

Transnational Television and Pakistani Diaspora in Canada: “Uses and Gratification” Approach

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ABSTRACT:

Pakistan’s media landscape has witnessed transformational change since 2002, with more than 90 private and liberalized satellite television channels growing from just three state-run channels. These flourishing transnational television channels broadcast news, views, sports, religious, glamour and entertainment programs in the Urdu language; not only for the local audience but also catering to the Pakistani diaspora around the globe. Through the ‘Uses and Gratification’ theoretical approach, this paper investigates the consumption and motivation of viewers watching transnational television channels. The study used qualitative data collected from focus groups comprising various

members of the Pakistani diaspora in Canada. Interviews with Pakistani viewers suggest that television watching is goal-oriented. The specific gratifications derived included cognitive, affective and, at times, social ones. Analysis of focus group interviews suggests that the audience did not find emotional relaxation or tension release. Age and gender were found to be significant factors in shaping patterns of media consumption and gratification.

KEYWORDS:

Pakistani diaspora, immigrants, transnational television, viewing patterns, media of the diaspora, uses and gratification.

INTRODUCTION:

New technology and the liberalization of the broadcast media market in 2002 has dramatically shaped and transformed the media landscape in Pakistan over the past decade. Pakistan, which had just three state-run sources of information, until very recently, has been flooded with new private cable and satellite television channels for a diversified audience. The relaxation of cross-media ownership rules in 2007 turbo-charged media expansion and facilitated an extreme concentration of Pakistan's independent media (Yusuf, 2013: 8). More than 90 Pakistani satellite-based television channels licensed by Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) have been launched, prominent among them are Geo News, ARY News, Express News, Sama TV, Dunya News, Hum TV, Geo Entertainment, etc. (Murthy, 2012).

The television field witnessed an expansion of different categories of channels, such as television channels specializing in a particular kind of programming: news and current affairs, entertainment, religious, children, sports programs, etc. PEMRA has issued licenses to the private sector in a range of categories, including channel 29 for news and current affairs, 48 for drama and entertainment, 04

for sports, 06 for education and training, 02 for religious programming, 01 for agriculture and 01 for health programming. Their transmission can be viewed in 60 countries, through satellite and Internet (PEMRA, annual report, 2010:18). The booming television channels available locally and internationally reach an increasingly diversifying audience, which augments competition among them. This illustrates the impact of contemporary globalizing forces, satellite technology and thematic channels with the inevitable convergence of public service and commercial interests in the Pakistani television industry.

These thriving transnational Pakistani television channels broadcast news, views, drama, soaps, satire, music, films, talk shows, sports and religious shows, glamour and entertainment programs, in the Urdu language, not only for local audiences but also catering to the diaspora around the globe. They focus on political, social, economic, religious and cultural issues involving Pakistan, its diaspora worldwide, and other South Asian communities. In view of the extensive growth and availability of satellite television channels to the Canadian diaspora, this article outlines audience

analysis conducted on viewership, by applying the uses and gratification theory.

Television, undoubtedly, is a ubiquitous and influential medium for viewers in a country like Pakistan (Murthy, 2012). The news bulletins of these satellite channels (available to 60 countries) are also the main source of current national and international affairs and political information about the country for viewers abroad (Pakistani diaspora). In many Western countries, TV newscasts are still among the most widely used source of political information (Hargreaves & Thomas, 2002; Lewis 2008). TV not only reaches many people, but is said to attract more easily the attention of those who are less politically interested than other news sources do (Schoenbach & Lauf, 2002). This raises a question of what importance these channels have for the Pakistani diaspora.

'Diaspora' is derived from the Greek *diaspeirein*, which suggests the scattering of seeds (Karim, 2003a: 1). The term 'diaspora' tended, in the past, to refer primarily to the existence of Jewish communities around the world, but is increasingly being used to denote communities with similar dispersion (Karim, 1998: 2). Diaspora has often been used to

denote religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland (Bauböck & Faist, 2010: 7). 'Diasporic media' are said to be providing new means by which to promote transnational bonding, and thereby sustain ethnic, national or religious identities and cultures at distance (Aksoy and Robins, 2003: 93). Some hold on to a hope of eventual return. This creates the demand for cultural products, including media content that maintain and ritually celebrate the links between the diaspora and the homeland (Karim, 2003:3).

