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Media Consumption and Media Literacy Level of Uzbek Youth

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Abstract

The article analyzes the media consumption and media literacy of Uzbek youth based on the results of an empirical survey conducted using a questionnaire. The sources of information of young people were checked, their connection with the media, the ability to work with information and extract facts in the form of text, video, photos, critical thinking skills. According to a survey of 7,827 respondents, the results of previous surveys in this area differ. This indicates that the forms and methods of media consumption of the audience are changing. The opportunities for Uzbek youth to access the digital world are expanding, and they are actively using the media, especially the Internet. The level of media literacy for checking information is medium, with a low level of information creation. Young people do not have a deep understanding of the manipulative, commercial impact of information. While there has been progress in the consumption of digital media products, there has been a hierarchical regression in traditional media. The youth of Uzbekistan widely uses the media, has an idea of the need to regulate media consumption, the formation of media literacy. There is still no complete and complete understanding of the components of media literacy. The results of the study can be used in the development of the information policy of Uzbekistan, the introduction of media education, the integration of media education tools with other disciplines, and the creation of an information portrait of the youth audience.

Keywords: media consumption, media literacy, digital divide, media diet, information hygiene, information warfare, fact checking.

1. Introduction

Media consumption of the world's population, especially the younger segment of the audience, increases the time needed for media. In recent years, as the Internet audience has grown, smartphones have become a means of self-isolation, there is a need for a media diet, and the demand for fact-checking is increasing due to the personalization of information, the spread of fake information and disinformation. In addition to forms such as media search, communication, visual content, information service purchase, online commerce, online activity, has become a means of direct broadcasting. The audience is rapidly acquiring the skills to use digital opportunities. Digital opportunities radically change the way, form and micro-level of information use, media ethics, cognitive characteristics, digital habits of the audience. It is known that media consumption is the amount of information that a person uses regardless of the scope, including reading books, newspapers and magazines, watching movies and TV shows, listening to the radio, receiving information in digital format, playing computer games. Media consumption can be beneficial or detrimental to a person's professional growth, depending on their impact on mental health. There

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is a need for an in-depth study of media consumption in terms of the formation of stereotypes in the minds of people, the formation of attitudes, and the impact on public thinking. It is advisable to study it in terms of consumption and media literacy, to look for ways to regulate relations with the media on a scientific basis.

Each age group has its own media consumption. As J. Genuneit, “Media use is increasingly becoming common in preschoolers and starting before the age of three years” (Genuneit et al., 2018: 7). For example, children do not determine the source of information, do not understand the difference between the real world and the media, they are connected to Youtube, parents act as information filters, teenagers and young people actively communicate through the media, consider social networks as the first source of news, content, and for older people information comes through relatives or verified official channels, seeks to use high protection mechanisms, barriers to obtaining information. Differences in media consumption between youth and adults create “digital divide” (Daley, 2015).

However, each country has its own media consumption. These include the development of the information system in the country, the focus on the development of the digital economy, e-government, freedom of information, the speed of the Internet, the richness of the content of sites in the national heritage, the focus on the formation of digital skills in education, the national mentality, historical and spiritual values.

Uzbekistan, which has a unique demographic dividend where the majority of the population is young, also has its own media consumption. Media consumption of Uzbeks has been studied in several studies. One such poll, conducted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) among 1,000 respondents, showed that television remains the main source of information for Uzbeks (USAID, 2019). (Our research has shown that this is not the case among young people) Currently, 97.6 % of Uzbeks have a TV, 38.8 % have a smartphone, 14 % have a camera, and 3.4 % have a game console. The younger part of the population pays less attention to television. UNICEF study conducted from 2018 to 2020 among 4458 young people from all regions of the country showed that the proportion of girls who do not own a computer was 43.5 %, and among boys – 30.0 %. In Uzbekistan, 68 % of girls and young women aged 14 to 30 do not use the Internet (UNICEF, 2021).

Along with the potential of the digital world, there are changes in its consumption. According to the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, the number of Internet subscribers in the country as of January 1, 2021 will be about 20 million people (SCRUS, 2021). According to it, compared to the corresponding period in 2019, it increased by 23.0 % or 3.1 million. Uzbekistan's place in the world ranking of Internet speed is growing. Over the year, the speed of wired Internet in Uzbekistan increased by 1.5 times (51.8 %) (t.e. s 25.82 Mbit / s in April 2020 to 39.2 Mbit/s in April 2021). Over the past three years, the speed of wired Internet in Uzbekistan has tripled. Positive results were also recorded in terms of mobile Internet speed. According to the results of April 2021, Uzbekistan has risen by four positions (Figure 1).

