

Credibility and Viewership of Pakistani Mass Media in Digital Age

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Abstract

Few years ago, mainstream media was the major source of dissemination of information with the help of professional journalists after gate keeping but with the emergence of social media information reaches to the public with in a second of incident happening without any scrutiny. Due to the easy availability of different social media platforms the persons who were the consumers of media now became the content creators of media. The flood of information produced by social media and mainstream media lefts doubts in the minds of consumers among the validity of information and the credibility of platforms. The researcher has designed this study to check the credibility of social and electronic media in the Pakistan in new age. For this purpose, the researcher designed a questionnaire for data collection to check the perception of public about social and electronic media credibility and adopted purposive sampling to collect the data from residents of capital cities of all 4 provinces (Lahore, Karachi, Quetta & Peshawar) of Pakistan. The researcher has applied uses and gratification and source credibility theory as a theoretical framework. The results of the study revealed that credibility and viewership of electronic media is decreased due to the popularity of social media. The researcher also found that public counter check social media information on electronic media. The researcher also came to know that official sources considered more credible than the anonymous sources. On the basis of gathered data the researcher also came to the conclusion that content attributes increased the level of credibility in electronic and social media.

Keywords: Viewership, Credibility, Social Media, Electronic Media, Source Credibility Theory, Uses and Gratification Theory

Introduction

In Pakistan social media has unlocked the new paths for communication and socialization not just at individual level to produce social and political opinion but also for business advancement. In Pakistan, the growth of social media highly influenced the traditional media by providing them different options to get news. Currently everybody has more choices to gain news and information than ever. Though, they remain anxious to get information through a reliable and credible source. As like, Lankes et al. (2007) dug out that social media and internet are changing the views of public regarding the credibility while in previous researches, Flanagin & Metzger (2008) explored that public have different ways for assessing the information of traditional and social media to find the credible information.

The use of social media is growing rapidly in Pakistan. There were two main barriers in the way of social media. First one is language, as so many people don't understand, speak or write English and the second barrier is not access of internet or devices. But with the induction of Urdu websites, blogs and portals the first barrier has been broken, as well as the second barrier has also been broken after the availability of cheap smart phones in the market. After broken of these both barriers, the use of social media is growing rapidly. Collectively, Pakistani public use internet for news, education, politics, sports, hobbies and entertainment. Use of internet is different in gender, as men use internet for news and sports while women are more likely to use the internet for education and hobbies (Ahmed et al., 2016).

Every one of us receives such information daily that is far more than we possibly use. Information which received from the friends, books, and mass media directly influences our way of thinking and decision making process. Mass Media has become an essential part of our lives through which we make meaning out of our lives and social activities. People receive information from newspapers, magazines, radio, television and internet on daily basis so that they remain up to date and well aware about happenings around the world (Apejoye, 2015).

It's a fact that when new technology of media arose its affects the existing form of media. As after the invention of Radio and Television the effectiveness of newspaper decreased but after the 1980s instant growth of internet remained faster than the growth of other mediums like; cellular phones, Radio and television (Lu & Andrews, 2006).

The use and consumption of electronic media (radio and television) has rapidly shifted to the social media (blogs, instant messages, chats, social networking sites) in the last decade and half. Usage of social media is more among the school going adolescents among the electronic media (Malhi et al., 2015). According to the National sleep foundation, 97% of American adolescents had electronic media devices including; music player, video game, telephone, computer, television, mobile, and internet in their bedrooms which is also affecting the sleeping habits of adolescents. It is also observed that older teenagers had more electronic devices than younger teenagers (Cain & Gradisar, 2010).

Credibility is the wide portion of research as it correlates messenger, receiver, media source and message. Credibility variously defined as trustworthiness, believability, dependability and integrity of any one. Some of the people consider it

as the power to inspire others and respond in many ways. Credibility also affects many other elements that make it an essential factor for valuable communication (Roberts, 2010).

Traditional media (newspaper, radio & television) have been considered more credible than new media (social media). According to the public, TV is the most credible medium while Twitter considered as lowest credible medium. Social media is considered as low credible medium due to fake news and misinformation. The sources of information of traditional media are mostly known or verified unlike the social media, which prompted poor assessment of social media credibility. (Idid et al., 2019) The credibility or validity of conventional media is still higher than of social media. Furthermore, the reliance of masses on conventional media (Newspaper, Radio, and Television) was significantly more than the reliance on the internet (Mustaffa, et al., 2010).