While explaining the main users of an 'alternative-diasporic media', Portes defines them as those who are in a continuous process of cultural negotiation, i.e. migrants who are living dual lives, have homes in two countries, speak more than one language, and whose work and family ties involve frequent transnational travel (Portes et al., 1999: 217). Whereas Bailey states that 'their reasons for using these media vary from sustaining a bond with their home countries or connecting with the new country, to simply engaging with the pleasures and ordinariness attached to media consumption' (Bailey et al., 2008).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:

The ‘uses and gratifications’ theory in communication sciences primarily examines the motivations for media use and the gratifications people derive from it. It asks the central question of what people do with the media rather than what the media do for people. Contrary to the all-powerful media effects paradigm, which suggests that media affect people indiscriminately, it states that people actively and intentionally select specific types of media and content to gratify specific social and psychological needs (Ruggiero, 2000). The theory closely examines the psychological, social needs and motivations for selecting different media and the derivation of gratifications (Jamal and Melkote, 2008; Rubin, 1994).

Concerning individual psychology, this approach has three basic assumptions: (a) to explain how viewers use mass media to meet their own needs; (b) to discover viewers’ motives for using the media; and (c) to identify the consequences of an individual’s mass media utilization (Siraj, 2007). In Katz, Gurevitch and Hass’s work (1973), five major types of needs based on the psychological use of mass media have been offered. They include: cognitive needs (such as information, knowledge and understanding); affective needs (such as

emotional and pleasurable experiences); personal needs (such as confidence, stability and credibility); social needs (such as contacts with family and friends); and tension release needs (such as escape and diversion) (Werner & Tankard, 1988: 303-304). This list of types was helpful in informing the study, which involved focus group interviews and analysis of the uses of transnational television channels and the gratifications derived.

Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007) identified six reality TV motives: reality entertainment, relaxation, habitual pastime, companionship, social interaction, and voyeurism. According to Cooper (1997), social contexts and media realities in different nations should be considered when investigating the effectiveness of this perspective. McLeod and Kosicki (1994) indicated that people are aware of the political, social and cultural contexts that limit media operations and then in turn influence people’s expectations of the media. (p. 140). Any member of the diaspora in the host country seeks affirmation of their ideas, attitudes, views, norms and values, especially for the forms they have learned from their parents. In other words, media do not change audience's

ideas, but enhance them (Dakroury, 2006: 40). Since Pakistani private satellite television channels are newly emerged and independent, diasporic audiences certainly hold specific perceptions and expectations about the reinforcement of their opinion, attitude, behavior and magnitude of gratifications that may be fulfilled by these channels. There is strong need for collective reassurance.

Katz (1973) proposes that the specific motivation to use media by individuals is to connect with (or sometimes to disconnect from) different kinds of others (self, family, friends, nation, etc.). Satellite television channels are playing a considerably important role for diasporic audiences in overcoming the physical barriers from their homeland. This advanced communication technology has made possible the availability of multiple channels and augmented the users' conscious choices of media selection. They watch certain channels of their preference (media channel exposure) with some prospects (expectations sought) and decide whether these channels gratify their needs or not (gratification obtained). They will continue watching these channels till their needs as an

immigrant are fulfilled and they have obtained the expected gratification.

The social and environmental circumstances that lead people to turn to the mass media for the satisfaction of certain needs are also not well understood yet (Katz et al., 1973). They are most likely a combined product of psychological disposition, sociological factors and environmental conditions that determine the specific uses of media audiences. Many socio-cultural factors also affect the variations of media uses and gratifications, such as the availability of media outlets to audiences, type of media, volume and content, gatekeepers, social pressure on media outlets, and media policy (McQuail, 1987). Needs and different ways of gratifying them differ from one culture to another, as certain variables, such as gender, religion and social class affect the way these needs are gratified (Lull, 2000:103). In a diasporic context, the cultures of home and host countries are different, and gender, social class, religion and age, at the time of migration, are important themes to assess needs and gratifications through media.

The Pakistani diaspora can now access media services from their country of origin, through transnational communications,

including satellite and Internet, along with cable services in all big cities across Canada. These Pakistani satellite private television channels are broadcasting news and other programs in the Urdu language. The current development of the media landscape in this crucial time of “war on terror” may have significant implications on the viewing patterns of the diaspora around the globe. The main focus of this qualitative research (focus groups) was to understand the use, involvement and specific motivation for watching transnational television channels by the viewers (the Pakistani diaspora) in Canada. It also investigated the role of age and gender in the consumption and gratification obtained from these channels.

The research questions addressed by the study were:

- Q1. How do members of the Pakistani diaspora in Canada approach and view the television channels from their country of origin i.e. their top of mind reactions to transnational television.
- Q2. What is the nature of their consumption (use/engagements) of these channels in the host country?
- Q3. What are the gratifications/motivations of watching transnational television?

