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NEWS MEDIA: A THING OF THE PAST FOR THE MILLENNIALS

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Abstract

In light of the 2016 Presidential campaign, this paper discusses the credibility of the news media as the campaign left the American public questioning the performance of the news media as providers of impartial news, and the credibility of the American social institutions such as the local politicians, the legal system, and the economy. Relying on the functional perspective, the paper traces the role of the media in establishing trust and credibility in the social institutions within a given culture. Using focus groups and a survey, the author reports on the diminishing levels of interest in the news media, and a lack of trust in the U.S. government, its legal system among the college students pursuing careers in journalism. These very individuals, supposedly, will be providing the news and information to the coming generations.

Keywords: *Media credibility, Mass media as an institution, Media functions, News and social media, Opinion formation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Functionalism, as a theoretical framework emerged out of an interest to understand the effects of mass communication in a society. The movement began with Harold Lasswell (LASSWELL, 1948), who proposed that the mass media had three important social functions. The surveillance of the environment, i.e., keeping an eye on the political system and the social institutions and playing the role of a watchdog; establishing a cultural correlation within the parts of a society and building cohesion among these parts and segments of the society; and cultural transmission, i.e., information about the past events and previous generations.

To these three, Charles Wright Mills added 'entertainment' as a fourth function of the media (WRIGHT MILLS, 1959). Robert K. Merton (MERTON, 1949) added two dimensions to functionalism asserting that media functions could be intended (manifest), or unintended (latent). Merton held that while media served

important functions in a social system, if it falls into the wrong hands, it might be used for dysfunctional purposes (MERTON, 1949). For instance, instead of exposing corruption, the media may choose to look the other way and cease to function in their capacity as a surveillance mechanism. Through discriminatory and hateful messages, the media may divide the various minorities and subgroups instead of bringing them together, thus neglecting the correlation function. By distorting or omitting certain portions from historical events, the media may marginalize certain subgroups out of the national heritage.

By offering excessive amounts of graphic violence and poking fun at certain individuals, groups, or ideologies, the entertainment function may become a narcotizing agent supplying mindless entertainment.

The rise of fake news and alternative facts are some of the recent examples of dysfunctional use (abuse) of the media. While certain individuals or organizations may benefit from propagating fake news and offering alternative truths, the results are misinformation, segregated populations, and fabricated histories. The news organizations' shift from information to profitability has brought the media credibility to a level where the audiences have become sceptical about the fairness, accuracy, and trustworthiness in the media reporting (HICKEY, 2003; MEYER, 2009). The role of the mass media in a democracy was intended to bring its citizens the information they needed in order to make important decisions; the American public no longer believes that the media can be relied upon for trustworthy information. This did not occur overnight. As Schudson (SCHUDSON, 2019) points out:

"Over the decades for which such data has been available, we have seen that people tend to

think of journalism in a more favourable light than, say, the White House or Congress, but less trustworthy than medicine, education, the military, organized religion, or major corporations. In the 1970s, faith in all these institutions began to decline. That may have been a necessary corrective to a sense of complacency that had been creeping in - among the public and the news media - that allowed perhaps too much trust: we accepted President Eisenhower's lies about the U-2 spy plane, President Kennedy's lies about the "missile gap", President Johnson's lies about the war in Vietnam and President Nixon's lies about Watergate".

The decline in media trust has been going on for some time now. However, it was hastened in the late 1980s during the Reagan era when two significant changes took place. Firstly, the news reporters and journalists were no longer permitted to go to the theatres where American militaries were actively involved. The members of the press were required to be vetted by the Pentagon before travelling to the war zones and were only allowed in places deemed safe by the commanding officers. Additionally, all the text and images had to be cleared by the field officers before journalists could file their stories (CROTEAU & HOYNES, 1999).

Secondly, media ownership changed hands drastically. The Federal Radio Act of 1927, the formation of the Federal Communication Commission in 1934, and the TV Licensing Freeze in 1948 were created to guarantee the American public the access to clear radio and TV signals to receive the news, information, and entertainment in a marketplace without the monopolistic control of the large corporations. Reagan's deregulation of media industries allowed larger corporations to acquire an unlimited number of media outlets in any market in the U.S. The result was, as expected - media oligopolies and virtual control of all news and information by the large multi-national corporations that operate with a sole mission - The bottom line is the top priority.