In digital age, credibility has achieved vast attention from the critics and public due to the dispersal of electronic media in digital media, as internet has become a vibrant source of information. No doubt, news channels of Pakistan appeared in this new age as an attracting source of information & analysis and gained public's trust. Though digital age has arisen many questions and the major query is the believability of credibility of electronic media (Shabbir, 2020).

Literature Review

A research conducted by Sun (2021) proposed the method for evaluating the credibility of social media information on the basis of user's perception to obtain the information of social media correctly, to enhance the performance of credibility estimation and for the improvement of security of social media. The researcher mentioned that for the evaluation of information credibility three dimensions must be analyzed; content credibility, subject credibility and source credibility. On the basis of user perception theory, the researcher concluded that information of social media about credibility evaluation is realized and results shows that method for evaluating the credibility of information of social media is too close to actuality as obtained results remained much accurate in short time.

Abdulla et al. (2002) analyzed the components of credibility of news in their research from online sites, television and newspapers. The data was collected through a telephonic survey from 536 adults. Credibility of news was evaluated by using 12-items Likert Scale of Gaziano and McGrath. The respondents of the survey evaluated the news credibility of newspapers and television more similar than the online news. The results of the respondents remained more positive regarding selected mediums (newspaper, television, online) in terms of up-to-date, current and timely while remained negative in terms of completeness and bias. The amazing fact found as that online users were less negative than the readers of newspapers and viewers of television. The researchers concluded that different factor dimensions were explored by different mediums as online news credibility was found to build trustworthiness, bias and timeliness factors. Television news credibility was found to have currency and fairness while newspapers credibility was found to have honest, currency and balance factors.

Golan (2010) explored the new perspectives on media credibility in his research and came to the conclusion that audience recognize official sources more credible than non-official, no forecast work has been done by the racial (African or White American) participants regarding media credibility, Viewers of Television recognize hard news (crime, business, politics, war, international news, economics) stories more credible than soft news (entertainment, arts, lifestyle) stories.

A research article presented by Adeyanju (2015) in an international conference and explained the advent of social media and its excessive use has extract many comparative studies on social media, newspapers and television regarding news credibility. The researcher also conducted a comparative study of social media, newspapers and television to check the credibility of news. The data collected through focus group discussion and survey while source effects model was used as theoretical framework. The researcher concluded that the respondent's knowledge of internet and level of education directly influence on the choice and trust worthiness of news as most of the people confirm the authenticity and truthfulness of news by rechecking through another medium. The researcher also exposed that the people believed more in newspapers and television news than social media news due to source credibility.

Gupta et al. (2014) conducted a research on social media credibility and described that the evaluation of credibility of Twitter and other social media applications through crowd source is not trustworthy. So machine learning should be used for Twitter credibility evaluation as it automatically evaluates the credibility of Tweets. Basically semi supervised ranking model used for scoring the credibility of tweets.

A research accomplished by Hajli (2018) explored that people are using internet but they have concern about the credibility of information on it. Social media is directly influencing the decision making of individuals as better information about different things is made available on it. The day by day rapid increasing popularity of social media has attracted the masses to engage them in interaction and to share their knowledge and information with the world. The researcher proposes a social word-of-mouth model to test it in travel community which highlights the role of social media and identify its rapid increasing credibility.

Mehrabi et al. (2009) described news media credibility of internet and television in their research article. The researchers used survey methodology to finds out the factors that influence the opinion of media credibility to interpret that what

respondents think about television broadcast credibility of news and internet source credibility of news. For this purpose, 270 non-academic professionals of University of Putra, Malaysia were selected as sample of the study. The researchers used systematic sampling method for data collection. In the light of obtained data, the researchers come to conclusion that television is more credible medium than internet in term of news.

A study done by Zulqarnain and Hassan (2016) explored the effects of social media credibility on the usage of five aspects of news; national news, local news, international news, entertainment news and disaster & relief activities news in social media. The researchers used convenient sampling method for collection of data from 164 male and female students of Islamabad and Rawalpindi universities. Findings of collected data showed a strong association among usage of mentioned five aspects of news and social media credibility. The researchers concluded that in order to enhance the credibility of social media and to increase its users, its need of time to change the perception of people.