The present study used qualitative data collected from focus groups comprising various members of the Pakistani diaspora in Canada. Focus groups are an effective methodology and provide the optimum setting for open discussions. In focus group sessions, participants share their thoughts and feelings honestly and openly, and freely interact with each other, agreeing and disagreeing. The findings in any qualitative study can be given multiple interpretations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The present study interpreted and analyzed the data, providing answers to the research questions.

THE PAKISTANI DIASPORA IN CANADA:

Here, the concept of the Pakistani diaspora refers to overseas Pakistanis, who are Pakistani citizens and have migrated to another country, as well as people who are of Pakistani descent. According to the government of Pakistan, there are around 7 million Pakistanis living abroad, with a vast majority of them residing in the Middle East, Europe and North America. As far as Canada is concerned, the first Pakistanis migrated from British India to British Columbia, Canada, at the beginning of the 19th century. But most of these immigrants were sojourners rather than settlers, and they

either returned to Pakistan in 1947 or moved on to the United States. Small numbers of Pakistanis (particularly Punjabis) migrated to Canada in the late 1950s and early 1960s and most settled in British Columbia. Most came from urban centers and belonged to the elite strata and the middle class, coming with excellent credentials (Qureshi & Qureshi, 1987: 133).

Pakistani nationals were registered in undergraduate and graduate programs at McGill University, in Montreal, as early as 1949, and at the University of Toronto, from 1958 on. Some went back, others remained to become the founding members of the Pakistani-Canadian community (Qureshi & Qureshi, 1987: 133). In 1976, with the introduction of the Immigration Act, their numbers increased dramatically. In the 1980s, Pakistani Canadians tended to be urban, well educated, and professional and were more or less familiar with western culture and ways of living, integrating well into Canadian society. (Qureshi & Qureshi, 1987: 135).

After 1990, due to immigration by sponsorship, the dependents and relatives sponsored for permanent residence were less educated. However, most of the Pakistanis immigrating to Canada were mainly students, professionals and economic

migrants. Most were Punjabis, Kashmiris and Muhajirs. They usually self-identified as Asian or South Asian; spoke English or French, along with their native tongues, which included Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Kashmiri and Pashto. Although the majority of them were Muslims, there was also a sizable community of Pakistani Christians, Parsis, Hindus and Sikhs, as well (Qureshi & Qureshi, 1987: 132).

According to the 2011 Canadian Census National Household Survey, there are about 161,380 Canadians who claim Pakistani ancestry. In reality, there are actually double these figures, with some sources estimating that their population may be as high as 250,000 and the Canadian Government quoting a figure of over 300,000 (Statistic Canada, 2011). The composition of their approximate population, in different provinces of Canada, shows that Ontario has the highest population of Pakistanis with 56,756, and the Northwest Territories (Yellowknife) has the lowest i.e. 50 members. According to the National Household Survey, most Pakistani Canadians are settled in Toronto i.e. 97,070 and Ottawa has 3, 745, whereas Vancouver has one of the fastest growing Pakistani communities in Canada. Among Muslim immigrants who came to Canada

between 2006 and 2011, the largest share came from Pakistan (Statistic Canada, 2014).

TRANSNATIONAL TELEVISION IN CANADA:

Documented information regarding Pakistani transnational television channels in Canada was not available. Therefore, the basic information here about the introduction and availability of said channels to the diaspora is gathered from old Pakistani settlers in Canada and Rogers Cable TV employees. They were interviewed, at their places, in December 2014. They said that the first Pakistani channel introduced to Canada was ARY (Digital) in 2004-05, followed by Geo TV and now, TV One. These channels were approved by the Canadian Radio-Television Telecommunication Commission (CRTC), which regulates and approves foreign channels to be aired through various service providers e.g. Rogers, Bell etc. Recently, the commission also allowed Hum TV and Zaiqa TV to air their transmissions in Canada.

The CRTC issued a revised list of non-Canadian programming services authorized for distribution on 17 February 2014. The

list contains 13 Pakistani satellite television channels, including 11 private ones named Aaj News, Aaj Tak Channel, AAJ TV, ARY Musik, ARY News, ARY Qtv, ARY Zauq, Dawn News (Urdu), GEO TV, Indus Vision, Masala Television and 02 state channels i.e. PTV Global, PTV-Prime USA. Eight out of these thirteen are news channels and the rest are entertainment and cooking channels. The commission also mentioned that these are third-language 24-hour channels (100% Urdu), originating in Pakistan that offers news, lifestyle, human interest, recreation and leisure programming as well as some music and variety programming.