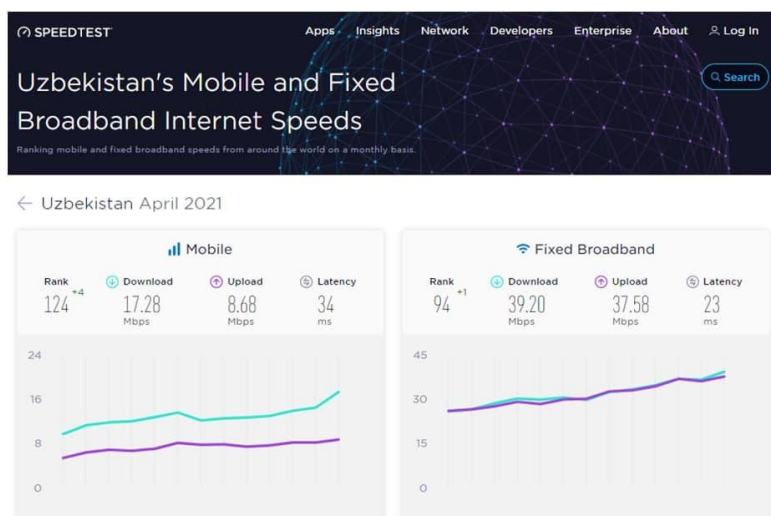


Fig. 1. Uzbekistan's mobile and fixed broadband internet speeds

2. Materials and methods

Through the study, we set a goal to study changes in the media consumption of young people in connection with the speed of the Internet, the expansion of the audience, as well as the level of media literacy. For this, the most convenient and optimal method of questioning was chosen. A program of sociological research has been developed. According to it, young people aged 16-30 were chosen as the object. The level of consumption and media literacy of young people was singled out as a subject. Explaining the relevance and necessity of research, examples from research and analysis were given showing that media consumption is growing and the need for media literacy is increasing.

Using the empirical method of observation, the behavior of young people in target groups in social networks was observed, an abundance of unverified information was noted, and hostile vocabulary was widely used. At the same time, in real life, the number of cybercrimes and insults aimed at stealing money from the card is growing.

Based on the study of the topic, primary observation and the obtained initial data, a questionnaire was compiled, consisting of 28 questions. 4 questions are introductory and control, 24 – basic. The questions focus on two areas: firstly, on media consumption, and secondly, on media literacy.

The survey involved 7827 people from all regions of the country with the support of the Institute for Social and Spiritual Research at the Republican Center for Spirituality and Education.

Of these, 7525 (96.1 %) are students, 162 (2.1 %) are employed, 109 (1.4 %) are pupils and 31 (0.4 %) are temporarily unemployed. 56.9 % are women and 43.1 % are men. By age, the main part is 18-25 years old – 82.7 %. The share of persons aged 16-18 accounted for 9.2 %, those aged 25-30 years old – 5.2 % and over 30 years old – 2.8 %. The proportion of respondents under the age of 16 was less than 0.1 % compared to 6 %.

The cross-sectional indicators are given in [Table 1](#). Compared to other regions, such as Namangan region, Republic of Karakalpakstan, Kashkadarya region, the number of participants was higher.

Table 1. Distribution of questionnaire participants by regions of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Region	Number of participants	Percentage (%)
Tashkent city	289	3,7
Andijan region	290	3,7
Bukhara region	165	2,1
Fergana region	236	3
Jizzakh region	52	0,7
Khorezm region	161	2,1
Namangan region	3369	43
Navoi region	538	6,7
Kashkadarya region	1035	13,2
The Republic of Karakalpakstan	1056	13,5
Samarkand region	398	5,1
Syrdarya region	57	0,7
Surkhandarya region	87	1,1
Tashkent region	99	1,3
I'm abroad now	5	

The results of the survey were expressed as a percentage, the media literacy scales were scaled.

3. Discussion

The media education appeared in the 1970s, when UNESCO announced media education as a priority area for the next decade ([Carlsson, 2019](#)). The problems of new media literacy, digital literacy, information literacy, digital culture, media competence have been extensively analyzed in scientific research ([Benallack et al., 2021](#); [Brady, 2021](#); [Celik et al., 2021](#); [Diergarten et al., 2017](#); [Gálik, 2020](#); [Gálik, Oprala, 2021](#); [Graves et al., 2021](#); [Hammons, 2020](#); [Harshman, 2018](#); [Hicks, 2022](#); [Jang, Kim, 2018](#); [Kačínová, 2019](#); [Ku et al., 2019](#); [Lu, 2019](#); [Mihailidis, Viotty, 2017](#); [Mingoa](#)

et al., 2019; Polizzi, 2020; Rieh et al., 2022; Tomaselli, 2021; Vrabc, Bôtošová, 2020; Wegener, 2022; Wilson, 2019 and others).

So far, research has been conducted in the areas of media consumption and the phenomenon of fragmentation in the order of consumption of news on social networks (Gaol et al., 2020), the effects of perception of social reality in media consumption (Shrum, 2002), consumption of advertising materials in cross-media, (Bharadwaj et al., 2020) based on theories of acculturation and information diffusion, (Shin et al., 2022) use of social networks, intergroup communication, (Choudhary et al., 2019) reduction of deviant behavior as a result of media literacy in the field of media literacy, (Xie et al., 2019) support of media literacy in preventing negative social impacts of social bots (Schmuck, Sikorski, 2020).

Although the problem is widely studied in the world, the media culture, media consumption, media and information literacy of the young Uzbek audience have not been studied.

4. Results

One of the main questions that comes after the control and filtering questions is “Where do you get more information?” The aim is to determine the audience’s source of information, their relationship with the media. 43 % of respondents responded to social networks and messengers, 36.6 % to Internet sites, 0.3 % to newspapers and magazines, 2.9 % to TV, and 4 respondents (less than 0.1 %) to radio (less than 0.1 %), for books – 7.4 %, for communication with parents, teachers and friends – 9.7 % (Figure 2).