Hypotheses

1. It is assumed that credibility and viewership of electronic media is decreased after the popularity of social media.
2. It is estimated that public counter check social media information on electronic media.
3. Official sources considered more credible than the anonymous sources.
4. Content attributes increased the level of credibility in electronic and social media.

Significance

This is the epoch of technology and new media, in which we have many forms of mediums through which we can interact with the world and also gain latest information only through a single click. This study also finds out the reasons behind the popularity of social media in the developing countries like Pakistan. Many studies have been done on electronic media and social media but every study explored different aspects. The present research is different from previous researches because it's based on different issue which facing the electronic media in the era of new media. This study is helpful for the media practitioners, academicians, government and common public to know about the credibility, viewership, and consumption patterns of electronic and social media to disseminating their messages in effective manners.

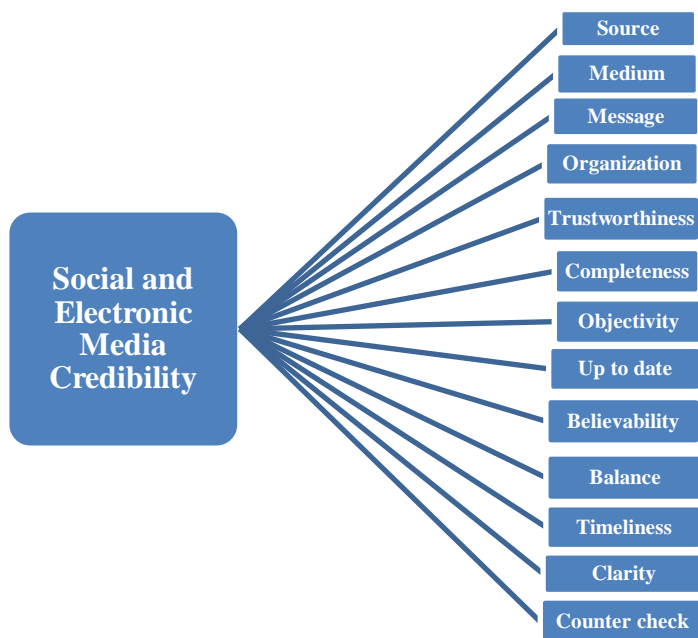
Methodology

The current research has been accomplished to check the comparison of credibility and viewership in Pakistan about mass media. For data collection the researchers exercised the survey method with the help of self-constructed questionnaire. For the gathering of data, the researchers applied purposive sampling technique of non-probability sampling. The researchers have selected 2000 educated respondents from capital cities of every province of Pakistan (Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar & Quetta) including male and female of 16 to 60 years who use mass media frequently for the sake of education, knowledge and entertainment. The researchers also applied Z-score test for the analysis of hypotheses through SPSS.

Credibility and Viewership Scale

The present research is conducted with the help of survey in which researcher adopted 13 different attributes for credibility and viewership scale on the basis of previous studies. Its includes different components of credibility and viewership like; source, message, medium, organization (Saleh, 2016), Trustworthiness, completeness, Objectivity, up to date, believability, balance, timeliness (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986), clarity (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007) and counter check. The credibility of said attributes evaluated with the help of Likert scale ranged from: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1).

Figure 1.



