are greater chances that the friends in the real life are possibly to gather on the same groups and SNS. Similarly, the SNS users would probably spend more time with the friends who they are also connected offline as compared to those users who the users are rarely familiar with [34].

In addition, when the SNS users restrict the size of their friend's circle to those whom they personally knows or associated with as well as those having common interests, there are greater chances that the information disseminated in that homogeneous, likeminded pool of friends would be considered as credible [35,36]. Moreover, certain elements of SNS, specifically, pages related to fans, groups regarding politics that can be joined by the members attract the individuals of similar viewpoint or political ideology can take part in the highly polarized

and partisan discussion against their foe and to strengthen their cause [37].

Measuring Media Credibility:

The concept of credibility has multiple dimensions. Aristotle described the concept of credibility as goodwill, character and intelligence. On the other hand, the scholars of contemporary world also have perceived the concept of credibility as the construct which has multiple dimensions. For example, [38] in his research regarding the credibility effects on persuasion conceived the competence and reputation as important dimensions in the construct of source credibility. The psychologists from the Yale University Hovland as well as his associates Kelly and Janis [39] investigated the communications during World War II concluded trustworthiness, expertise and intention as key credibility components. By following the same practice, abundance of studies focused the individual source with respect to public and group communication. Since 60s the media scholars studying the phenomena of credibility are conducting the researches to understand the audience credibility perception of the different forms of media like newspapers, television, internet and radio. But in the recent years [40, 41] the focus is track the best grouping combination

of the components of credibility which can represent in the meaningful category.

The measures as identified by the research of Gaziano & McGrath [41] are considered to be very significant in connection with the credibility research. These measures consist of 12 media credibility components. In addition, [42] placed Gaziano & McGrath's credibility components in to two groups. Among these two groups, one group of the seven components is regarding the affiliation of media with community whereas, second group having remaining five components repents the credibility of media: fairness: accuracy, trustworthiness, completeness and bias. The group of media credibility assembled by Meyer is established as one of the best combination for evaluating the reliable and valid credibility of media which has also been demonstrated by many other scholars studying the credibility of media [43, 44, 45].

Internet and News:

The internet has evidently developed into the major source of news. The literature suggests that more than 3 billion users around the globe are now using the internet services through different electronic devices [46]. Besides, many media groups and organizations now intend to invest in the online journalism like news websites because

of its profitability [47]. This new role of SNSs as the platform for news has provided a unique online space to all the journalism stakeholders. The users of social networking are not only the receivers of news and information but also equally participating in providing news and information [48].

Today, the audience only pays attention to the news media which they think is most credible. When the news audience considers a specific medium of communication for getting information and news, they most probably rank that specific medium more trustworthy as compared to other available information and communication mediums. This nature of digital media in complex to manage due to the enormous information flow, and there are very slight laws and policies available to regulate the audience who are participating on this new medium of social networking media. SNSs are regarded as heavily interactive mediums for the public to discuss and publish the information using the message feature and this utility makes the public interaction easier, faster and more open [49, 50].

Social Media and Practice of Journalism:

The traditional researches concerning the credibility of news emphasized on the factors of expertise and trustworthiness. But in the current era the innovation, adoption and reliance on new types of media technology and information sharing have changes the dynamics of the information and communication. The concept credibility has replaced by the new terms like "transparency," "authenticity," "authority," "legitimacy" or "passion". In addition, increasing role of social networking media for the dissemination of news and information, the audience has realized that news delivery method is rapidly changing [51] and the audience now expects to receive the news rapidly with regular updates. Today's journalism is satisfying the demands of the consumers. The availability of lot of social networking sites as well as other internet based sources of news like news websites has also changed the practices of modern journalism and journalistic work [52].

It can be estimated that in the new media journalism the journalists may have competition with their counterparts in disseminating the breaking news using social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter which is heavily being utilized as the source and method to circulate the news particularly by the young audience [53]. Besides, it is the primary responsibility of the media persons and reporters to evaluate and verify the authenticity of news and information which

is communicated through social networking sites before using the news material [54]. The internet users live in the world where they have to depend on the information which is important for them and it is the duty of journalists to extract that vital information [55]. This demands the contemporary journalism to discover new ways to access new audiences in cyber world and to motivate the news media groups to adopt and familiar with the latest technology of new media for adding innovation and value to their traditional journalistic work [56].