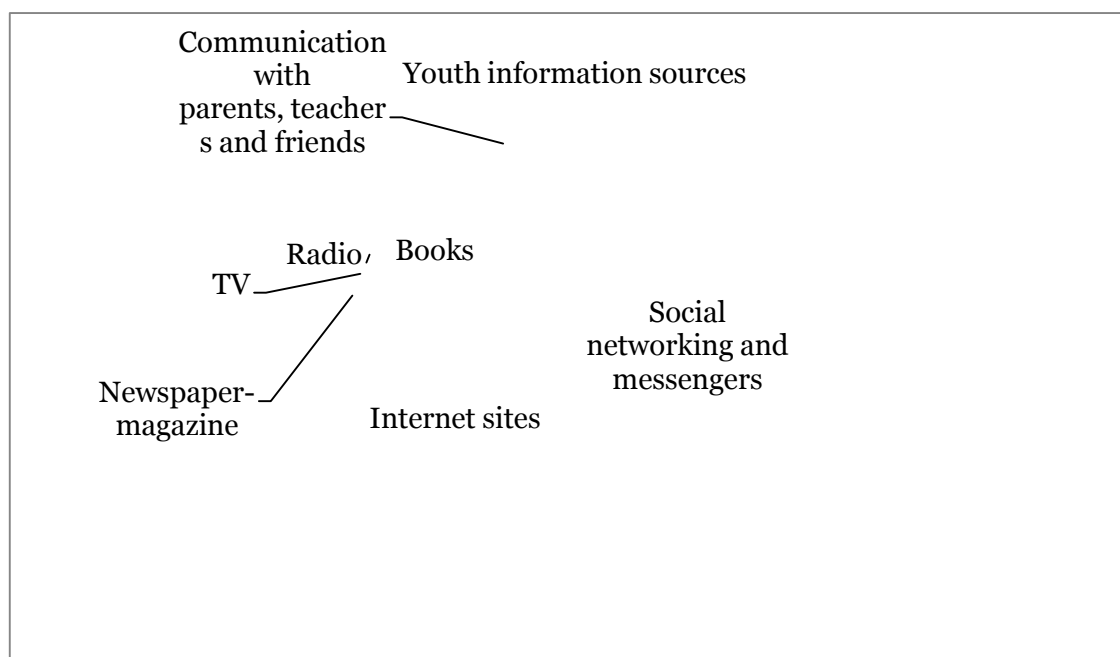


Fig. 2. Sources of information

In 2014, when faced with the same question, the TV and Internet performance was equal, and today it seems that the Internet has won in this competition.

Receiving information through social media is a major part of the audience’s need to understand the role of social media in disseminating information and polarizing political thought, and to acquire digital skills based on critical thinking. C. Tagg, P. Seargeant (Tagg, Seargeant, 2021) studying the impact of social media on *Facebook*, note that higher education institutions need digital textbooks that take into account the social or interpersonal nature of modern Internet use in dealing with disinformation and political polarization.

The question of how much time you spend watching TV in a day was aimed at determining how much time a young audience would spend on television media products. It was found that 61.7 % of the audience does not watch TV every day, 25.9 % spend up to 1 hour, 10.7 % spend 1-3 hours, 1.4 % spend 3-5 hours, and those who watch more than five hours spend 0.2 % (Figure 3). There is no dependence on television.