Traditionally, the profits for radio and television networks came from the entertainment programs; the news divisions lost money (SUSCA, 2017). The consolidation of media ownership resulted in severe cutbacks in news staff that affected news coverage and quality.

Declining readership of newspapers, the loss of the three major networks' viewers to cable, and the revenue losses coupled with the popularity of 24/7 news and social media have impacted the viability and sustainability of the conventional news operations. Most "trained" journalists, whether traditional or digital, practice the journalist's code of ethics by fact-checking and source verification. However, terms such as fake news and alternative facts have clouded most of the news outlets. Paradoxically, deregulation harmed diversity, localism, and competition in media, and accelerated the decline in media credibility to the extent that the mass media is no longer viewed as a credible institution expected to perform certain functions in the American society. The rise of social media and the big data (Amazon, Facebook, and Google) allowed for greater transparency, however, at the cost of media credibility (ANDERSON & RAINIE, 2012; ANDERSON & JIANG, 2018).

The campaigning during the Presidential elections of 2016 was unlike other campaigns of the past. One of the major differences was that while one candidate, Hillary Rodham Clinton, was a seasoned politician with a long history of public service; her opponent, Donald J. Trump was a businessperson, a television celebrity, and a billionaire. Clinton relied on donations and funding from major contributors and supporters for her campaign; Trump, presumably, used his own money. Still, it became the costliest campaign in American political history. According to Ingraham (INGRAHAM, 2017), the price tag for the congressional and the presidential campaign was \$6.8 billion; of this sum, \$2.4 billion went to the Presidential campaign alone. The key element to remember is that a healthy portion of the money spent on political advertising and campaigning went to the news media - newspapers, radio, television, and Internet. Regardless of the outcome of the elections, the real winners of the battle were the media.

Traditionally, the election's drama builds along a predictable path - the candidates run their campaigns, make promises, attack, and sometimes, ridicule the other candidates, and the media report as the events unfold. The paradigm shifted during the 500+ days of the last campaign. The 2016 campaign washed away the credibility

of the politicians, the social institutions, and the news media. In this regard, the American public became the real loser. As a consequence of the 2016 election, the news media, for the most part, have abandoned objective news reporting and adopted partial and opinionated commentaries in place of reporting on serious issues with any degree of seriousness. Political figures, social institutions, and businesses do not become credible or trustworthy instantly; trust is cultivated gradually and earned over long periods. Similarly, neither do credibility and trust erode overnight.

What do we mean by “trust”?

Trust is not synonymous with faith. One’s faith is rooted in one’s religious beliefs and it does not require any fact-checking. In this regard, faith is accepted as untestable and unchallengeable truth. Having trust or confidence in a person or an institution requires some degree of repetition and reliability in the past behaviour on which one may place one’s trust. According to Seligman (SELIGMAN, 1997), trust represents an “unconditional exchange” while confidence requires “structurally determined situations”. Both confidence and trust, rely on exchange systems.

Trusting an individual or institution implies having confidence in the integrity of that individual or the organisation. As such, a trustor expects honesty, fairness, and transparency from the trustee. There was a time when people could expect such behaviours from their leaders, financial institutions, manufacturers, and the news media. However, with the 2016 Presidential election news coverage the American public’s trust in the media “to report the news fully, accurately, and fairly” declined to a record low since the beginning of Gallup’s polling history. Only 32 percent of the polled sample said they had a “great deal” or “fair amount” of trust in the media. This was an 8 percent drop in one year (SWIFT, 2016). Gallup began such data collection in 1972. Confidence and trust of Americans in their news media peaked in 1976 (72 percent) when the media offered investigative journalistic coverage of the Vietnam War and the Watergate incident.

Trust also requires conditionality and solidarity. Coleman (COLEMAN, 1990), argues that trust is based on rational choices and “the interaction between trustor and trustee. If a trustee is trustworthy, the person who places trust is better off than if the trust is not placed; if the trustee is untrustworthy, the trustor is worse off than if the trust is not placed.”

Hovland (HOVLAND, 1953) theorizes that messages from credible sources produce stronger attitude changes and the associated levels of trust correspond to the speaker’s expertise and trustworthiness. Thus, trust in the news media requires an ethical and professional behaviour on behalf of the journalists upon which the audience may build their confidence (FUKUYAMA, 1995). Silverstone (SILVERSTONE, 1999) holds that in order for economies and societies to function, people must trust the others and the media must create the platforms from which public figures and business actors can build trust.