Viewing of HUM TV started in 2012 through the Internet. Hum TV is a Canadian exempt Category B Urdu language specialty channel, owned by Ethnic Channels Group. It broadcasts HUM TV programming as well as local Canadian content. Hum TV is a top rated entertainment channel from Pakistan, featuring popular drama series, which cater specifically to a female audience. Its main focus is on scripted content, including serials, soaps and sitcoms. It also airs morning shows, music and dance programs and cooking shows.

After the launching of Urdu channels, these providers offered "bundle" packages to

people including mostly Hindi and South East Asian channels, but mainly originating from Pakistan. A regular customer subscribing to cable, Internet, home phone and cell phone can negotiate for a few Pakistani television channels of his or her choice. The “bundle” package costs around \$16 to \$30 per month to the subscriber. Viewers of these channels are mostly female. It’s a booming business in Canada, as their viewership is increasing due especially to reliable and fast access Internet and cheap pop-up service providers.

In Ontario, initially, three local but main service providers (Rogers Cable TV, Bell Dish Network and Shaw TV) started providing these channels to subscribers. At times, these local service providers offer a day’s free preview of these channels. In the past 5 years, the trend has switched to Internet and Internet-based pop-up links, such as “Jaddu TV” and many more. “Jaddu TV,” also known as “Jaddu Ka Dubba,” is a new device but most popular among the Pakistani diaspora for watching transnational television channels from the homeland.

“Jaddu TV,” along with other pop-up links, works on Rogers and other Internet networks. Despite the legality aspect, these pop-up services providers offer a large

variety of multicultural channels at a lesser cost. Interestingly, neither Rogers nor Bell were able to block such services on their network. Most viewers are not subscribing to Rogers or Bell TV and using pop-up “Jaddu TV.” They also access limited Pakistani channels programs through YouTube. There were no reliable, up-to-date statistics available, showing the number of viewers of Pakistani transnational television channels across Canada or cities under study.

METHODOLOGY:

To answer the research questions, this research study applied a qualitative approach, using focus group techniques to have a better understanding of the uses, motivations and important gratifications of Pakistani television channels in viewers’ lives.

Members of the Pakistani diaspora, across Ottawa and Toronto, were interviewed during the period of December 2013 to February 2014. All participants were selected through purposive sampling, with key selection factors that all of them should be Pakistanis (non-immigrants, immigrant and Canadian-born) and viewing Pakistani transnational television channels.

Because age reflects generational and life cycle factors, which can affect viewing pattern, the participants in this study were assigned to focus group sessions according to their age. The four focus groups for each city were composed as follows:

Group 1: Toronto older male viewers, aged 26 years and over. (TOM)

Group 2: Toronto older female viewers, aged 26 and over. (TOF)

Group 3: Toronto younger male viewers, aged 18 to 25 years. (TYM)

Group 4: Toronto younger female viewers, aged 18 to 25 years. (TYF)

The same groups were formed for the Ottawa sessions

Group 1: Ottawa older male viewers, aged 26 years and over. (OOM)

Group 2: Ottawa older female viewers, aged 26 and over. (OOF)

Group 3: Ottawa younger male viewers, aged 18 to 25 years. (OYM)

Group 4: Ottawa younger female viewers, aged 18 to 25 years. (OYF)

Contact lists (comprising names, addresses, phone numbers and emails) of

Pakistani families in Ottawa and Toronto were collected from the High Commission of Pakistan and the Canada Pakistan Association (CPA) for purposive sampling. By using these lists, potential candidates were identified and invited for participation in the focus groups through phone calls and emails.

As many as eight focus groups, comprising 74 male and female participants aged 18–65, were sampled, with each focus group consisting of 8-12 members. The sessions with older males and females were carried out on December 4, 2013 and young male and female sessions were held on the 23rd of January 2014, in Ottawa. However, Toronto focus group sessions with older males and females were held on the 6th of February 2014 and young male and female sessions were conducted on February 7th, 2014. All discussion sessions were bilingual (English and Urdu), spanning 2 hours on average. Carleton University's School of Journalism and Communication (Ottawa) and Sadabahr, FM 530's (Etobicoke, Toronto) audio recording systems and recording rooms were used to record the proceedings of the focus group sessions.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS:

All the participants were Pakistani, shared similar ethnic backgrounds and were viewers of Pakistani transnational television channels. The male representation was slightly higher (39 males) than the female one (35 females) in the focus group sessions. Half of the respondents had been living in Canada for more than twenty years and rest for less than ten years. Most of them were Pakistani-born and only 4 of the younger participants were Canadian-born. All groups had a mix of participants with a varied level of education and work backgrounds, including highly educated professionals (e.g. professors, engineers, consultants, analysts, marketing officer, businessmen, managing directors, IT experts, writers, media managers), those with some specialized training (e.g. house manager, chef, photographer, property dealer), those in blue collar occupations (e.g. truck driver, taxi driver, salesman, daycare worker) however the majority of younger groups were university or college students, studying diverse subjects (e.g. communication, journalism, chemical engineering, psychology, economics, biology, business studies, English).