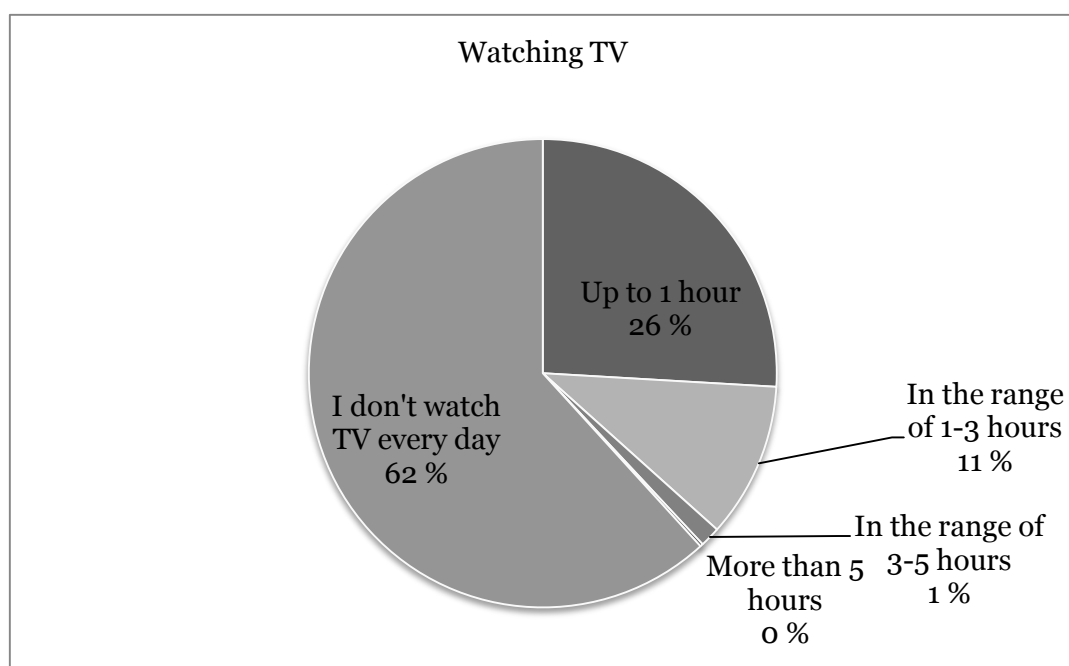


Fig. 3. Watching TV

When asked how many hours a day they use the Internet, 4.9 % of young people do not use the Internet every day. Most respondents actively use it in the time range from 1 to 12 hours: 12.5 % – up to 1 hour, 34.4 % – in the range of 1-3 hours, 32.4 % – 3-5 hours, 13.1 % – 6-12 hours apart. The number of users over 12 hours is 2.7 % (Figure 4).

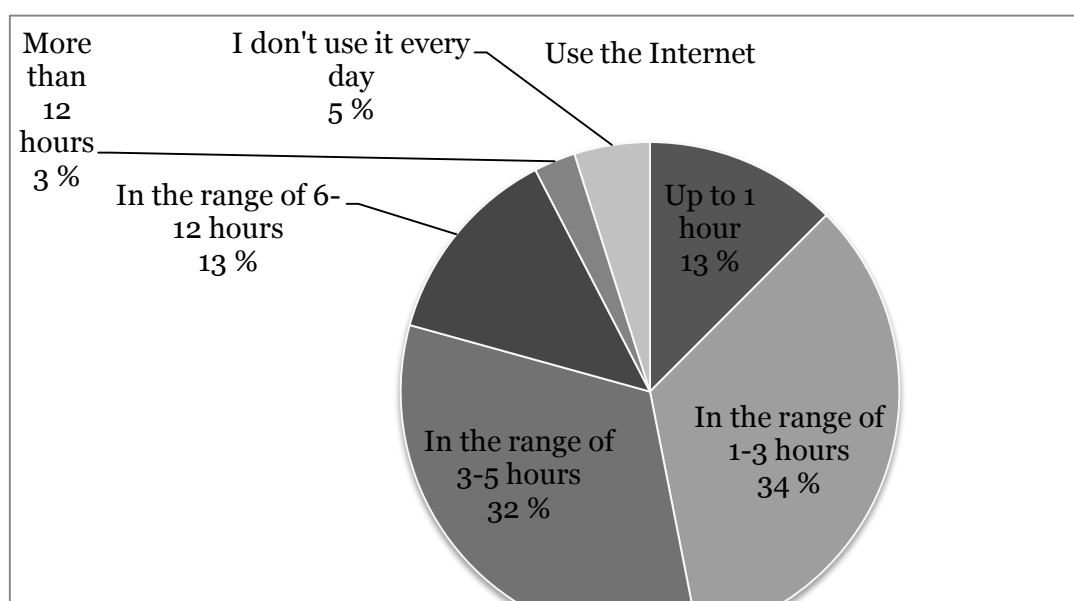


Fig. 4. Use the Internet

Our study of audience measurement also allows us to compare the relationship between the Internet and TV to the audience (Figure 5).

When asked if they listen to the radio, 59.8 % of respondents answered "no", 32.7 % answered "yes" and 32.7 % answered "sometimes". Radio is the least popular form of media.

When asked if they read newspapers and magazines, 50.1 % answered "sometimes", 33.7 % answered "no" and 16.7 % answered "yes". In Uzbekistan, as well as throughout the world, in recent years there has been a tendency to reduce the number, circulation and audience of print media. The number of newspapers has halved in the last decade. Over the years, the number of newspapers has dropped from 649 in 2010 to 366 in 2020. Over the past 10 years, the number of

newspapers has decreased to 283. According to the State Statistics Committee, as of January 1, 2021, the number of newspapers operating in the country was 366.