Source Credibility

Although newspapers have editorial sections where the editors and columnists write opinion pieces, the audiences expect media sources such as the reporters and the anchor-persons to remain neutral and report the stories covering diverse points of view. Under no circumstances should the reporters’ opinions surface as part of the news story. Once reporters deviate from the rigorous demand for objectivity, they become opinion gurus, cease to be impartial messengers and their newspapers and television networks lose their credibility (REHMAN, 2018).

Message Credibility

The people’s overwhelming disregard for advertising and political messages is a fair indicator of their general mistrust in advertising messages and campaign slogans. Credibility encompasses both the objective and subjective components of the believability of a source or message. Credibility has two elements: trustworthiness and expertise. Both of these have objective and subjective dimensions. Once the credibility of a source becomes suspect, its messages become suspect. Finberg (FINBERG, 2002) asserts that credibility is hard to earn and

once lost, it becomes even harder to regain. For example, it may be a while before consumers will accept advertising messages originating from VW Auto Group or Wells Fargo Bank. An automaker or a banking institution has products that a consumer buys or uses. If and when wrongdoing is detected, the federal agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) take action. Both, VW Group and Wells Fargo have been fined to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars for defrauding their customers. No newspaper, radio network, or television network has been fined for not reporting the news objectively or misinforming its audiences.

Mistrust in the media stems from two elements: media's failure to report, and erroneous reporting. (MAJOR & ATWOOD, 1997; WATTS, DOMKE, SHAH & FAN, 1999). The credibility of media messages lies in the integrity of their sources, i.e., the reporters or the news anchors. Every occurrence of a reporter or an anchor making a mistake stains the credibility of the entire news media (SHEPARD, 2017).

Media Credibility

A medium's credibility represents an *interaction* of source, message, and receiver (WATHEN & BURKELL, 2002). A medium (newspaper, radio, television, the Internet) is just that - a medium. It carries and delivers a message; its credibility is tied to the credibility of the message. Thus, the accuracy and impartiality in the messages are the touchstones of a medium's integrity.

During and immediately after World War I, newspapers were the most credible news sources - more so than radio. In the early 1960s, television replaced the newspapers as a more credible source than radio and print media (WESTLEY & SEVERIN, 1964).

Newhagen and Nass (NEWHAGEN & NASS, 1989) suggested that the audience considers newspapers as institutions, and broadcasters as mere individuals, thus the audience uses different criteria in assessing the print media (newspapers) vs. broadcast media (radio and television). The readers view the news in a newspaper as institution-based, and news from radio or

television as based on the personalities of the broadcasters.

The Internet has neither the status of an institution nor are its reporters as established and credible personalities as the established broadcast journalists. However, with the ease of accessibility and the increasing popularity of the Internet and social media, the younger generation has begun to consider the Internet as "more credible than the traditional media" (JOHNSON & KAYE, 1998).

Flanagin & Metzger (FLANAGIN & METZGER, 2000) warn that many Internet users may be unaware that a large portion of the online information does not go through the strict processes of fact-checking and verification that are characteristic to the traditional media. As Westley & Severin (WESTLEY & SEVERIN, 1964) pointed out: People do not always rank the more credible media as their preferred source of news.

As yellow journalism had put the credibility of newspapers in jeopardy, television is, in part, responsible for the deterioration of U.S. social capital and journalistic standards (PUTNAM, 1995). Engel (ENGEL, 2017) makes a convincing argument in claiming that the news coverage of the 2016 presidential election has made the American media - dubious. The news organizations and networks are no longer perceived as reliable sources.

The most trusted news media in the U.S. are the BBC, and a print publication - *The Economist*. ABC News, with the largest share of the audience, has to preface its newscasts as "The News You Can Trust." The statement in itself represents an admission that there is some news that cannot be trusted. Despite its declining rating and shares, NBC continues to call itself "America's #1 Network". Fox News Network (until 2016) claimed to be "Fair and Balanced". At the time of this writing (2020), FOX News no longer makes such a claim. CNN blatantly claims to be "The Most Trusted Name in the News." CNN is not without its critics. On December 9, 2017, President Donald Trump tweeted: "Their slogan should be CNN, THE LEAST TRUSTED NAME IN NEWS!" Earlier in 2017, Trump attacked the CNN, the three major television networks, and the two leading national newspapers - *New York Times* and *Washing Post* in a tweet:

Donald J. Trump

✓ @realDonaldTrump

So they caught Fake News CNN cold, but what about NBC, CBS & ABC? What about the failing @nytimes&@washingtonpost? They are all Fake News!