1. Top of the mind viewer's reactions to transnational television:

As part of the warm-up exercise, the moderator asked participants: What comes to your mind straight away when I say 'Pakistani television channels'? In response, the majority of TOM and OOM participants pointed to "news and talk shows." Most TYM and OYM participants also responded "news" but called them "bad news." Two of the OYM participants answered "bomb blasts" and one pointed out 'Hasb-e-Haal' (Dunya News infotainment program). On the other hand, the majority of female participants, from all locations, answered "drama and dresses" whereas one OYF participant said "uncountable advertisements and time wastage" and two OOF participants mentioned news and 'Hasb-e-Haal'. One OOF and two of the TOF participants indicated that "cooking channels" came to mind.

In response to the question about the availability of Pakistani channels in Canada, the majority of respondents of all focus groups said that all Pakistani satellite channels are accessible online and that some are also made available through cable services. One OOM participant pointed that ARY (Digital) was the first channel that had been watched in Canada, through dish antenna, since 2004-05, followed by GEO

TV (the same information had already been collected by one of the Rogers officers). He added: “these channels are also beamed by Rogers Cable TV, Bell Dish Network and Shaw TV, on the demand of subscribers.” Most of the participants from all target groups, except OYM, in both cities (Ottawa and Toronto) mentioned that they had “Jaddu TV” (Internet-based pop-up links) for the last five to six years, as local cable service providers supplied only one or two Pakistani channels and at high cost. OYM participants pointed out that they were not relying on Jaddu TV or cable services but using the Internet and watching Pakistani news channels on their computers/laptops.

2. Transnational Television Consumption:

To explore viewing patterns, i.e. consumption of Pakistani satellite channels, discussion was carried out in all the focus group sessions. Most of the participants belonging to the TOM, TOF, OOM and OOF groups admitted that they were regular viewers of these channels in the early days of their availability, through dish antennas and later through “Jaddu TV.” They pointed out that Pakistan had gone through a series of crises since the availability of these channels, here in Canada, for instance

political instability, war on terror, the 2007 Lal Masjid operation, a judicial crisis, the 2008 earthquake, floods, the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, elections in 2008 and 2013, the killing of Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan, etc. which made them watch these channels regularly for first-hand information. One respondent added: ‘their independent and aggressive coverage style was also attractive and different from PTV But now, contentious and negative coverage depressed and distressed them, so for a while now, they had been watching their preferred programs or news only. However, the majority of TOM and OOM participants, aged 50 and above, still watched regularly, and those aged 30 to 40 years rarely watched these channels now.

The majority of Canadian-born participants of Pakistani origins in these groups mentioned that if they watched television at their own, they generally preferred English movies or local TV programs to Pakistani channels. However, some participants (international students) from the TYM and OYM groups, who had families in Pakistan, often surfed these channels for news through the Internet, in order to know the current situation in their homeland. They were not regular viewers

but watched news and programs of their choice, at their convenience. Similarly, the majority participants from the TYF and OYF focus groups mentioned that they were not regular viewers of these channels but watched programs of their parents' choosing through "Jaddu TV." In fact, they said, most of the time when they joined their parents in the TV lounge, they were exposed to these channels and watched dramas and infotainment programs for entertainment.

Two TOM participants and one OOM participant shared the information that, in absence of satellite TV channels, they used to import or bring VCR cassettes from Pakistan containing films, music programs and mostly television and stage dramas, in their native language, and showing their indigenous culture. They enjoyed watching these programs with their family members and were frustrated if these cassettes or the VCR did not play properly. A handful of participants said that numerous television channels from the home country were available currently and provided news, drama, talk shows on current affairs and entertainment programs around-the-clock, but that they didn't find much time or enthusiasm to watch these programs.

