Express TV: Competing In a Cluttered World of Media for Consumer Preferences and Viewership Patterns

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Abstract

Express News TV Channel found some reports that their TV channel viewership was declining. In Pakistan, however, the viewership data is managed, still the system is not properly managed and has many loopholes. This can be imagined through the information that one of the most populated area of Karachi, Gulshan Iqbal, TV viewing patterns are evaluated through less than ten people meters. Express news therefore decided to conduct a full survey that included the viewership patterns, the most preferred TV shows, and hosts, morning shows, and anchors. The study revealed interesting facts about the standing of Express News programs and TV viewers' preferences of the same.

Keywords: *Consumer Preferences, Express TV, Media, Viewership Patterns*

INTRODUCTION

Express TV is one of the old and among most famous TV channels of Pakistan. It is present in different forms including electronic, print, online and web TV. A shift from print to electronic media resulted in the number of TV channels. All the newspaper once prominent in their circulation channelized their budget on establishing TV channels. Geo TV by Jang group, Aaj TV by Business recorder, and Waqt by Naw-e-Waqt are few examples. The outcome is severe competition between the media fighting for viewership and securing big names for programs by their names. The source of revenue for all the channels is advertising. The clients that are the advertisers and advertising agencies in Pakistan patronize TV channels based on its popularity and ratings of the programs.

The program rating is evaluated by research firms and media rating agencies with the help of people meters and software called Kantar. The problem with rating of TV channels is its authenticity as it is based on very limited sample size. As the rest of TV channels, Express TV is also in the contest of increasing viewership. Express TV however saw a decline in its viewership. This is partly due to the mushroom growth of TV channels and partly because of flaws in the rating management that is based on meager people meters. Express TV is now

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focusing on increasing their rating through appropriate programing and contents to attract more advertising. For this, multiple meetings were called to develop the consensus on approach. On 8th February 2016, Fawad A. Fakhir - Manager Sales - at Express TV, and a team of young qualified professionals sat at Express TV's head office. As TV remained one of the most prevalent and preferred media in Pakistan, Fawad and the management of Express TV network wondered how, in such a cluttered world, their TV channels and programs were distinct from others of the same sort.

Along with this, came the issue related to channel and program ratings, as a number of faults in the currently used system - People's Meter - became increasingly evident. They had no idea as to how the consumers perceived their channels and shows, and whether or not they liked those shows. Express's brand image and the audience's loyalty to the channels also remained in question. The consulting team, on the other hand, were qualified and experienced professionals who were interested in working with the TV Network, and had committed to work with them for a period of 4 months. With multiple concerns at hand, Fawad briefed the team about the situation. They suggested and subsequently agreed that a consumer survey would best answer all the concerns of Express's management, who believed that if the consumer's viewership pattern, perception and acceptance of Express TV programs were identified, they could surely revitalize Express TV and make it the most prominent, distinct player in the market.

Channel Background

Express News, the Urdu language television news channel was launched on January 1, 2008 (Express News, 2010). The owners of the channel, Lakson Group, later launched 'Express 24/7', a 24-Hour English news channel. The channel is headquartered in Lahore and broadcast in Middle East, South Asia, USA, UK, Ireland, and India. Express Television Network is classified as the second largest media group catering the domains of entertainment, news, and current affairs. Express News publication enjoys the status of the only newspaper being published in 11 cities simultaneously. Express News TV Live is a prime Urdu news channel of Pakistan, mainly focuses on social, political, cultural, economic and global issues that affects the nation.

On February 5, 2009, Express News launched its second news channel in English called Express 24/7. After Dawn News shifted to Urdu broadcasts in February 2010, Express 24/7 remained the only 24-hour English-language news channel in Pakistan until its closure in November 2011. The Express 24/7 CEO, Sultan Lakhani, cited dismal economic condition and insufficient number of advertisement as the main reasons behind the closure. Express Media Group launched their entertainment channel Express Entertainment on January 1, 2012. Express Entertainment is an entertainment channel that airs dramas, soaps and lifestyle programs such Satrangi Morning Show hosted by Javeria Saud. Express Entertainment airs through Prime TV in the United Kingdom and Europe. Express Media Group head then launched a new channel named Hero TV, an infotainment channel, from 5 June 2012.

Express News TV Live is known for broadcasting hourly news bulletin followed by some of the amazing shows including KalTak hosted by Javed Chaudhry, Koi Dekhe Na DekheShabbir Tow Dekhey Ga, G for Garida, Giraft , Takrar, Siyasi Theatre, Khabar Se Agay, Woh Kya Hai, Kadi se hatkadi, Darling, Express Special, JurmKhani and Main aurMualana. Leading host Aftab Iqbal hosting a comedy political show titled "Khabardar with Aftab Iqbal". The show creates the stir among the audience with witty and humorous performances and discussions. Express

News Live TV aims to provide variety of current affair shows blended with entertainment. The Express News live show offers you programs related to politics, sports, weather, entertainment, international current affairs and top stories etc. The anchors of Express News TV debate on various current prevailing issues in their live shows. Express News Breaking News is broadcast as it happens.

The Market for TV viewership

In February 2016, 'Daily Pakistan', Pakistan's local Urdu newspaper, did a comparative analysis of television show ratings on the basis of data provided by Pakistan's only media rating agency, Media Logic (Aslam, 2016). They provided ratings of different TV channels and programs based on which show was being watched the most at any given time. Kantar Media collected this information through specialized devices installed on televisions in homes throughout Pakistan. These ratings formed a basis for advertising tariff and volume.