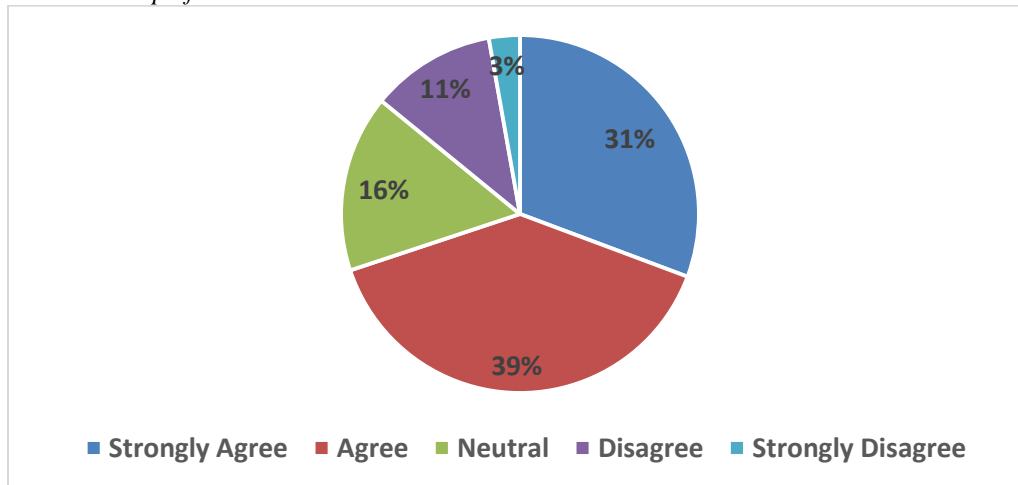
Theoretical Framework

The present research is based on two theories of media and communication. The first is ‘Source Credibility Theory’ and the other is ‘Uses and Gratification Theory’. The basic objectives of the research are focused on credibility and viewership of electronic and social media, same as to check the perception of public in choosing different mediums for information gathering. Most of the time people choose media without and special intentions but later on continued on the bases of content and medium credibility due to satisfaction level. Both selected theories; Source Credibility Theory and Uses and Gratification Theory mainly focused on viewership and credibility and main themes of selected theories are much relevant to the major objectives of the research.

Results

Findings of gathered data are presented in the shape of tables and graphs. The researcher also interprets the tables and figures in a simple way for the better understanding of the readers. The researcher exercised simple percentage technique for the analysis of data, while Microsoft Word and Excel were used for graphs & charts formulation and composing. The researcher also exercised SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) during the analysis of data and applied Z-score test for the analysis of assumptions. Detail presentation and analysis of gathered data is given ahead.

Figure 2.
Credibility and Viewership of Electronic Media is Decreased



Electronic Media has also a significant impact on viewership. After penetration of social media there is lot of competition seemed. Electronic Media and social media both are sharing contents borrowed from each other. Figure 1 is illustrating the results of credibility and viewership of its contents. Majority of respondents are supporting the notion that Electronic Media credibility and viewership is decreased. (31 %) respondents were strongly agreed that viewership of Electronic Media is decreased followed by (39 %) those who also supporting this notion as agree while (16 %) were neutral to this notion. (11 %) respondents were disagreed to this notion although (3 %) respondents remained strongly disagree with the statement that viewership of Electronic Media is decreased.

Table 1.
H¹: Credibility and viewership of electronic media is decreased after the popularity of social media

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Frequency	425	542	255	431	347	2000
Percent	21.3	27.1	12.8	21.6	17.3	100

Table 2.
Test and CI for Two Proportions

Response	X (Score)	N (Total Sample)	Sample P
Agreement	967	2000	0.483500
Disagreement	778	2000	0.389000

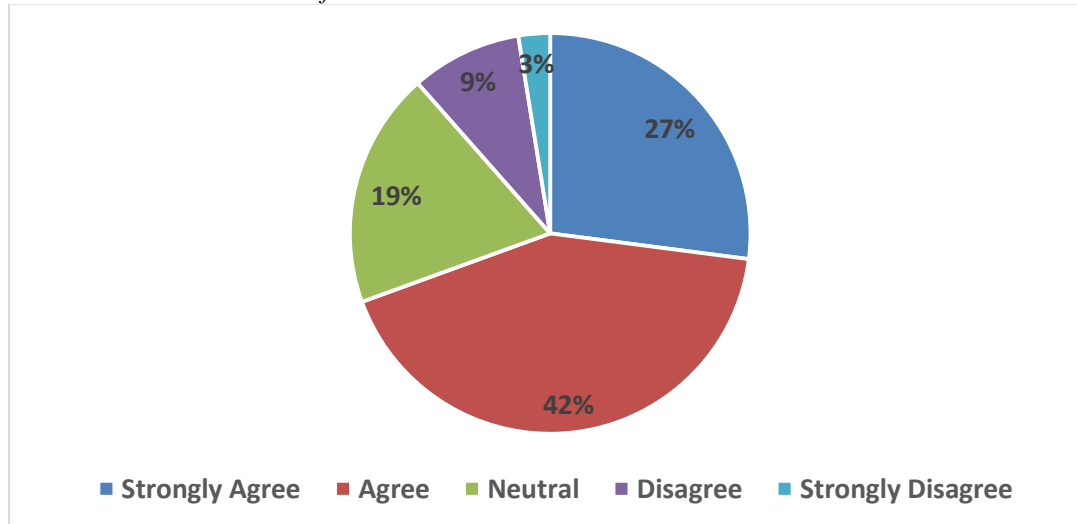
Difference = p (1) - p (2)
 Estimate for difference: 0.0945
 95% CI for difference: (0.0639030, 0.125097)
 Test for difference = 0 (vs ≠ 0): Z = 6.05 P-Value = 0.000
 Fisher's exact test: P-Value = 0.000

Statistical Analysis

The first hypothesis states that credibility and viewership is decreased due to popularity of social media among the respondents. The data presented in the above table reflects the majority was in agreement towards thin notion. The Z

score test ($Z=6.05$, $p=0.00<0.05$) shows the significant difference between agreement and disagreement towards this assumption. Thus, the hypothesis is supported and approved.