Votes were taken for consensus on whether overall viewers were increasing or decreasing, primarily to clarify viewership positions. The dominant opinion was that viewership was increasing, whether the viewers were regular or not. Participants of all focus groups in Toronto and Ottawa also shared the opinion that the majority Pakistanis and even Indian migrants, including Sikhs, watched these channels through the Internet or "Jaddu TV."

All participants expressed the idea that several channels were available but that they often watched Geo News, ARY News, TV One, Dunya News, Hum TV, Geo Entertainment, Masala TV and QTV. Geo News was the most watched, followed by ARY and Hum TV. Most viewers, particularly women (young and old) had tuned into entertainment TV channels and watched soap dramas, morning shows and cooking programs, whereas the majority of male participants preferred news channels for news or talk shows. During the discussion, one participant from the TOM focus group said that within the Canadian community, Pakistani women preferred entertainment while men focused on news channels. He stated: "my wife doesn't watch the news content but is interested in drama

and entertainment programs. He also added: “It is more of a gender difference”. Whereas few of the OOF participants expressed the idea that they were interested in watching news, whether good or bad, by stating: “It’s not a gender difference but it depends more on one’s intellect.”

Responding to a query about how much time they devoted to watching diasporic television, the participants of the TOM, OOM, TOF and OOF groups said that they normally watched 3 to 4 hours weekly. However, the younger groups could afford only 1 to 2 hours of watching. When asked about their preferred time for watching these channels, the majority of older participants watched primetime transmissions. Women (home managers) of both cities were comfortable watching morning transmissions. The younger groups said that they watched whenever they found some spare time or when sitting with their parents.

Answering the question of their preferred programs, all male groups (TOM, TYM, OOM and OYM) and a few of the OOF participants conveyed that their first choice was news, followed by political talk shows. Some mentioned that they also watched drama, infotainment and sports

programs. However, young Pakistani participants born in Canada said ‘we watch news from Pakistan sometimes but if we have the choice, we prefer to watch English movies or local television programs.’ Most of the TOF participants and some of the OOF participants (women 30 years or more) mentioned that they preferred to watch drama followed by news and cooking programs, but members of the TYF and OYF groups said that they preferred to watch drama and other entertainment programs and avoided news and talk shows. Members of the younger groups from both cities also expressed the idea that their parents did not want them to watch news channels, as these might create bad impact on them due to the constant negative coverage of the country. One TOM participant said: ‘some Indians also watched Pakistani channels for cricket matches and at times for soap dramas’.

3. Underlying motivations for watching transnational Pakistani television channels

Discussion also focused on the reasons and motives for watching transnational television channels. Across all the focus groups and in both locations, except the TYF and OYF groups, the first reason for

watching transnational television channels was to become aware of the issues and events in the homeland. Several female participants (older groups from all locations) pointed out that they watched these channels to see new trends and fashions in dresses, hairstyles, etc. They indicated that style and fashion start from there and were followed by them here. Some also stated that their purpose for watching was to learn cooking. The young female participants watched Pakistani channels from time to time, but just for entertainment.

Most of the participants from all the groups expressed the idea that awareness of current political, social, strategic and economic issues of their country of origin, along with new trends in fashion, supported their interactions with community at social gatherings in Canada and, to some extent, connected them to the homeland. Geo News and ARY News were the most watched television channels, followed by Hum TV, an entertainment and drama channel for the diaspora.

The second main reason identified by the participants from all groups in both Toronto and Ottawa, was entertainment and relaxation, though it was the first priority for the TYF and OYF participants. Interest in

entertaining programs, predominantly drama, was generally high across all groups and locations except within the TYM and OYM groups. Most of the older participants said that they watched Pakistani television channels to remain connected with their homeland and that the dramas provided them with a “home away from home” touch. Though they criticized the content and production values of these dramas, the language, characters, sights and themes of the drama still occasionally created nostalgic feelings in them.

All participants from the TOM, TOF, OOM and OOF groups agreed that entertainment programs in indigenous languages were also one of the attractions. They said that they amused and enjoyed themselves watching entertaining programs other than dramas, such as ‘Hum Sub Umeed Say Hain,’ ‘Hasb-e-Haal,’ ‘Khabarnak,’ etc. The humor present in these programs changed their mood and made them feel comfortable and relaxed. However, younger Canadian-born participants of Pakistani origin pointed out that they did not feel much attraction to these programs because these were telecasted in Urdu. They said that at times, they could not understand the meanings of

various words used in programs and sought guidance from parents or elders.