7:47 AM - Jun 27, 2017

However, the decline in trust in the new media to fulfil their functions is not due to Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton. It was a process that began seven decades ago (SCHUDSON, 2019); the digital media of the late 2010s have brought it into the public light. The demise of the Hollywood studio system during the late 1940s and the early 1950s for which the House Unamerican Activities Committee is partly responsible paved the way for television – an entertainment medium that assumed the role of a news provider (CAMPBELL, MARTIN & FABOS, 2018). In its years of infancy, television did fulfil the news and information function. However, its commercial interests have pushed the information-function aside. News divisions did not, and do not generate profits for the three networks – ABC, CBS, and NBC (SUSCA, 2017).

A 2016 study belonging to the American Press Institute reported that the topics people followed most closely were domestic issues (25 percent), national politics or government (22 percent), local news (13 percent), and foreign or international news (4 percent). The same survey also reported that people used different criteria in order to assess the credibility of national news vs. sports or lifestyle news (AMERICAN PRESS INSTITUTE, 2016).

According to Pew Research Centre, which began reporting on media credibility in 2004, the credibility ratings for three major television networks in the year 2003 were; ABC 30 percent, CBS 33 percent, and NBC 29 percent. By the year 2004, the credibility of all three networks dropped below 25 percent. From the year 2003 to 2004, Gallup also reported a 9 percent drop in the confidence of the Americans in the media's ability to report the news accurately (GILLESPIE, 2004). Between the years 1998 and 2000, *The Wall Street Journal* held a 42 percent credibility rating; in 2004; it plummeted to 23 percent. Historically, *USA Today* has never attained higher than 24 percent; it dropped down to 18 percent in 2004. The Gallup surveys ask the respondents how much trust and confidence they have in the mass

media such as newspapers, TV, and radio in reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly. The choices for responses are – “a great deal”, “a fair amount”, “not very much”, or “none at all”.

The next section of the paper presents the findings of a focus group and a survey on the journalism students in a state-supported, mid-size, American university and their interest in the news, how they access the news, and their impressions about the performance of the American news media.

2. THE SURVEY

The present study sought to determine the perceptions of the journalism students regarding two important factors: one, the performance of the media in terms of fulfilling the key functions discussed earlier and, two, how communication students accessed the news. It can be argued that if a person was studying literature, it would be more interested in reading and learning about literature, literary criticism, and writing in general. If a person was pursuing studies in political science, they would be more engrossed in politics, the politicians, and the public policy. Along these lines, the study's participants were expected to be more interested in the news, the process of news coverage, and the social impact of the news media than the students of other disciplines.

Four focus groups were conducted with students majoring in Communication and Media Studies. With the full knowledge of the participants, the sessions were audiotaped for recordkeeping and the ability to recheck the responses. The participants were given specific topics to discuss and debate for 30 minutes. Following the discussions, the participants were asked to complete a self-administered, paper-and-pencil instrument with several Likert-Scale items and some close-ended questions in order to collect demographic data. Primarily, the questionnaire contained

Likert-Scale items regarding the respondents' confidence/trust in the social institutions, the U.S. government, the news media, and the economy. It also included items about political engagement, and interest in international, national, and local news, and how the respondents got their news. The demographic data was collected through close-ended items.

The sample and the findings

Participation was voluntary, and the participants were not asked to give their names or other identifying information. They were informed that the findings from the research may be published and that they could withdraw from the research project at any time without any repercussions or negative impact on their grades. The focus groups were conducted two weeks after President Donald J. Trump took office. The study intended (1) to gauge the respondents' interest in local, national, and international news, (2) how they accessed the news, (3) what levels of credibility the media and other social institutions had with these respondents, and (4) how the respondents felt about the performance of mass media in fulfilling the media functions as described earlier.

The sample consisted of 23 (54.7 percent) females and 19 (45.3 percent) males. Among the sample, three participants (7 percent) were under 20 years of age, 34 (81 percent) were between 20 and 25 years of age, and the remaining five (12 percent) were above the age of 25. Among the sample, 31 (74 percent) voted in the presidential election, and 11 (26 percent) did not take part in voting. It is reasonable to state that the sample consisted of politically engaged individuals. As for their political party affiliation, 23 (60.5 percent) respondents were Democrats, 9 (23.7 percent) were Republicans, 5 (13 percent) were independent, and another five (13 percent) said they were affiliated with some other political party. The county where the survey was conducted has traditionally favoured the Democratic Party. The sample demonstrated a similar political leaning.