Figure 3.
Public Counter Check Social Media Information on Electronic Media



Majority of Social Media sites are borrowing contents from Electronic Media. Content writer edit, reedit, manipulate the original contents for sake of enjoyment. This creates concept of falseness in the mind of other user who exposes from false content of social media so a regular users' mind develops a state of curiosity for the authenticity of contents of social media from main stream Media. It is very necessary for a regular user of social media and Electronic Media to counter check the information. For this purpose, above mentioned chart 2 explores the results about user perception that they wish to counter check Social Media information on Electronic Media. (27 %) respondents strongly agree, (42 %) agree and (19 %) avail choice of neutral. However, (9 %) answered as disagree and (3 %) replied as strongly disagree to this answer.

Table 3.
H₂: Public counter check social media information on electronic media

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Frequency	495	772	294	303	136	2000
Percent	24.8	38.6	14.7	15.1	6.8	100

Table 4.
Test and CI for Two Proportions

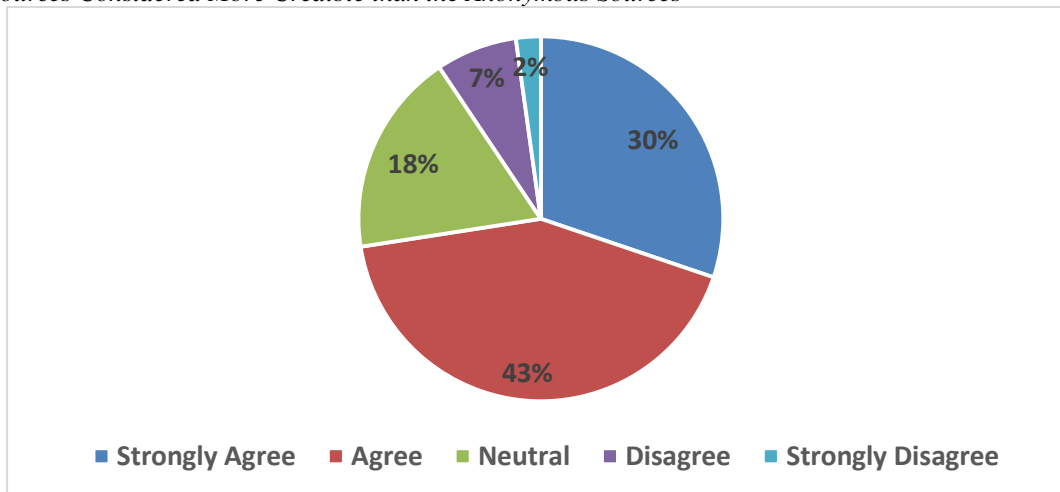
Response	X (Score)	N (Total Sample)	Sample P
Agreement	1267	2000	0.633500
Disagreement	439	2000	0.219500

Difference = p (1) - p (2)
 Estimate for difference: 0.414
 95% CI for difference: (0.386161, 0.441839)
 Test for difference = 0 (vs ≠ 0): Z = 29.15 P-Value = 0.000
 Fisher's exact test: P-Value = 0.000

Statistical Analysis

Regarding the public counterchecking information appearing on social media from mainstream media majority was in agreement that this is practiced by respondents. The Z-score test ($Z=29.15, p=0.000<0.005$) indicated significant difference in agreement and disagreement. So this hypothesis too is accepted.

Figure 4.
Official Sources Considered More Credible than the Anonymous Sources



There are lot of official pages and non-official pages of national and international personalities on Social Media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. There are also many fake pages of celebrities on such sites. Official sources are considered as more credible as compare to anonymous pages. To check credibility of such pages respondents asked a question. Picture 3 explores the results of credibility of official sources versus anonymous sources. (30 %) respondents are strongly agreeing and (43 %) agree followed by (18 %) neutral respondents who conceive official sources as more credible as compare to anonymous sources. Empirical results further reveal that (7 %) disagree to this notion while (2 %) strongly disagree to conceive official sources more credible as compare to anonymous sources.