Social networking sites are gradually invading the traditional news method. Now days, the journalists are "romancing new communities by blogging and posting updates and stories on Twitter, YouTube and Facebook" [57]. The desire and perception of the news audience for speedy and real time news updates have shifted the consumers form the traditional way of delivering news to the modern way of news media technologically. This rapidly emerging trend pushed the journalists to adopt this new technology for their part in the changing media landscape [58]. Apart from the lot of advantages of social networking sites for journalists is the capacity of dealing with the huge audience with no geographical boundaries. Moreover, social networking

sites have ability to disseminate the information to the larger audience; it has the ability to negatively or positively affect the audience at such rapid speed that cannot be challenged by the traditional news media [59]. The Social networking sites are such powerful medium of communication with the ability to speedily disseminate the news & information that can make the local news into a global one. This innovative support of new media technology has opened the new ways of interactive and speedy communication for its users. Consequently, this convenient access to internet and social media networks media facilitated the users to participate into the process of news and information dissemination. It is also very significant to note that different political parties are now heavily depending on new media sources of information dissemination like social networking sites and internet websites.

New Media, Citizen Journalism & Political Communication:
The rapid development into the ICTs and new media technology have provided the opportunity to the general public to become an active participant of citizen journalism which has opened the new avenues to virtual interaction and rapid communication. This unique form of journalism strengthened to the member of the society with the power to

comment and debate on different news stories as well as to share those stories on their social media landscape which was never possible before. It is very important to note that this development in the journalism and communication sector resulted in heavy decrease in the monopoly of news media organizations. Initially, the citizen journalist were highly discourages by the mainstream media organization but now a days they are appreciated to provide their view point and feedback on different issues as well as they are now reporting different news to mainstream media organizations. Now there are many bloggers, independent online newspapers, and social media based news organizations which are also playing their part to inform the society regarding different national and international developments. Additionally, due to the fact that unlimited numbers of users are now online and are rapidly adopting the new media technology, to decrease this gap and to broaden the news audience, the mainstream media organization has already started operating through these new mediums of journalism.

No one can deny the features of this modern form of journalism and communication technology. But on the other hand this distinct form of journalism and communication has gave birth to very

significant questions regarding the credibility and authenticity of news and information through "street reporting" is trustworthy? and how these "new journalists" are participating without having access to personal computers and internet connectivity and has no media literacy at all? For the ultimate success of the participatory journalism, there is a grave need for joint cooperation and efforts among the media organizations, citizen journalists and other stake holders to increase their knowledge and skills through different trainings and workshops [60].

Due the drastic technological advancement in ICTs in the 21st century we are enjoying the rapid internet services and other new media services which have provided us with the wealth of information and every sort of information is on our finger tips. This rapid change has not only occurred in the lives of the individuals but the media organizations were also influenced by this rapid information and communication technology. This newly invented technology of new media has also altered the way of political communication. Political communication is the most prominent form of the Mass Communication and Journalism. It includes the utilization of media by different political parties and government to win the support of public in both elections and other than that

time. The pattern of political communication is different in the different parts of the planet earth and it depends upon their socio-economic and cultural situations but it is very clear that the society where democracy is in practice depends heavily on political communication.

New media technology is playing its very significant role in the countries where media is not free. Newspapers and TV channels can be banned by the governments but no such control is possible in case of internet, Facebook and other similar internet based services cannot be stopped. Like in the recent past, the citizens of Arab countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Libya stood against their governments and there were new media services which provided the citizens with the powerful platform to voice against the ruler and initiate the new media campaigns which finally lead to the huge gatherings to protest. Now the internet is heavily being utilized by the Gulf countries and even Google and Yahoo is providing their service in Arabic language [61].