Contending in the marathon of ratings, channels began to air any and everything that would boost their ratings. With little differentiation, all Pakistani news channels are showing different talk shows which set their ranking among different channels. The daily ratings of Pakistani channels for second week of February were 0.2 for Geo, 0.25 for Dunya, 0.45 for Samaa. Express stood a little higher than Samaa, and ARY somewhere below Dunya.

During 7pm to 8pm on weekdays, Samaa took the lead because of showing crime shows. In the 8pm to 9pm slot on weekdays, Capital Talk, Geo's prime time program took a lead over ARY and Samaa. During 9pm to 10pm Geo News again won for its news bulletin. Overall Geo was the favorite, whereas Express news rated as second. From 10pm to 11pm Geo News's 'Aaj Shahzaib Khanzada ke Sath' soared high, while in the 11pm to 12 am time slot, Samaa again won the race with its crime shows. (See Exhibits 1 to 5)

On weekends, during 7pm to 8pm, 'Sar-e-aam' by ARY won by wide margin, while 'Naya Pakistan' with Talat Hussain by Geo was the most watched program of the week. In the 10pm-11pm time slot, Express news won over Samaa. However, Samaa was watched the most due to its crime shows reenactments. (See Exhibits 6 & 7). Similarly, in February 2016, Synergyzer Magazine also did a comparative analysis of television viewership, show ratings, age break up, SEC classification, morning shows, talk shows and channel as well. According to Synergyzer, prime-time & post prime-time i.e. 7pm to9pm and 9pm to11pm were the most viewed times and shared the slot of highest ratings overall with postprime-time having 33.6%followed by prime-time with a minor difference of 1.5 i.e. 32.1% (Synergyzer, 2018). In both the time slots prime-time & post prime-time female share was high at33.5% & 34.0% compared with male share at 30.8% & 33.2% respectively.

Based on Synergyzer's findings, viewership pattern of Socio Economic Classification, SEC - E had the highest viewership share at 28% while SEC – C was at 26% followed by SEC – D at 23%. SEC – B and SEC – A were at 16% and 7% respectively. While talking about age wise break up, Synergyzer identified that teenagers (aged 15 to 25) & young adults / adults (aged 25 to 45) had the highest share of TV viewership at 30% & 34% respectively. On the contrary, people aged above 60 had only 5% viewership share. Interesting thing to note was that kids (aged 5 to 14) and middle aged viewers (46 to 59) had almost similar viewership share of 17% & 14% respectively.

Talking about Talk shows, Geo News's show "Aaj Shahzaib Khanzada k Sath" with 1.347% rating became the most watched program on news channel for the month of February 2016. "11th Hour" by Ary News with 1.188% rating took the second place followed by "Live with Shahid Masood" at Ary News and "News Beat" at Samaa with 1.079% and 1.026% ratings respectively. Express News's "Takrar" and Ary News's "Power play" ranked last in this list with 0.73% and 0.69% rating. While KalTak of Express News hosted by Javed Chaudhry was not even in the list. (See Exhibit 8).

Apart from this, according to Cable & Satellite viewers Samaa took the lead as the no. 1 news channel with 0.28% rating for its authentic news while Geo with 0.27% ranked number 2 on the charts followed by Ary News and Dunia TV. Whereas, three channels, "Aaj News", "News One" and "92 HD News" reported similar ratings of 0.07% and ranked the least watched channels. While according to total viewers Samaa& Geo shared rank 1 with 0.26% rating followed by Ary News with 0.20%, Dunya at 0.17%, Express News at 0.16% while 92 News, Aaj News & News One are the least rated news channel with each sharing similar ratings of 0.07%.

Among morning shows, ARY's "Good morning Pakistan" hosted by Nida Yasir took the lead with 0.70% rating with somewhat closer rating of Hum TV's program "Jaago Pakistan Jaago" hosted by Sanam Jung, which is the second most popular show among viewers with 0.63% rating. ATV's morning show "Mehakti Morning" hosted by Sundas Khan shared the same rating. Geo Kahani's morning show "Subh-e-Pakistan" earned the rating of 0.43% and stood at number four and Samaa "Subha Saverey Samaa ke Sath" was ranked number five with 0.42% rating followed by Geo Entertainment's "Nadia Khan Show" and Express Entertainment' show "Satrangi" with 0.32% rating. ARY News' "The Morning Show" and PTV home's "Morning with Juggan" were not that popular as they had only 0.2% rating. Morning shows by Dawn news and "Hum Sitarey" were watched the least. (See Exhibit 9)

Insights – Gathering the Required Information

As Fawad set out to identify the consumer's viewership pattern, perception and acceptance of Express TV programs, he prepared a detailed research plan in collaboration with the team. They planned to use area and strata sampling for data gathering because of the scope of the research and due to the ease it provides with sampling population. The main research instrument, the questionnaire, was divided into 3 basic parts; each part gauging different things. Part one was designed to find Express's 'Viewership pattern', part two was to gauge the 'Brand Awareness & Perception' and the third one to identify 'Program Acceptance'. A total of 48 Questions were being asked and most of the questions were measured on a 5-point likert-scale.