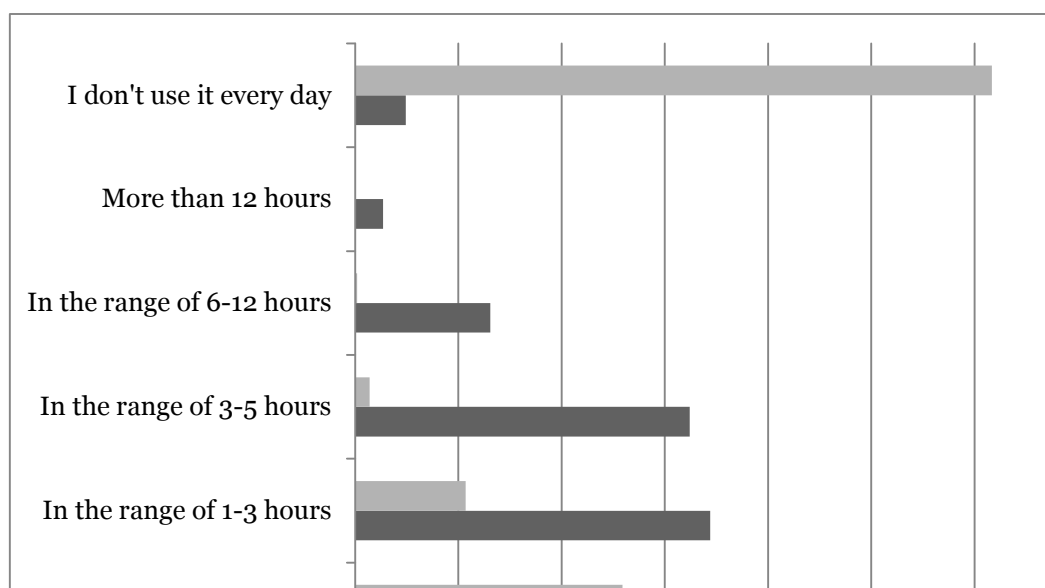


Fig. 5. The difference between the audience of the Internet and TV

One of the main survey questions, "What do you do online?" was answered in the table below. It should be noted that the answer "I follow the news on the websites" received the largest number of votes – 54.1 %. This means that, in addition to the enormous potential of the Internet, it still leads the way in the delivery of journalistic news. Although the answer "I use search engines" is 32.9 %, the respondents are not familiar with the concept of search engine optimization. One positive aspect of the increase in media consumption is that online tools, software and media in general have become an active part of education. The fact that 45 % of the participants read e-books and 16.1 % read online confirms the widespread use of media in education. The active use of the media is consistent with the goal of media education in the formation of critical thinking.

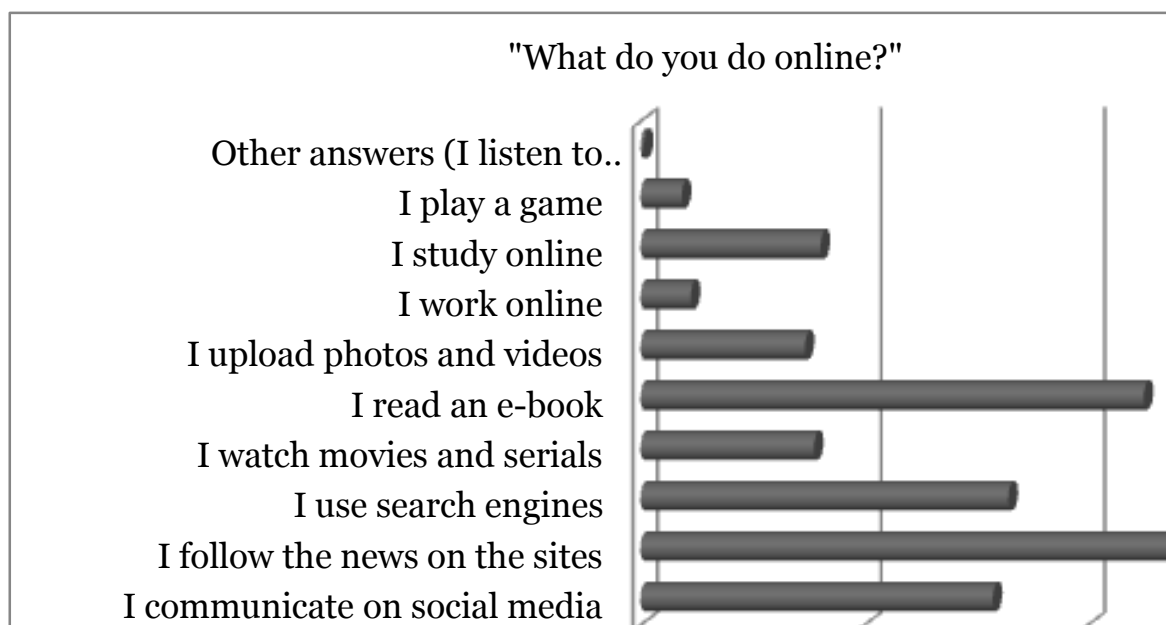


Fig. 6. Activity on the Internet

4.5 % of respondents work online. Communication on social networks – 31.5 %, watching movies and TV series – 15.5 %, uploading photos and videos – 14.7 %, games – 3.7 %. According to the Committee on Information Policy and Transparency of State Bodies of the Oliy Majlis of the

Republic of Uzbekistan, the most widely used social network in Uzbekistan is the *Telegram* messenger, which is currently used by more than 18 million Uzbeks. *Facebook* – 4.7 million, *Odnoklassniki* – 16.7 million, *Instagram* – 3.7 million, *Vkontyakte* – 2.6 million, *LinkedIn* – 288 thousand and *Twitter* – 51,6 thousand users, most of them – youth (Table 7).

The question “How do you feel when you see (read, hear) the news?” was aimed at measuring the psychological impact of the media, the adaptation of the audience to the mood of the social networking environment, indicators of self-absorption positive or negative impact. Ball-Rokeach and Defler explore the emotional impact of the media. Ball-Rokeach summarized the main differences of media systems dependency theory by comparing them with media use and gratification theory (Ball-Rokeach, Sandra, 1985). And, in our opinion, it is appropriate to define modern science as media addiction, not media addiction.

The sociological research program predicted that there would be a lot of fear, panic, and pressure in the audience as a result of the increase in negative information in the working hypothesis. In practice, the results did not confirm this. Only 5.9 % of the audience feels fear, 52.6 % of the audience is surprised, and 40.6 % feel joy and peace (Figure 7).