Feeling connected with their homeland and people, while watching transnational television, was another important reason revealed by TOM, TOF, OOM, and OOF participants. One participant said “of course, this factor was important but that they had observed radical changes in culture shown by the media and vis-à-vis their own experience.” Some participants of the mentioned groups, including non-immigrant youth, also expressed the idea that they watched these channels to feel good and to overcome homesickness. During the discussion, a handful of older participants from both cities mentioned that although these channels were bringing values, traditions and religious information to Canada, through programs in their indigenous language, they hardly related to these practices now. One participant said, “when we left Pakistan it was different. Globalization has also had an effect on it because what these channels are showing seems originally not Pakistani but more Indian and western”

DISCUSSION:

Focus group interviews with Pakistani diasporic members suggested that transnational media is used to gratify them in many ways. Data shows that the Pakistani diaspora in Canada today has a much broader choice of transnational television channels, which has kept the audience diverted and entertained. Their channel selection and engagement with television varies with their background and intellectual level, thus supporting the uses and gratification core concept of an active audience. It reinforces the idea that media watching (in this case transnational television channels) is goal-oriented. Overall findings established several persistent uses and gratifications i.e. general information, entertainment, social integration into the host country and connectivity with the homeland. But, the current study did not find strong support for personal needs such as confidence, stability and credibility, along with tension release needs such as escape and diversion.

The combined product of psychological disposition, sociological factors and environmental conditions determines the specific uses of media audiences. Pakistani private news channels are new phenomena, introduced in the last decade, when Pakistan

was a key supporter of the US war on terror. The post 9/11 sociopolitical scenario in Pakistan is unfortunately depressing. This situation has enhanced the hunger for news among Pakistanis, including those in the diaspora. As soon as these channels “hit” the screen in Canada, the diaspora started watching them regularly to gratify their cognitive needs such as information, knowledge and understanding of the current situation.

The findings confirmed that for the majority, with the exception of younger female and Canadian-born Pakistani participants, the first reason to watch transnational television, was to receive recent information to analyze the state of affairs in the country of their origin. It was apparent from the focus group discussions that the current condition of Pakistan was the major concern for the older generation within the diaspora community in Canada and, consequently, transnational channels had a strong appeal for them. The result endorsed Karim’s findings that first-generation ties to the homeland remain strong and individuals seek first-hand information, especially in times of crisis (Karim, 2003: 3).

Many socio-cultural factors include availability of media outlets to audiences, type of media, volume and content affecting variations of media uses and gratifications. The members of the Pakistani diaspora in Canada were regular viewers at the time of the launch of these private channels, getting independent opinions and analyses of current events in their country of origin. Older Pakistanis remained “glued” to the television screens due to their independent and aggressive live coverage style, which was different from the state-owned Pakistan Television they were used to watching in their home country. Viewers were also aware of the political, social and cultural contexts of the content broadcast by these channels, so that they watched them with interest and gratification.

The findings also indicate that gradually, the majority of participants (excluding those above 50 years of age) lost interest due to non-stop negative coverage and monotonous patterns of programming. The viewing of transnational television was not standard practice in their family life and older participants watched these channels for three to four hours weekly for news and their preferred programs, however younger participants afforded only one to two hours.

But the majority of 50 year-old Canadian Pakistani participants maintained a connection with Pakistan and thus, transnational television news channels were still playing a role in keeping them informed of current events, political, religious and social issues of Pakistan. The majority of them said that they also watched dramas because these sometimes provided them with a “home away from home” touch. Although they had critical views about the production values, language, characters, sights and themes of these daytime dramas, they also expressed the idea that these create nostalgic feelings in them.

The focus group findings suggest that the diaspora had observed radical changes in the culture shown by the media, which did not support their own experiences of Pakistan but presented a more Indian and western perspective. Therefore, they hardly found any similarities with the norms and values projected by the transnational channels and they learned about the homeland mainly from their parents. Thus, their expected gratification of a reassurance of values and behaviors remained unfulfilled. They argued that while changes in time are normal, the transformation in values and culture in Pakistan has been so

fast that they (participants) could not digest them easily. They mentioned that traditions and festivities were still going on but the way they were practiced had changed. They didn’t relate these festivities to the ones of their time but when watching and comparing, missed the old pastimes and had nostalgic feelings. Therefore consumption of these channels sometimes becomes problematic, as stated by Karanfil (2009) rather than bringing the familiar into the living room, it actually acts as a reminder of the loss of the homeland (p. 893).