Sample size of 642 was finalized, out of which 430 respondents participated positively. Sample composition of the population was planned on the basis of population size of each area. The spread was divided into Housewives, Male Adults, Aged 18 – 60, Students / Part timers, Working professionals & Unemployed people; which covered various major spectrums of the research area, Karachi. Research was then conducted by the team in public places and households, face-to-face interviews (short paper based interviews) were also conducted.

Morning Shows– Consumer Preferences

The research suggested that morning shows in general had a very moderate viewership, while Satrangi had a very bad viewership pattern. Only 27% respondents i.e. 122 out of 451 watched Satrangi, and they also didn't have any positive review about the themes or host of Satrangi. (See Exhibit 10). Majority of the respondents didn't prefer to watch 'wedding & dance themes', while the most preferred theme people desired to watch was 'Health & lifestyle' related theme, followed by 'Social Issues'. (See Exhibit 11 & 12). Among the hosts of morning shows 'Sanam Jung' was the most liked and preferred morning show host, while 'Satrangi' host Javeria Saud left extremely bad impression on viewers which caused the negative image of 'Satrangi' (See Exhibit 13). People believed that 'Satrangi' shows nothing special of their interest and the way it is hosted was also annoying for many of the viewers. (See Exhibit 14)

Housewives – Changing Trends in Viewership

Housewives contribute to most of the viewership chunk since the country's culture allows more of the housewives to stay at homes and spend a considerable amount of time watching TV. When the outburst of local channels took place between 2002 and 2009, mostly the viewership pattern was monotonous amongst all housewives. Entertainment relating to dance and wedding themes was high in demand due to which the trend was followed by each channel since consumers wanted to see that. Lack of innovativeness lead to a fatigue in the viewers of this category leading to shifting preferences (See Exhibit 11 & 12).

Express– Evolution in Talk Shows

According to the findings, Express Talk shows had higher viewership but viewers' loyalty towards express talk shows was very low as Express Talk shows Kal Tak &Takrar were not the first choice for viewers (See Exhibit 15). Brand loyalty of Javed Chaudhry, anchor of KalTak was third amongst the talk shows anchors. 28 % of viewers believed that KalTak&Takrar provided 'clear picture to viewers' while 24% believed that their motive was to 'Gain TV viewership' which is not a positive sign (See Exhibit 16 & 17). Viewers also believed that Express Talk shows are unbiased and they do not reflect any political party agenda, which is positive and 41% respondents agrees to the fact that they are not influenced by government pressure (See Exhibit 18, 19 & 20).

Express News– Building a Strong Brand

As per the research findings, Express News rightfully claims their tag line of 'Har Khabar per Nazar' as 61% of respondents agreed to this, while majority of respondents were neutral towards 'biasness of Express News' (See Exhibit 21 & 22). Majority of viewers also believed that Express News covered positive stories, and agreed that Express News does not convey negative message. (See Exhibit 23). The anchors of Express News were considered highly qualified professionals and majorities of viewers were favorable to Express News. (See Exhibit 24 & 25). The overall data analysis suggested that consumers are highly aware of Express TV but the channel has neither been able to engage its audience, nor differentiate itself from all other channels. It was evident from the data that the audience's involvement in Express TV programs was quite low, because a lot of respondents did not have an opinion formed about the channel and its programs. A low number of detractors, however, suggested that Express TV still had the opportunity of molding the opinion of the neutral people in its favor, and transform them into loyal Express TV promoters.

CONCLUSION

Consumers attitude towards the Express news was found unidirectional which showed that the brand association is missing so consumers take Express as an average network for all of its segments, Satrangi viewership and low brand acceptance raised a lot of questions that which approach should be used to stand out of the clutter to make a clear cut differentiation. Mr. Fawad has got some major tasks to do. The first one is to rejuvenate the morning shows segments followed by the consolidation of express news viewership and importantly create a differentiated image of express talk shows.