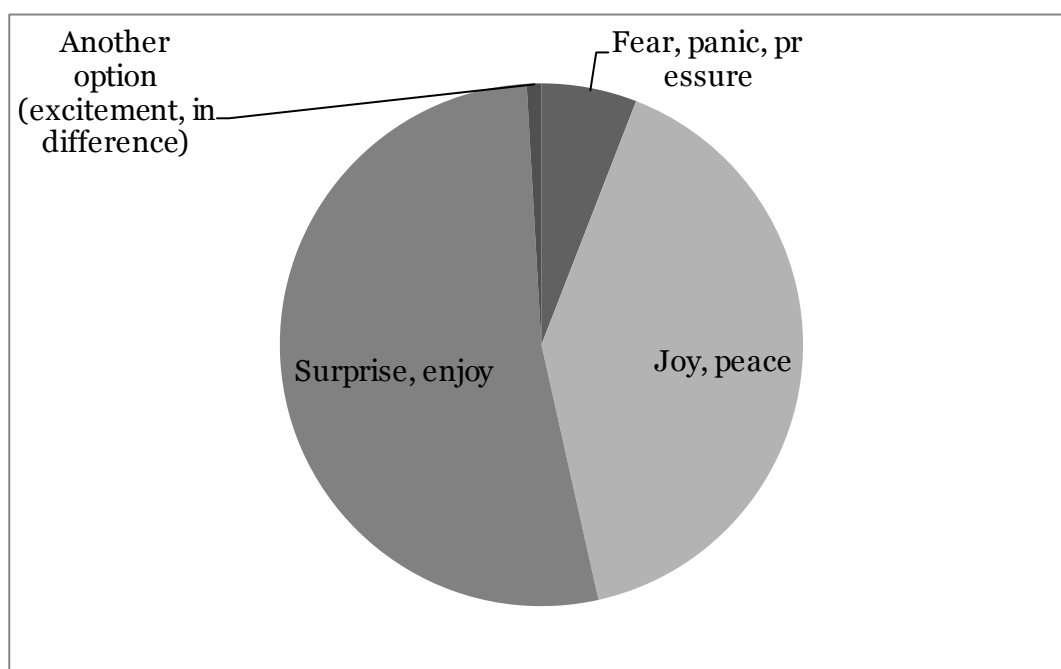


Fig. 7. Feelings that arise as a result of the influence of information

When asked if they found the information they received online useful, 93 % of respondents answered yes and 7 % answered no. "The Internet contains a lot of information, but unfortunately some of it is empty information" (Yudalevich, 2016). Waste of information, information foam are useless promotional materials (according to the principle “there is no healthy food on harmful food”), unfounded personal opinions, posts, attitudes, comments, biased propaganda materials, propaganda, disinformation, fakes, especially in the context of information and psychological astroturfing wars (creating the illusion of majority support for an idea), trolls, bots can become a common topic of influence.

While the audience confirms the usefulness of the content on the Internet, it shows that they answered without thinking deeply about the topic, they are not familiar with the concepts and requirements of information garbage, information hygiene.

The next question is “What did you do when you learned about the transition to online studying?” was a media literacy test, which was answered correctly by 61.6 % of the respondents. 11.8 % said they would forward the message to others, while 26.7 % said they would try to confirm it via social media.

Respondents were given a fake photograph of a landscape and asked, "How do you feel about this photograph?". 66.3 % of respondents did not doubt the authenticity of the photo, 22.7 % answered that they did not believe in the existence of such a scene in nature. 11 % say they can prove it wrong using various web tools. Most respondents are unfamiliar with image search tools

such as “TinEye” and “RevEye”, as well as software products that determine whether an image has been processed based on metadata.

“Do you know how to identify the original source of a video?” 25.2 % of the respondents answered “yes, I can use Youtube DataViewer and other tools” and 74.8 % said “no, never tried”.

“Can you tell trustworthy sites from untrustworthy ones?” 19 % of respondents answered “Yes, I can check if the site has an SSL certificate, is it an official source, etc.”, 20.5 % “no, I didn’t pay attention to it”, 60.5 % “can partially discern,” they replied.

“What should I do if unwanted advertising accompanies you when visiting a site?” – 18.9 % of respondents answered the test question correctly. At the same time, 66.5 % of respondents simply press the x (close) button, 12.6 % do not pay attention to it, it does not bother them, 2.1 % consider it completely (Figure 8).