Viewing of transnational television is a social practice as mentioned by Bailey (2008) that congregates families and friends, particularly to watch special programs about their countries (p. 64). In our case, transnational television assembled only the daughters and parents to watch entertainment programs and dramas together. But, these channels have significantly facilitated the diaspora in updating their information in all walks of life, supporting them in socializing with their community here. At most of their social gatherings in the host country, men discuss political and strategic issues of Pakistan and women discuss stories of dramas, cooking shows, new trends in

fashion and social issues of the country covered by media.

The consumption, experiences, motivations and gratifications of these channels also vary with gender and generational differences. Focus group sessions reflected that the Pakistani diaspora is divided in viewership patterns as the majority of the women generally watch entertainment channels while men focus on news channels.

Older individuals of the first generation Pakistani (above 50 years of age) in Canada were still regular viewers but watched only news along with political talk shows, to gratify their cognitive needs. This is consistent with Karim's findings that homeland politics forms a major topic for a section of the diaspora, especially those consisting largely of first-generation migrants (Karim, 2003: 3). On the other hand, these channels were neither a choice of all the younger groups nor they were regular viewers. Generally, they preferred to watch western movies or local television programs. But the younger male non-immigrant participants used transnational television channels off and on for latest information whereas younger females

watched just for entertainment and new fashion trends.

Linguistic filters also become key determinants of the revealed pattern of media use amongst members of the diaspora. Linguistic barriers, which obstructed some of the younger generation from watching community-language transnational television, equally served the older respondents in using these channels comprehensively. Younger members of diaspora (Canadian-born) were not very comfortable with the *Urdu language* and, indeed, as the focus groups revealed, were more contented with English. They sought help from their parents to understand programs on these private channels and thus lost interest.

Second-generation Pakistanis (present-day youth) had very little attraction for Pakistani transnational television channels. If they found some time, boys watched news and talk shows on the Internet to keep themselves aware of current affairs. But girls preferred drama and morning shows for entertainment and keeping themselves updated on new trends in fashion. It was interesting to note that parents were reluctant to allow their children to watch Pakistani news channels out of fear that they

might have a negative impact on their children's personalities.

Focus group interview data also indicated gender differentials in media use and gratification. The (old and young) female members of the Pakistani diaspora in Canada were more inclined towards entertainment channels and the males, both old and young members, focused on information programs of news channels. Viewing patterns of young males and females also depended upon the socializing patterns of the Pakistani diaspora. Considering the prevalence of dominant cultural orientations in most Pakistani families, girls generally stayed at home and watched TV dramas and entertainment programs, during their free time while sitting with parents, whereas boys enjoyed more freedom and socialized outside the home and watched these channels through the Internet, at the time of their convenience. This result corresponds with the findings of Gillespie's study (1989) on media uses by British Asians, which emphasizes gender differences in the viewing patterns of girls and boys. She states 'girls were generally engaged with Indian movies and soaps because their socialization revolved around the domestic sphere where Indian movies played an important social role. In contrast,

boys had more freedom to socialize outside the home' (p. 229).

Although these channels were not very pressing for all of them now, older group (first generation) participants still watched these television channels for the latest information, entertainment and homeland connectivity factors. The younger (second generation) groups did not find appropriate attraction to and time for these channels. They were not comfortable with the presentation of news and current affairs programs along with the language used by these channels. But some of the young girls still found interest in dramas and entertainment programs, to some extent, and boys watched sporadically, just for latest information on Pakistan.

CONCLUSION:

As an outcome, this study validates and supports some specific needs, including cognitive, affective and at times social needs. In particular, this study did not find emotional relaxation and tension release, escape, etc. to be major uses and gratifications. The study suggests that viewers have specific motivations to watch diasporic television channels. It concludes that the major gratifications derived from

watching transnational television of majority, were keeping themselves informed on the latest happenings in their homeland, followed by entertainment. Awareness of current political, social, strategic and economic issues of the country of the origin, along with new trends in fashion, supported them in their interactions with their community at social gatherings in host country (Canada) and to some extent connected them with the homeland.

This study did not find any support for personal and tension release needs. Rather, viewing of these channels - particularly the news channels - was depressing for the diaspora. In spite of the fact that these channels were bringing cultural, traditional and religious programs in the Urdu language to them, the focus group findings made clear that viewers barely related to the projected culture and values because it seemed to them, not originally Pakistani. Further the study found that age and gender were clearly significant in shaping patterns of media use. Thus, the consumption of transnational television and gratification derived varies within members of the diaspora, according to their generational and gender differences.

Finally, it should be stated that the focus group findings did provide unique insights

into the subject under study but these are not quantifiable and may or may not be representative of the population at large. Due to these limitations, this research may be further pursued by applying other quantitative and qualitative instruments, to add to these findings.

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