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Exhibit 1: Average Daily Ratings for Time Slot 7pm - 8pm (Weekdays)
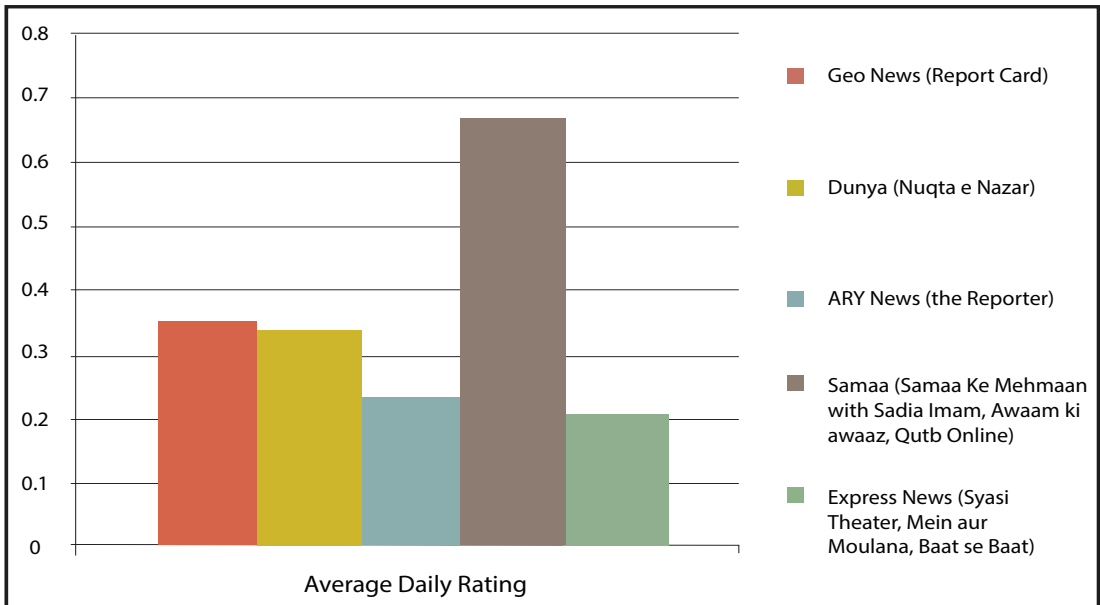
Exhibit 2: Average Daily Ratings for Time Slot 8pm - 9pm (Weekdays)
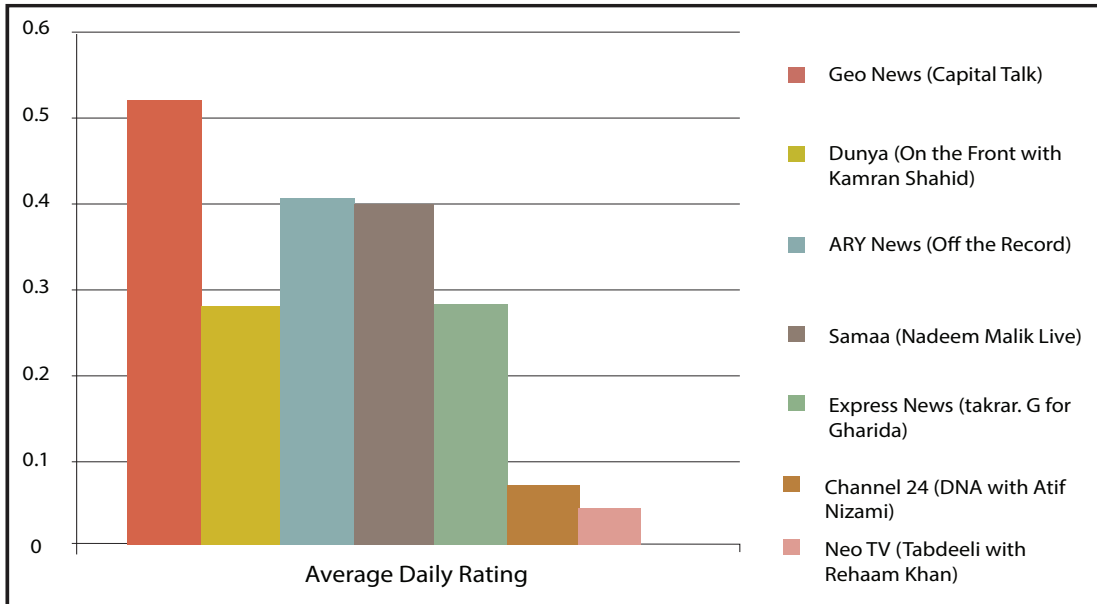

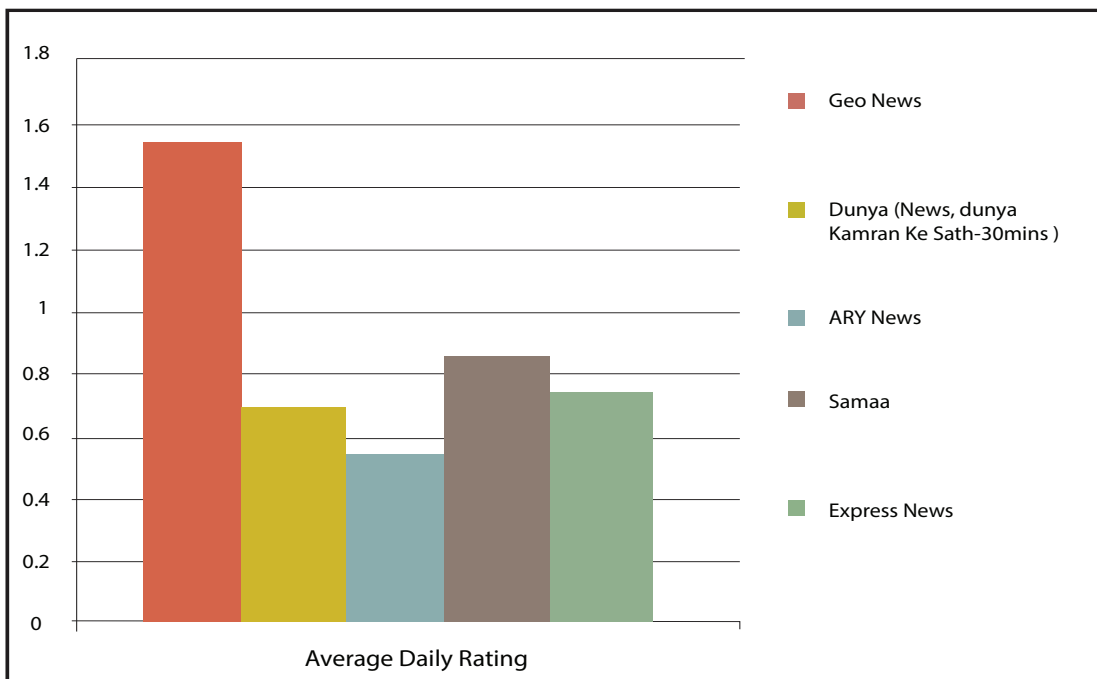*Exhibit 3: Average Daily Ratings for Time Slot 9pm - 10pm (Weekdays)*