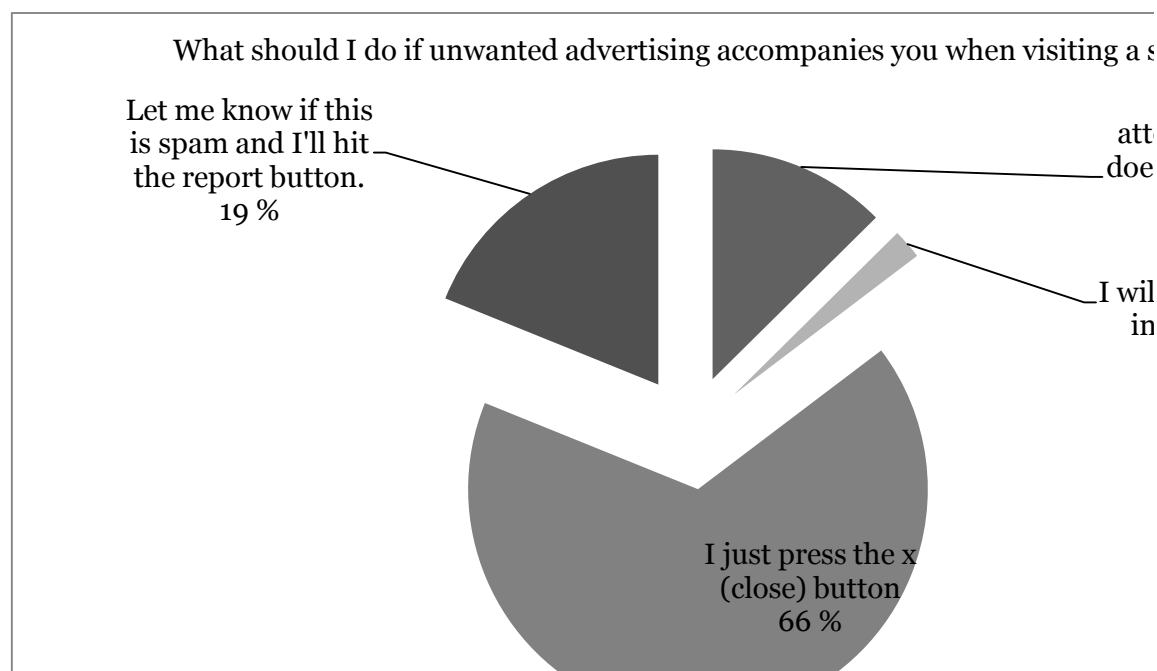


Fig. 8. Attitude to unwanted advertising

61 % of respondents do not want to receive the advertised product, 36.7 % do so sometimes, 2.3 % do it more often. 51.7 % of participants can detect that the bot is talking, while 48.3 % of participants do not. 74.7 % of respondents do not know the identity of the trolls, and 25.4 % are aware of the activities of fake accounts that operate to control public opinion.

78.8 % of respondents can create video content, while 21.2 % cannot. While media literacy is the ability to interpret/analyze and create media texts, we can see a person who knows how to create content as a fully media literate person. 92.9 % of respondents encountered cyber fraud aimed at withdrawing money from the card, and 7.1 % faced this problem. In recent years, the number of cybercrimes aimed at withdrawing money from plastic cards has been growing in Uzbekistan.

The analysis of the answers to the question “How do you think the information war will be waged” and the number of votes are given in the table below. 48.9 % of respondents believe that “through lies, conspiracy, slander”, 39.1 % of votes “through the management of public opinion, manipulation.” 12.9 % by creating more content, 17.6 % by gaining more audience, and 33.1 % by creating illusions that distract people (Figure 9).

The expression of negative situations such as hatred, insult, enmity, ridicule, obscenity among participants in the media space through speech has a negative impact on the digital health of social network users. Many of the unexplored aspects of this are reflected in the research of J. Culpeper (Culpeper, 2021). In our study, “Have you been abused on social media, have you written comments and attitudes that have insulted, insulted you for your post, your personal opinion?” the question was to determine the extent to which hostile language is used on social media. A positive result has been obtained on this issue. 85 % of respondents answered: “No, it didn’t happen at all.” 13.6 % of respondents periodically face this problem, 1.4 % often face this problem.