Among the reported sample, women were politically more engaged than men. A greater portion of women in comparison to men voted

in the 2016 Presidential elections. (*Chi-square* =11.344; *p-value* 3.441. *This is significant at* < .01)

For their party affiliations, proportionately more women claim to be Democrats than men. Conversely, more men claim to be Republicans than women. (*Chi-square* = 20.908; *p-value* < 0.0001. *This is significant at* $p < .01$)

Regarding media functions, respondents rated the media's performance on a scale of one-to-five. The average scores for the four functions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Media Fulfilling Their Functions

Media Function	
Entertainment	4.0
Surveillance	3.071
Cultural Transmission	2.5
Cultural Correlation	2.429

The respondents' perception that instead of functioning as a watchdog or being a cohesive force to unite various sub-groups or providing an accurate and unbiased picture of past generations and history, the media are focused on providing entertainment and opinionated news coverage. The low scores on Cultural Transmission and Cultural Correlation suggest there may be more distortions of the historical facts than presented in the media and that the media might be responsible for dividing various subgroups rather than uniting them. In this regard, the media may have become dysfunctional.

Regarding the respondents' interest in the local, national, and international news, only 12 (28.6 percent) were heavy news users, 29 (69 percent) were light users, and one (2.4 percent) of the respondents said that he did not have much interest in the news.

Concerning their interest in the different types of hard news, it appears that the respondents reported to be more interested in the national news than in the local or international ones. One-fifth (19 percent) of the respondents were not interested in the international news, and nearly one-third (31 percent) reported as having no interest in the local news. The highest numbers for all three categories fell in the middle as "Somewhat Informed". Table 2 presents this data in a tabular form.

Table 2. Interest in Hard News

	Informed	Somewhat Informed	Not Interested/ Not Informed	Total Responses
International News	8(19%)	26 (62%)	8 (19%)	42
National News	22(52%)	18(43%)	2 (5%)	42
Local News	7(16.6%)	22(52.4%)	13 (31.0%)	42

Americans rely on many different types of media for news about the topics they follow most closely. No single medium dominates (AMERICAN PRESS INSTITUTE, 2016). With the popularity of social media and smartphones as delivery tools, it is not surprising that the respondents rely more on social media and smartphones than on the conventional news channels such as newspapers, news magazines, radio or television.

The respondents were asked to identify their first and second choices for accessing the news. Assigning a weight of 2 for the first choice and a weight of 1 for the second choice, the sample's scores are summarized in Table 3

Table 3. How do you access the news?

Medium	Composite Score
My cell-phone	49
Social media	38
Television	29
Radio	5
Newspapers	3
Magazines	1
Some other medium	1

By far, the cell-phones and social media lead as the first and second choices for accessing the news. The respondents use the smartphone most frequently in order to access news and information. However, it is unclear if the respondents access

the news feeds from the newspapers and television networks or some opinion blogs.

The respondents' level of trust in the social institutions, the U.S. government, the economy and the news media were assessed using a five-point Likert-Scale. The items were worded as:

*Consider the statement: "I trust –"
Which of the following may apply to you?*

- [5] I trust – completely.
- [4] I trust – for the most part.
- [3] I'm not sure
- [2] I mistrust – for the most part.
- [1] I have no trust in–.

The first two categories were grouped as "Trust", and the last two as "No Trust". Table 4 summarizes the respondents' reported trust in various social institutions.

Over one-fourth (26.2 percent) of the respondents said that they had no faith in their politicians or the U.S. economy; nearly 29 percent did not trust the government. 33.3 percent of the sample has no faith in the legal system, and over 47 percent of the participants claim to have no trust in the news media – the least trusted among the social institutions.

Men and women differed in their opinions about their trust in the U.S. government and the U.S. news media. Both Chi-square and t-test calculations indicated that women trusted the government more than men. This was significant at .01 level.