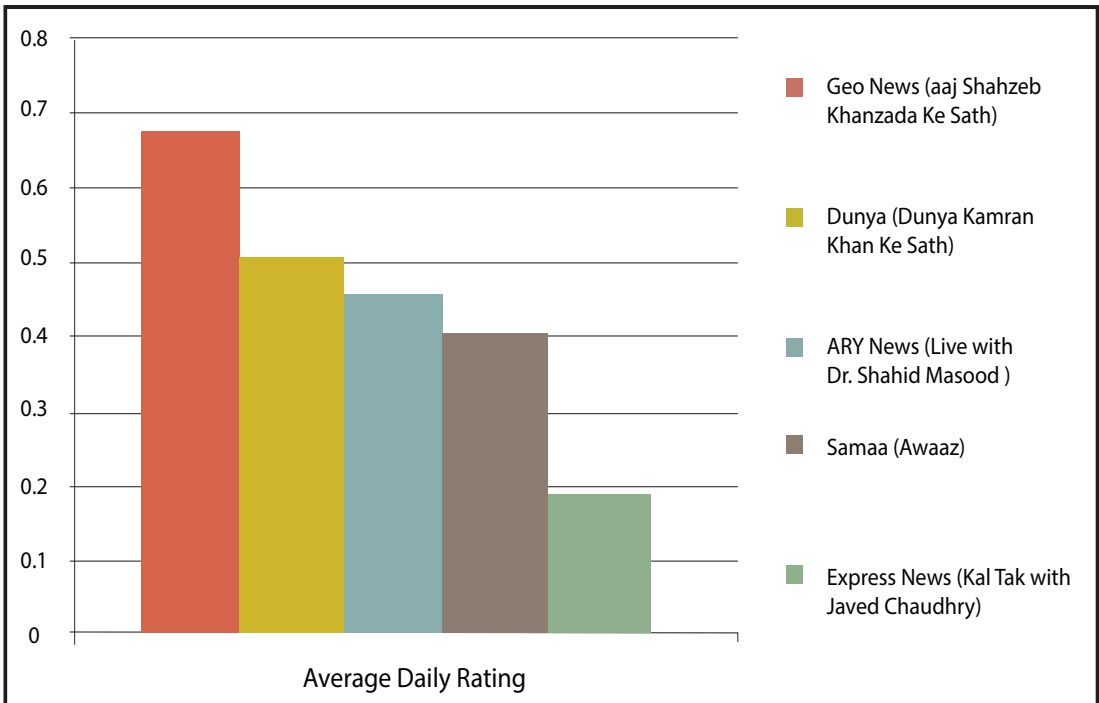*Exhibit 4: Average Daily Ratings for Time Slot 10pm - 11pm (Weekdays)*

Exhibit 5: Average Daily Ratings for Time Slot 11pm – 12 am (Weekdays)