The Technology Acceptance:

It is significant to notice that blogs and social networking sites are not going to replace the conventional or traditional way of journalism. However, online media like SNSs has provided an extra information layer to strengthen the existing traditional news sources of online news and information [62, 63]. Undoubtedly, SNSs has altered the journalism work. Technology like SNSs has strengthened the journalists with many ways of crowd sourcing and newsgathering. This supported them to gather additional online news material and at the same time provision of diverse range of citizen journalism sources regarding different news stories they are working on which make them capable of sharing their own opinion and stories with news audience. This new phenomena of public participation in journalism called citizen journalism has provided the opportunity to the public to share interesting happening around them which has also supported the journalists to very quickly reach to the eyewitnesses through the Tweets and posts of citizens. Although, it is beneficial for the media persons to make contact with and collect the news and information from the citizen sources of news and information but on the other hand it is very significant to think about the credibility and reliability of sources of news and information which would certainly affect the credibility of news. Consequently, untrustworthy and invalid news and information would generate negative effects [64].

Rationale of the Study:

In the result of proliferation of limitless news and information from the multiple mainstream and new media sources has gave birth to the critical issue of credibility, believability and trustworthiness. As we know that the mainstream news media undergoes through multiple steps including the verification of fact and figures, trustworthiness of and authenticity of the sources and content of the news etc. which is labeled as media gatekeeping process. But on the other hand, the news and information disseminated through the new media sources i.e. social networking site, multiple news websites as well as different news apps. which are being utilized by the smartphone users for receiving the rapid news and information with the help of high speed 3G/4G internet services has made the new media more powerful, detailed, comprehensive hub of news and information. Besides, most of the content on the internet have no such media gatekeeping process as in followed by the traditional mainstream media organization. Consequently, anyone who has access to internet connection can publish any kind of news or information without going through different filters of verifications and authenticity of the content. Conversely, on the new media, the news

audience would not be able to distinguish fact from fiction, and may accept the new media content as credible.

In this connection, it is significant to investigate and analyze the factors and audience perceptions regarding the issue of credibility of news and trustworthiness of mainstream and new media sources. The focus of this review paper is to highlight the major factors and variables which push the audience to believe the new and information.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous researches have been conducted to answer the question regarding the audience perceived credibility of mainstream and new media channels of news and each study have investigated different factors which lead the audience to trust one medium as compared to other news and information medium which disseminating the same information. Broadly, the mass media credibility studies can be divided into two main areas one is the mainstream media and other is new or alternative media.

Internet & New Media Credibility:

The study conducted by Johnson and Kaye has concluded that credibility of SNS generally judged by the politically interested internet users was quite low. The participant's evaluated credibility of SNS low on all the measures and specifically on

the depth of content. The findings also suggested that the internet user connects with those SNS groups which match their views. In addition, as compared to SNS all other online sources of political information were ranked by the users as moderately credibly. The reasons behind lower credibility of SNS is the use of SNS as main source social of interaction and it is not related to the questionability of political content disseminated through SNS and such sources of social interactions are regarded less credible as compared to other online sources of political information. It is also possible that lower ranking of SNS credibility is associated with their lower use of SNS for the sake of political information. Furthermore, the findings also suggested that interest in politics, political ideology and trust were significantly associated to the credibility perception of SNS. Liberals evaluated SNS as highly credible as compared to conservatives. It was also discovered that participants who maintain their trust on the government are more probably regards SNS as credible. Also, the younger and less educated respondents judged SNS as credible as compared to those participants belongs to the higher educational level and older age groups [65].

Similarly, many studies suggested that audience judge those mediums as most credible to which they give preference over other mediums. Therefore, the findings of the most of the researches suggested that television is considered as most reliable medium as compared to other mediums of mass communication. Additionally, many internet researches concerning the credibility of medium proved an association between the audience's judgments about the credibility of medium with the frequency of its usage [66].

In China, the researchers concluded that micro-blogs were regarded as top most credible news source by the Chinese students and non-social networking sites, SNSs and television were placed on second, third and fourth position respectively in credibility ranking of national political news. The research also found that online news media was considered most reliable as compared to their traditional counterpart. The study also tracked the strong relationship between the Youth League members and non-member as well as between the member of the party and non-members in relation to their perception regarding the reliability of online media. In addition, the variables of attitude towards politics and involvement were significantly

associated with the reliability of online news media [67].

Garrett (2011) discovered that the information which is related to politics and disseminated through the social networking sites or by means of email has greater chances to be considered trustworthy than exactly the same version of information available on web sites, which suggests the usefulness of trusting on social networking sites for the sake of political information. Besides by investigating political rumors he concluded that the medium of Internet speed up and broadens the rumor circulation but it has no effect on recipient believability. Conversely the political rumors which are sent via emails between friends and family members are more likely to be regarded as trustworthy which can pose threat to truthful political knowledge [68].