Table 5.
H₃: Official sources considered more credible than the anonymous sources

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Frequency	668	737	321	207	67	2000
Percent	33.4	36.9	16.1	10.4	3.4	100

Table 6.
Test and CI for Two Proportions

Response	X (Score)	N (Total Sample)	Sample P
Agreement	1405	2000	0.702500
Disagreement	274	2000	0.137000

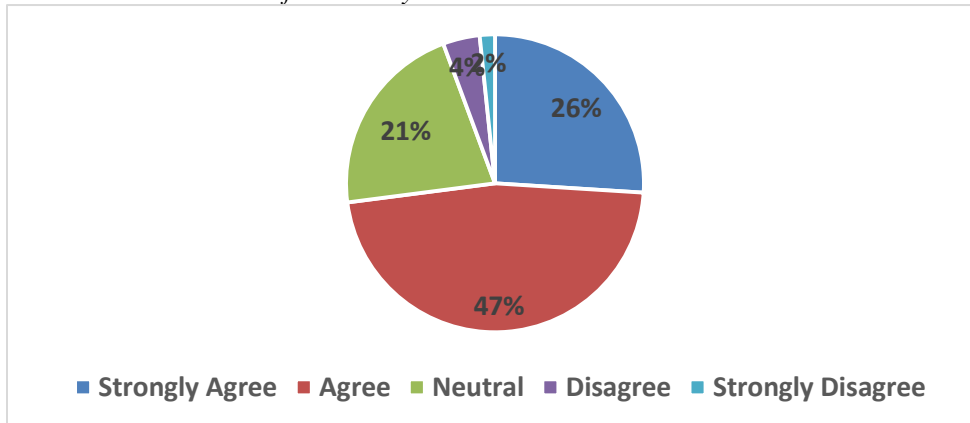
Difference = p (1) - p (2)
 Estimate for difference: 0.5655
 95% CI for difference: (0.540430, 0.590570)
 Test for difference = 0 (vs ≠ 0): Z = 44.21 P-Value = 0.000
 Fisher's exact test: P-Value = 0.000

Statistical Analysis

The 3rd assumption states that official sources considered more credible than the anonymous sources. It was found that most of the respondent responded in agreement as compared to disagreement and this difference was significant. As the Z-score ($Z=44.21, p=0.005<0.05$) which shows that this hypothesis is accepted.

Figure 5.

Content Attributes Increased the Level of Credibility in Electronic and Social Media



Content presentation is core strength of credibility of Electronic Media and social media. If contents are good and presented in well-mannered, then the credibility of Electronic Media and social media will be enhanced. Respondents are (26 %) Strongly agree and (47 %) agree while (21 %) neutral about content attribute increased the credibility in Electronic Media and social media. However small number of respondents (4 %) disagrees followed by (2 %) who also strongly disagree to this point of view.

Table 7.

H₄: Content attributes increased the level of credibility in electronic and social media

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Frequency	597	807	265	176	155	2000
Percent	29.8	40.4	13.3	8.8	7.8	100

Table 8.

Test and CI for Two Proportions

Response	X (Score)	N (Total Sample)	Sample P
Agreement	1404	2000	0.702000
Disagreement	331	2000	0.165500

Difference = p (1) - p (2)

Estimate for difference: 0.5365

95% CI for difference: (0.510672, 0.562328)

Test for difference = 0 (vs ≠ 0): Z = 40.71 P-Value = 0.000

Fisher's exact test: P-Value = 0.000

Statistical Analysis

The 4th assumption states that content attributes increased the level of credibility in electronic and social media. The difference was statistically significant as majority agreed this notion. The Z-score test ($Z=40.71, p=0.000<0.05$) indicated significant difference. Thus, this hypothesis also proved and accepted.

Conclusion

The results of the study discovered that credibility and viewership of electronic media is decreased due to the popularity of social media. The researcher also found that public counter check social media information on electronic media. The researcher also came to know that official sources considered more credible than the anonymous sources. On the basis of gathered data the researcher also came to the conclusion that content attributes increased the level of credibility in electronic and social media.

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