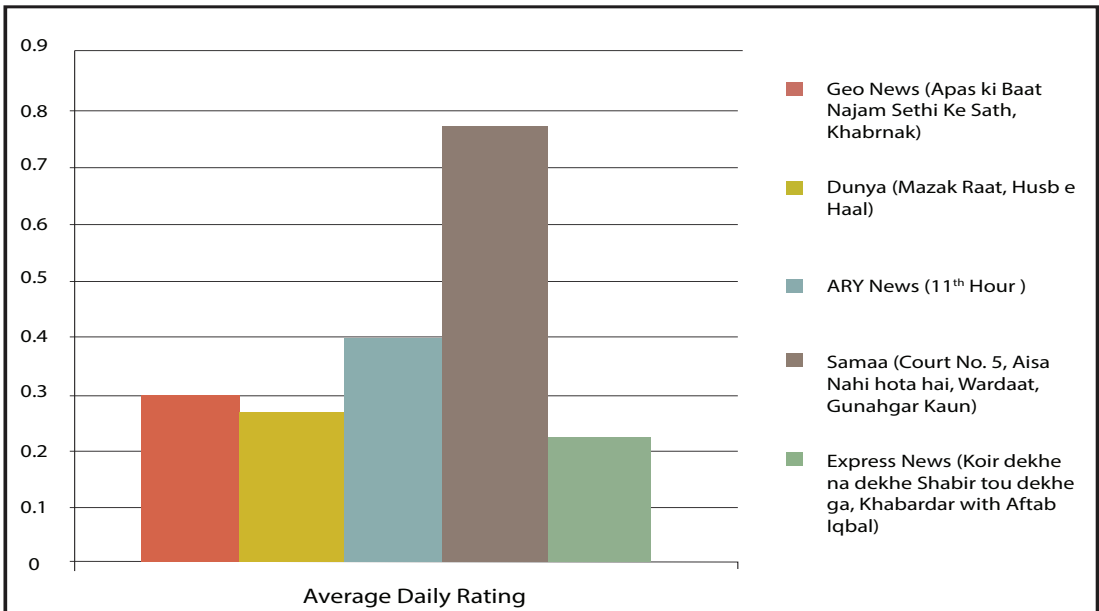
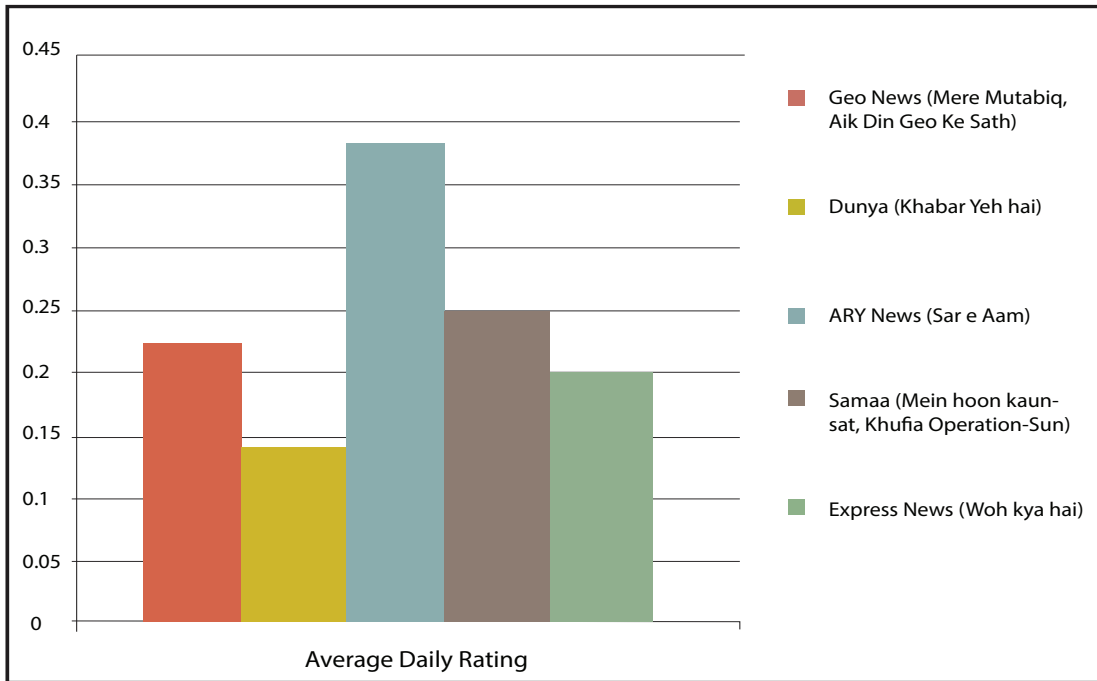*Exhibit 6: Average Daily Ratings for Time Slot 7pm-8pm (Weekend)*