Research regarding 32 online news websites using five different credibility factors confirmed that more open news systems (where editorial process is not followed like social media) are judged to be less credible than more closed news systems like mainstream news media i.e. newspapers and television news channels [69].

Another study suggested that more than half of the politically interested participants heavily trusted on the medium of internet followed by newspapers and TV news channels as source of information. The study also revealed that younger internet users who spend most of the time on internet consider it as more credible as compared to other mediums. Moreover, less educated internet users regarded internet as more authentic, this study reinforce previous researches that suggests highly educated individuals are very critical regarding media [70].

Similarly, Greer (2003) compared the trustworthiness of a highly credible and well-known online news source Nytimes.com (the online edition of The New York Times) to a personal web page. The findings suggested that the highly credible source was rated as the most reliable, but this difference was not statistically significant [71].

Study of Schweiger found that German audience rated newspapers as more reliable medium than television or internet based news. At the time of the study, the web was comparatively new to the German audience and the majority of participants were non-Internet consumers. While newspapers were normally regarded to be the most credible medium, the position between television and online news media were unclear. Television was considered as more serious, critical and well-researched, whereas the online web was regarded as more thorough and

impartial. In addition, he also found that the web users and non-web users selected similarly ratings concerning the credibility of the Web as amazingly similar to television and newspapers [72].

Likewise, study to explore technological and traditional factors suggested that wider use of hyperlinks, reliability and popularity ranking of the news publisher, as well as unlimited choices that Yahoo and Google news provides to the internet news audience gives the feeling that linked news content is credible. It was also found that traditional elements of the credibility was proved to be influential, the feature of hypertextuality of the news source plays an important role in developing credibility perception. In contrast, the study also found that interactivity and multimediality characteristic of internet was found ineffective for formation of perceived credibility of news [73].

This study has explored the effect of the formats of online news on the credibility perception of the online news audience. For this purpose three different mediums of news Journalist and non-journalistic blogs and online newspapers were taken into account. In this connection, the has investigated the effects of political interest, dependency of media and use of media on the credibility perception of medium of news, The findings

of the study revealed that all three variables, media use, political interest and dependency on media were not significantly associated with the credibility perception of new. In contrast, the blogs which are not associated with any journalists were regarded as more credible as compared to other media formats. The statistical impact can be elaborated in terms of no media organizational affiliation of non-journalistic blogs [74].

Research conducted in Nigeria regarding internet based newspaper's credibility concluded that the majority of the Nigerians still do not trust on online newspapers because of the fact that anonymous/faceless individuals can share whatever they like for the audience [75].

In addition, a study found that college students of Ohio University perceived online newspaper as more trustworthy. It was also concluded that the students with more experience of using internet considered internet news to be credible. Also, the credibility of online newspapers increased when the readers are more familiar with the printed version of the same online newspaper [76].

An experimental research investigation conducted to measure the anonymous sources and journalistic quality of news effects on the credibility perception has confirmed that use

of anonymous news sources would consequently affect negatively on the perception of the readers. Besides, the news stories apparently of the higher quality attracted more trustworthiness toward the sources who disagree with the main findings of the story [77].

An experimental study was conducted to evaluate the effects of credibility of anonymous news sources in United States and China (two countries with different journalistic norms) found that participants of both countries indicated news stories with anonymous as less credible in comparison to the news stories with known sources [78].

A Study evaluated the Journalists perception revealed that the majority of Slovenian journalist considers the traditional news media as more credible as compared to the online news websites. Besides, only those journalists who often use internet or work in the online news organizations regarded the online news websites as credible. The study also confirmed that the demographic variables of age, gender and education don't have statistically significant effects on the journalist's evaluation of credibility [79].

Similarly, survey of politically interested internet users concluded that web-based independent newspaper was perceived credible for seeking political information as

compared to traditional sources and other online newspapers. In addition, the findings of the study also suggested that traditional newspapers and television channels were perceived as more trustworthy than internet based newspapers and online television channels for seeking political information [80]

Additionally, a study evaluated the credibility of SNS which is considered as very important information source used by political parties for the sake of persuasion of voters and dissemination of political information. The findings suggested that the SNS were regarded as credible information source [81].

