

Responsible Media Practices Index: A Study of Compliance of Media Industry in Pakistan

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Brief Introduction

Modern Information and Communication Technology has empowered the media to reach a larger audience more swiftly through multiple communication channels. This follows with an incredible power to influence political, religious and cultural views of masses. In a country like Pakistan where extremism, violence and terrorism prevail, media groups cannot be left unbound and free to promote social, religious or political intolerance and unrest in the society under the name of 'freedom of speech'. They need to function within the parameters of social responsibility (Rizvi, 2012). The Media Responsibility and Independence Index (MRII) study conducted by The Institute of Business Management (IoBM), in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also suggests that "concerned stakeholders" believe the media in Pakistan is relatively independent, but the degree of responsibility it demonstrates falls shorter of its claims (Ajmal, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to regulate and evaluate the performance of media with respect to social responsibility in order to make them accountable to the state and society. This can be ensured by following three steps: Firstly, a legal framework provided by the state should oblige the media to operate within acceptable limits. Secondly, each media body should be bound to have their own internal control mechanisms in place.

Thirdly, a monitoring body should oversee the media and regularly assess and measure their social responsibility through a media specific CSR index (Rizvi, 2012). Therefore, it is the need of the time to develop a media specific CSR index which complies with the social requirements of Pakistan. The proposed study aims to fulfill this gap by developing such an index after thorough and comprehensive research and test its viability.

Following are the specific objectives of this study:

1. To provide insight about responsible media practices and corporate sustainability dynamics of Pakistan media industry.
2. To develop a responsible media practices index to rank the Pakistani Media corporations with reference to their contribution for society.
3. To provide insight about the difference of behavior of companies in media industry.
4. Development of theoretically tested, practically viable responsible media practices index for media industry in Pakistan.
5. To rate electronic and print media companies on the developed responsible media practices index every year.

Possible Outcome of Research

1. Yearly rating of electronic and print media companies on the developed responsible media practices index every year.
2. Solutions and consulting for companies with low rating upon responsible media practices index.
3. Replication of same methodology / framework to develop CSR index for other industries of Pakistan
4. Recommendation to SECP to improve guidelines and develop comprehensive framework and policy to regulate and monitor companies upon CSR index in Pakistan.
5. With implementation of media index – reporting on media activities will improve because of effective monitoring based on responsible media practices.
6. Comprehensive policies on media ethics could be formed.
7. Pakistan’s media could align with international standards of responsible media practices.
8. Control on media will be more effective with emphasis on accountability: self-regulation mechanism could be introduced.
9. Media related corruption could be controlled.
10. Transparency in processes of regulator and broadcasters could be improved.
11. It could be ensured that national content is given preference.

Impact of this research for Economy and Society

Civil society will get insight about responsible media practices and corporate sustainability dynamics of Pakistan media industry.

1. Media organizations will become more responsible once ranked on responsible media practices index with reference to their contribution for society.
2. Society spends most of time on media, depend on media for information as well as entertainment. Both information and entertainment have socio-economic and psycho-behavioral impacts on society. Identification of responsible media organizations with good practices will encourage society to read and view highly rated RBP indexed media organization that in return improve socio-economic and psycho-behavioral impacts on society.