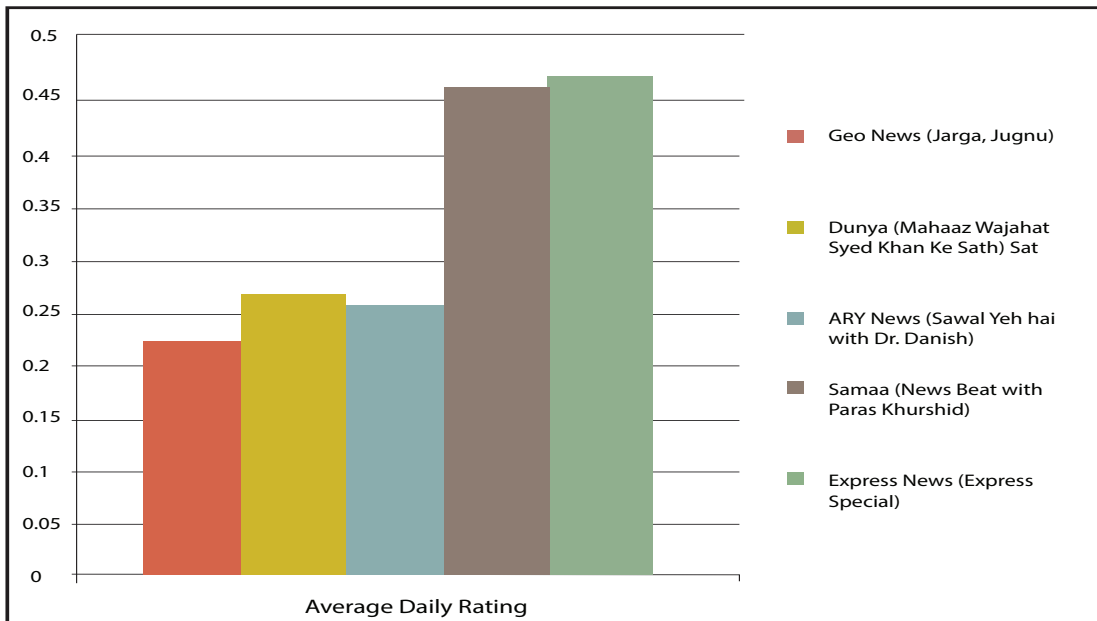*Exhibit 7: Average Daily Ratings for Time Slot 10pm - 11pm*
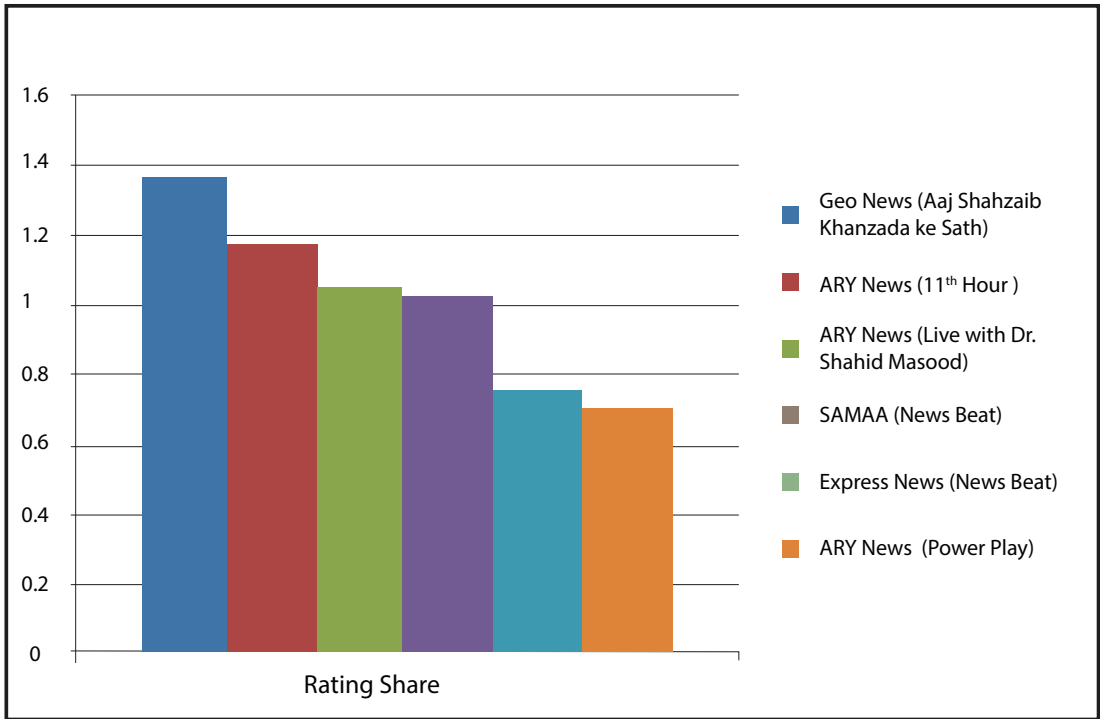
Exhibit 8: Rating Share of News Channels
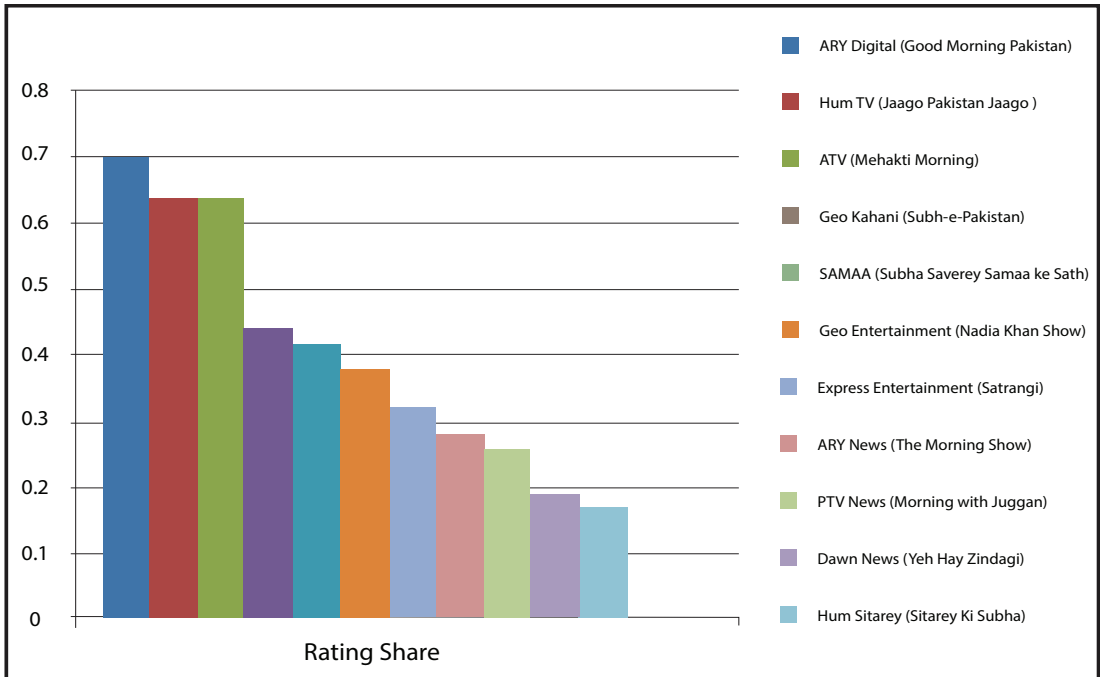