A comparison of American and Korean survey regarding the credibility of sources of news revealed very interesting results. The American respondents perceived online news as number one most authentic news source followed by mobile, newspaper, television and radio news as second, third, fourth and fifth most reliable news source respectively. Whereas Korean research participants ranked television as most trustworthy news medium followed by newspaper, radio, mobile news as seconds, third and fourth most credible news medium respectively and quite interestingly online news source was regarded as lowest credible news medium

which was ranked number one by the American participants [82].

The study has analyzed the media credibility perception of news & debate programs before and during the elections broadcast by Malayalam news channel. Findings of the study suggested that the credibility of news media is a situation phenomenon and it varies in different times for instance when the news media start reporting events extensively during different elections of governing bodies in the country i.e. parliamentary and state's legislatures. This trend of credibility perception can be either positive or negative. According to the results of this study, during the election period the credibility of television news channel and different broadcast is gauged higher which proves that audience give value to news and debates programs during election broadcast [83].

Likewise, another study investigated the University of Nevada (UNLV) student's attitude towards internet-based news consumption and the factors which have contributed to push user to comparatively prefer, adopt and rely on the online news. It was found that the convenience and instantaneous feature of online news were the most integral factors which have pushed the internet user to depend. In addition, it was also found that participant's positive feeling

about the internet is associated with their positive feeling toward the online news [84].

Mainstream Media Credibility:

Another study was conducted to differentiate government controlled local TV news service (Al-Jamahiriya with Al –Libya) with pan-Arab (Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya) Libyan television news service during the Gadhafi regime in Libya concluded that the news services provided by pan-Arab news channels were regarded more credible than Libyan local television news services [85].

Similarly, research conducted in Egypt during the pre-election stage to evaluate the credibility perception of the audience towards different media channels suggested that overall, television was perceived as highly trustworthy medium after newspaper and internet. Internet consumers considered online newspapers, Facebook posts and other online news portals as highly credible. In contrast, less educated and wealthy Egyptians considered stated owned media as highly credible (major vote bank).Furthermore, comparing the media type, the credibility of online sources was higher than the mainstream sources. Additionally, there was weak association of individual's political attitude with credibility [86].

Likewise, another study conducted in new African democratic countries by gathering data from sixteen African countries concluded that the on balance, public media is considered as highly trustworthy as privately media. Those Individuals who are unsatisfied with the performance of the president or doubtful about honesty of the government official trust the private media whereas, at national level of analysis it was discovered that large scale corruption or lower freedom of press are also interlinked with the greater preference for private media over the public [87].

Additionally, an investigation into young audience of Klang Valley, Malaysia concluded that Malaysia still considers the mainstream news media as credible but on the other hand according to the findings, the mainstream media was failed in providing the youth with the sufficient information they need and consequently they depends on alternative sources of news i.e. news websites for seeking additional information. The study has also reveled that relationship between the young users trust on news related websites is based on the accuracy and reflection of the given scenario. In addition, it was also found that students trust and depends on those news websites which provides them with unique point of view,

critical and in depth analysis as well as the news content free from any influence and biasness [88].

Similarly, study conducted to gauge the media formats by the Chinese audience revealed that Chinese participants believed television to be the most trustworthy medium than newspaper. Additionally, according to the Chinese participants two government controlled mouthpieces, China Central Television (CCTV) & the People's Daily both were considered as highly reliable [89].

The findings of the study concluded that younger age audience evaluated news of television as higher credible than older age group respondents in connection with the factors of believability and informativeness. In addition, both the age groups respondents gauged the news of television in context of depth. Moreover, students rated online news as more in-depth and informative than adult respondents and adult regarded internet news comparatively less fair than the students. Additionally, the younger respondents assessed internet news more credible as compared to older members. Furthermore, adult considered internet news as informative, in-depth and fairer and consequently more reliable overall than television news. In contrast, students gives higher score to television news than the

internet news on each and every item excluding in dept and considered television news to be most authentic medium of news [90].