Table 4. Trust in the Social Institutions

Institution	Trust	No Trust	Not Sure	Total
The U.S. Government	19 (45.2%)	12 (28.6)	11 (26.2)	42
The Legal System	19 (45.2%)	14 (33.3%)	9 (21.5%)	42
The Politicians	12 (28.6)	11 (26.2)	19 (45.2%)	42
The U.S. Economy	11 (26.2)	11 (26.2)	20 (47.6%)	42
The News Media	11 (26.2)	20 (47.6%)	11 (26.2)	42

Similarly, Chi-square and t-test revealed that men had a higher level of trust in the media than women. This was significant at .01 level. However, gender seemed to have no impact on trust in the legal system, the U.S. economy, and politicians.

Twenty (47.6 percent) of the respondents felt that the U.S. economy would remain unchanged in the next five years; 11 (26.2 percent) felt that it was likely to worsen, 11 (26.2 percent) felt it was likely to improve.

Nearly half of the respondents reported that Fox News Network leaned towards conservative views. One-fourth thought that CNN was also a conservative news outlet. Nearly one-fourth of the respondents have little or no faith in FOX news channel or national newspapers. Nearly one-third did not trust the news magazines. Slightly over 50 percent of the participants never read news magazines, 38 percent rarely watch Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) television, and 26 percent do not read newspapers.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is reasonable to state that the American college students, 25 years of age or

younger, i.e., the millennials, rely on smartphones and social media to access the news and information. As such, they have abandoned traditional print, broadcast, and cable media. According to the present sample, the function fulfilled by the media is that of entertainment.

The author is aware of the limitations of the study due to its small sample. Thus, the findings are not generalizable. However, the findings do correspond with similar studies conducted by other researchers, the Pew Foundation, and the Gallup Corporation. There is a need for further studies in assessing the decline in the credibility of the media and the social impact of such a change. There is also a need to refine the instruments used to measure credibility and trust.

Newsfeeds on the internet, social media, and blogs are unchecked variations of the facts (alternative facts and fake news). On March 11, 2019, President Donald Trump sent an *en masse* email with the subject heading: Fake News. In it, Trump warned the public of the irresponsible behaviour of the news media. A portion of the email is included in Appendix I.

Appendix I FAKE NEWS

DT

Donald J. Trump <contact@victory.donaldtrump.com>

Reply all |

Today, 16:03

Sharaf Rehman

Sharaf,

The mainstream media have never been more dishonest than they are today. Stories have been reported that have absolutely no basis that has no basis in fact.

Some are so eager to report something negative about our movement, that they don't even seek verification on. **They are totally out of control!**

have no boundaries or principles. They only seek to undermine and insult anyone associated with my administration and our great movement.

The mainstream media can make up fake stories and lie about my administration all they want, but at the end of the day, I only really care what **YOU** think.

That's why I need you to **FIGHT BACK** and hold the mainstream media accountable.

The likes of Anderson Cooper, Tucker Carlson, Sean Hannity, and Rachel Maddow provide news coverage as opinionated entertainment on CNN, Fox News Network, and MSNBC. There appears to be a dire shortage of programs providing investigative reports on matters that would be considered serious, national or international issues, i.e., the hard news. Soft news topics such as noisy neighbours, road rage, and heroes of American gymnastics hardly classify as investigative news journalism. However, such information is more readily and frequently available on television networks. Even serious television news programs such as 20/20 and 60-Minutes structure their stories as fictional narratives with doses of good guys, bad guys, and conflict. Serious issues are dramatized to resemble exciting entertainment. News reporting is reduced to storytelling (POSTMAN, 1985). Resultantly, contemporary news anchors have failed to attain the credibility once associated with journalists such as Edward R. Murrow, Eric Sevareid, Walter Cronkite, Dan Rather, Connie Chung, Peter Jennings, Barbara Walters, and Tom Brokaw.

The result of the public's trust and faith in the institutions and the media being at historically low levels is that the millennials have turned away from the traditional media in favour of unchecked and unverified news on social media. They also admit to being disinterested, uninformed, or only mildly informed about the local and international news.

When the audiences lose interest in the important issues and events, the news media turn these issues into entertainment. When important issues are trivialized, it is an indication that a nation may have become indifferent to its past or future. U.S. involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq represents a reminiscent of The Vietnam War. The recent failed coup in Turkey reminds us of one of the American plans to stage a regime change in Cuba (Bay of Pigs). George Santayana warned us against such indifference to history by saying that those who failed to learn from the mistakes of their predecessors were destined to repeat them.

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