Exhibit 9: Rating Share of Morning Shows

Exhibit 10: Satrangi viewership

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Do you watch Satrangi morning show hosted by Javeria Saud?	Yes	Count	50	72	122
		% within Gender	23.8%	29.9%	27.1%
	No	Count	160	169	329
		% within Gender	76.2%	70.1%	72.9%
Total		Count	210	241	451
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Exhibit 11: Wedding and dance themes in Morning Shows

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
How favorable or unfavorable are you towards Wedding and Dance based content in Morning shows?	Extremely Favorable	Count	5	8	13
		% within Gender	2.4%	3.3%	2.9%
	Favorable	Count	36	31	67
		% within Gender	17.1%	12.9%	14.9%
	Neutral	Count	61	69	130
		% within Gender	29.0%	28.6%	28.8%
	Unfavorable	Count	54	65	119
		% within Gender	25.7%	27.0%	26.4%
	Extremely Unfavorable	Count	54	68	122
		% within Gender	25.7%	28.2%	27.1%
Total		Count	210	241	451
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Exhibit 12: Preferred Content

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
What is the theme that you would like to see the most in morning shows? Rate the following on a scale of 1 to 6, 1 being the most preferred and 6 being the least preferred.	Weddings	Count	16	19	35
		% within Gender	7.6%	7.9%	7.8%
	Social Issues	Count	84	58	142
		% within Gender	40.0%	24.1%	31.5%
	Health and Lifestyle	Count	73	122	195
		% within Gender	34.8%	50.6%	43.2%
	Astrology and Fortune Telling	Count	17	5	22

			Male	Female	Total
		% within Gender	8.1%	2.1%	4.9%
	Fashion and Movies	Count	7	19	26
		% within Gender	3.3%	7.9%	5.8%
	Celebrity Interviews	Count	13	18	31
		% within Gender	6.2%	7.5%	6.9%
Total		Count	210	241	451
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Exhibit 13: Preferred morning show host

			Gender		Total
			Male	**Female**	
Which of the following celebrities do you prefer as a morning show host?	*Javeria Saud*	Count	14	10	24
		% within Gender	6.7%	4.1%	5.3%
	Nida Yasir	Count	17	23	40
		% within Gender	8.1%	9.5%	8.9%
	Sanam Jung	Count	46	68	114
		% within Gender	21.9%	28.2%	25.3%
	SahirLodhi	Count	10	14	24
		% within Gender	4.8%	5.8%	5.3%
	ShaistaWahidi	Count	19	11	30
		% within Gender	9.0%	4.6%	6.7%
	Nadia Khan	Count	19	44	63
		% within Gender	9.0%	18.3%	14.0%
	Sanam Baloch	Count	37	37	74
		% within Gender	17.6%	15.4%	16.4%
	Others	Count	48	34	82
		% within Gender	22.9%	14.1%	18.2%
Total		Count	210	241	451
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Exhibit 14: Reasons for not watching Satrangi

Exhibit 15: Most preferred talk show?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	*KalTak*	111	24.6	24.6	24.6
	Aj Kamran Khan Key Sath	104	23.1	23.1	47.7
	Capital Talk	140	31.0	31.0	78.7
	Takrar	51	11.3	11.3	90.0
	MerayMutabiq	45	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	451	100.0	100.0	

Exhibit 16: Preferred Talk Show Host

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	*Jawed Chaudry*	77	17.1	17.1	17.1
	Kamran Khan	87	19.3	19.3	36.4
	Hamid Mir	98	21.7	21.7	58.1
	Kamran Shahid	25	5.5	5.5	63.6
	Hassan Nasir	55	12.2	12.2	75.8
	Imran Khan	63	14.0	14.0	89.8
	Others	46	10.2	10.2	100.0
	Total	451	100.0	100.0	

Exhibit 17: 'Kal Tak' & 'Takrar' motive

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Loyalty towards political parties	48	10.6	10.6	10.6
	Gaining TV viewership	110	24.4	24.4	35.0
	Advocacy of own political ideology	80	17.7	17.7	52.8
	Hypocrisy	42	9.3	9.3	62.1
	Giving clear picture to viewers	126	27.9	27.9	90.0
	Show pathway to the government	45	10	10	100
	Total	451	100.0	100.0	

Exhibit 18: Response to item "Express TV talk shows are unbiased"

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	22	5%
Agree	140	31%
Neutral	214	47%
Disagree	66	14%
Strongly Disagree	9	2%

Exhibit 19: Response to item "Express TV talk shows do not reflect any political party agenda"

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	72	16%
Agree	111	25%
Neutral	188	41%
Disagree	73	16%
Strongly Disagree	7	2%

Exhibit 20: Response to item "Express TV talk shows are not influenced by Government pressure"

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	26	5%
Agree	126	28%
Neutral	198	44%
Disagree	84	19%
Strongly Disagree	17	4%

Exhibit 21: Response to item "Express News rightfully claims harkhabar par nazar"

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	65	15%
Agree	208	46%

Neutral	149	*33%*
Disagree	29	*5%*
Strongly Disagree	6	*1%*

Exhibit 22: Response to item "Express News is unbiased in its reporting"

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Strongly Agree	23	*5%*
Agree	118	*27%*
Neutral	233	*51.7%*
Disagree	66	*14.6%*
Strongly Disagree	11	*2.4%*

Exhibit 23: Response to item "Express News does a good job of covering positive stories"

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Strongly Agree	48	*11%*
Agree	161	*36%*
Neutral	176	*39%*
Disagree	29	*6%*
Strongly Disagree	37	*8%*

Exhibit 24: Response to item "Express News anchors are qualified professionals"

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Strongly Agree	42	*9%*
Agree	191	*42%*
Neutral	179	*40%*
Disagree	29	*6%*
Strongly Disagree	9	*2%*

Exhibit 25: Express News Favorability

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	*Extremely Favorable*	18	*4.0*	*4.0*	*4.0*
	Favorable	154	*34.1*	*34.1*	*38.1*
	Neutral	223	*49.4*	*49.4*	*87.6*
	Unfavorable	51	*11.3*	*11.3*	*98.9*
	Extremely Unfavorable	5	*1.1*	*1.1*	*100.0*
	Total	*451*	*100.0*	*100.0*	