The study evaluated Sindh (Province of Pakistan) journalist's perception suggested that typical Sindhi journalists consider print media to be more credible as compared to electronic media. In addition, journalists who are employed by the English media organizations consider English language media as more trustworthy as compared to Sindhi/Urdu language mass media. On the contrary, those journalists serving in Urdu language based media organizations believe that Urdu language has more reliability than English media organizations whereas journalist serving in Sindhi language media organization are of the unique view that all English, Urdu and Sindhi languages based media organizations have the same rank of trustworthiness [91].

A study which has evaluated the student's perceived credibility of TV and online news discovered that there were three main factors which have contributed towards the perceived credibility of medicated news. The research concluded that news credibility, medium credibility, and reporters' credibility directly influence the reliability of the communicated news on both television and

online news. Whereas, the reporters credibility is directly associated with the individuals intelligence, expertise, education, authoritativeness and trustworthiness. In addition, the medium of television was accessed by its comprehensive nature, fairness, and taking care for the public interest while internet was evaluated on the basis of its objectivity, public interest as well as trustworthiness. Besides, the yard stick for measuring the credibility of news for both the mediums was objectivity and trustworthiness [92].

Likewise, a study conducted to measure the citizen's credibility perception of newly expanded television news channels which are generally owned and controlled by political groups and commercial personalities in Bangladesh. The findings of the analysis revealed that the greater the TV news content regarding social issue (i.e. public affairs content) like awareness of family planning, garment industry and transportation sector the higher the audience would perceive the TV news as credible [93].

Korean study of news media credibility found that Korean audience considered traditional sources of news as more reliable as compared to online sources of news. Newspapers, television and radio were found as statistically significant whereas the

Internet and magazines did not. When asked about the overall perception of medium credibility, the majority of the respondents perceived newspapers as highly relied medium of news. On the other hand, Internet was not regarded as medium for news [94].

Study conducted to evaluate the media type credibility of news media in China. The respondents were asked what medium they believe when they receive the conflicting news from the different news mediums. The findings indicated that the mediums of television secured top position and is regarded as most trustworthy medium of news in China whereas newspaper, websites, radio and stands on second, third and fourth position respectively in terms of news credibility of news medium [95].

Media credibility research revealed that the Pakistani women evaluated internet and international television channels as less trustworthy than men. Minority ethnic groups perceived domestic television channels as less credible and international TV and traditional media as more reliable than the Punjabi ethnic majority [96].

This study explored the American audience cross media credibility perception in connection with the news reporting and coverage of Iraq war. The findings of the study depicted that opponent of war considered internet as less associated with the position of pro-government and highly credible as compared to supporters and neutrals. In addition, for the group of minority partisan the diversification of view and information regarding war was the major reason of high level of credibility perception of internet as medium of news [97].

The study analyzed the perceived credibility of cable news network's channels, CNN and FOX news. The research has found that Conservatives and Republicans have low level of trust on the media all together. It was also discovered that those viewers who expressed their distrust on the government also expressed their mistrust on FOX and CNN as well as the viewers who showed their trust to the government also said that they believe CNN and FOX news. Additionally, those mistrusted the government more inclined to believe CNN as trustworthy as compared to FOX [98].

The survey conducted with the Punjab university student's revealed that heavy television news channels viewing do not leads to or have any association with the higher credibility perception as well as it has no effect on the process of opinion formation [99].

In addition, the study conducted in the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)

revealed that the greater the news audience give preference to and depends greatly on particular medium, the higher they consider that medium as more trustworthy. On the other hand, the sources of local news were also regarded as credible but the study has found very low consumption and dependence whereas the consumers for online news were found accessing news content on daily basis from the websites of mainstream accredited media and not from the new media platforms i.e. weblogs and citizen journalists [100].

Similarly, a research explored the relationship between the concept of media credibility and popular vote in the general elections in Malaysia as well as the level of credibility of television, newspaper and internet according to Malaysian audience. An analysis of the popular votes of BN and media credibility from election years 1990, 1995, 1999 and 2004 concluded that there was a correlation between the media credibility and popular votes. The findings of the study suggested that when the voters would rely on the media, they would also rely on the information they would gather from that particular media. It was also concluded that the credibility of television and newspaper is higher as compared to internet which is regarded as new medium in Malaysia [101].

In addition to it, another study investigated the effect of image quality of the local news and anchors of local news channels on the credibility perception of the audience. The findings revealed that better image quality (HDTV) positively effects the audience credibility perception of the source credibility as well as overall trustworthiness of newscast [102].

Likewise, a study gauged the credibility perceptions of Internet information in contrast to other media. The findings of the study concluded that the Internet was considered as credible as radio, radio, television and magazines, but not newspapers. They discovered that there was a variation of credibility by medium among different types of information sought by audiences, such as news and entertainment. The participants reported that they did not confirm the information found on the Internet, The findings of the study also varied by the category of information needed. In addition to it, the amount of skillfulness and experience of using the Internet and how the individuals perceived the information were linked with efforts to verify online information [103].

Another research investigated the impact of fake news exposure on the attitude of individuals (i.e. enhancing the feeling of

distrust, inefficacy and cynicism) towards politicians in the political communication process during the 2006 election campaign in Israel. It was concluded that exposure to fake-news and perceiving it as real depends upon the viewing hard news. It was also discovered that the strength of those research participants who considered fake-news as real are those individuals who were highly exposed with fake news and less to the hard news as compared to the participants with higher level of exposure to both type of news [104].

In a research investigation which compared the television news with the print news sources, asked online users to rank the trustworthiness of some popular Internet news related websites and they found the Interesting results; the ratings for the online sites of the key national news media outlets were significantly higher than the ratings for the news organizations themselves [105]. Similarly, the study of Schweiger conducted in Germany has investigated the medium credibility concluded parallel findings. Although, internet was regarded as authentic information source but it was perceived as less authentic than television and newspaper [106].

CONCLUSIONS & DISCUSSION

It can be safely concluded from the above cited literature that the credibility and trust is the foundation of contemporary journalism which leads the audience to believe the specific medium of mass communication as most authentic as compared to other available medium. The above literature suggests that there are many variables which lead the audience to consider news and information channels as trustworthy. The credibility perception about the news and information mediums depends on multiple factors i.e. demographics characteristics (age, gender, education), audience geographical location, mass media consumption pattern, type of government, news appearance and presentation, economical and political situation, availability and convenience of ICTs and so on. Additionally, due the heavy dependence of the audience on new media sources of news and information, the danger of misinformation and rumors is also highly increased. It is also evident from the literature that the importance of mainstream news media channels specially television and Newspaper is not faded. In addition, the internet and other new media channels of news and information dissemination i.e. Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter are new in the developing countries which are now heavily being utilized by young users.

On the basis of review of several studies related to the new and mainstream media trough the lenses of credibility, believability and trustworthiness it was found that either new or mainstream media cannot be described the most credible in generalized way. Some of the studies considered classical traditional media more trustworthy and credible in comparison of new media however, significant number of studies declared vice versa. It also explored that media dependency was found directly correlated with scale of credibility. In addition to this, another striking and interesting factor was explored that the greater the hypertextuality and multimediality the greater the credibility and trustworthiness. Role and impact of gatekeepers was also analyzed with regard to credibility phenomena. It was revealed as professional gatekeepers have not been involved while constructing, packaging and disseminating political news through open news system i.e. citizen journalism via online media was considered less credible and authentic in comparison of close news system being operated by professional gatekeepers on the landscape of mainstream print and electronic media- this feature making it more credible. Apart

from believability of audience in general news items different results with regard to credibility measurement scale has been brought on surface in perspective of political communication; as autocratically regimes in Middle East has curb down freedom of expression and muted dissent voices of the deviant groups. Ultimately, it has yielded negative outcome and leads the audience to have more believe in political news circulated through online media sources.

Different studies, have endorsed efficacy, utility and authenticity of new media in escalating political uprising as it was proved productive and fruitful during Arab Spring. Synthesis of the studies conducted in South Asian countries observed paradigm shift in perspective of greater dependency and reliance on new media as mainstream media has been owned and controlled by certain vested interest groups including business tycoons, real state barons, political personalities, industrialists, other pressure groups in general and religious political elite in particular for manipulating information and setting the agenda in order to fulfill their ulterior political designs. While on the other hand, a study in different perspective also highlighted the repetitive

dissemination of propaganda based political communication was lead towards believability of audience through mainstream print and electronic media. Last but not the least, some of the studies also endorsed that certain appealing factors including high definition, presentation of news irrespective of nature of media was linked with greater credibility and authenticity.

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