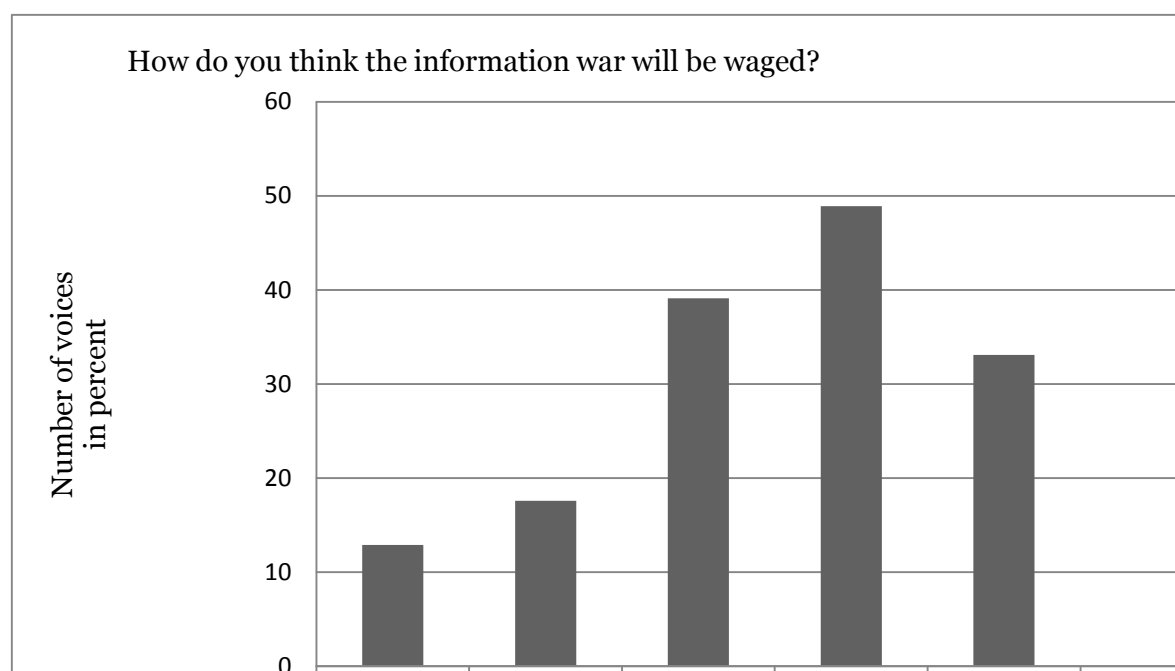


Fig. 9. Imagination about the information war

"Urgent message for you. See you now!" A link to the video came in. What is your reaction?" on the test question, 42 % of respondents answered "I don't see it open", 15.7 % answered "I'm looking at the link", and 42.3 % answered "I'm trying to figure out what the purpose of the video is".

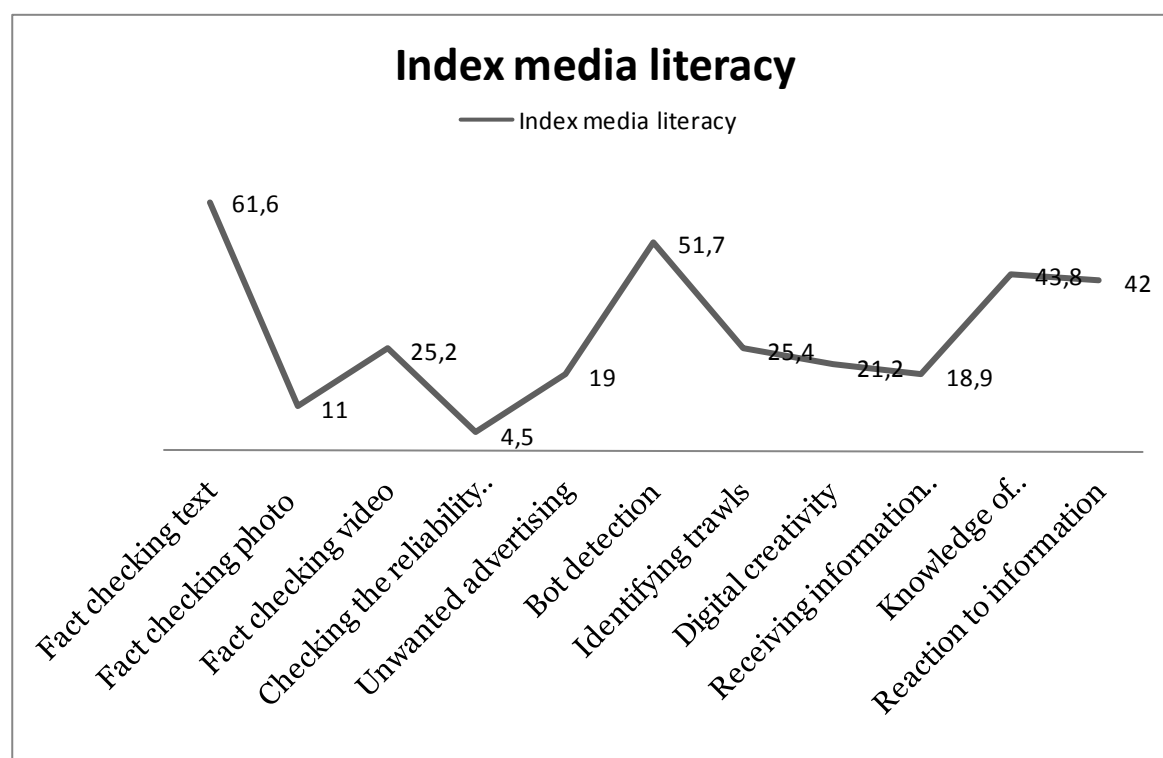


Fig. 10. The indicator(index) of general media literacy of Uzbek Youth

In response to the question "As long as the Wi-Fi network is open in a public place, you ...", 56.2 % of participants said they would use it, while 43.8 % said they would not use it. Hybrid threats are emerging in the form of a convergence of cybersecurity and personal security. In such circumstances, it is known that media literacy also includes cybersecurity rules. According to it – on unprotected Wi-Fi networks in public places it is recommended not to use Man-in-the-Middle, that is, because there may be a third person in the middle of the conversation.

To the question “Do you get the impression that you are being deceived by the media?”, 6.3 % of respondents answered quickly, 2.4 % constantly, 32.9 % occasionally, 32.3 % rarely and 26.1 % in general. The audience imagines itself free from the manipulative influence of the media.

63.7 % of respondents supported the question “How would you feel about the introduction of a new science in the field of media education and media literacy into the education system of Uzbekistan, which will help young people adapt to the media world, teach them to separate fake information and develop critical thinking?” – 22.1 % found it difficult to answer. It should be noted that the development of media education in Uzbekistan, the formation of information literacy and online safety of children, adolescents and youth are on the agenda. And most of the audience seemed to support it (Figure 11).

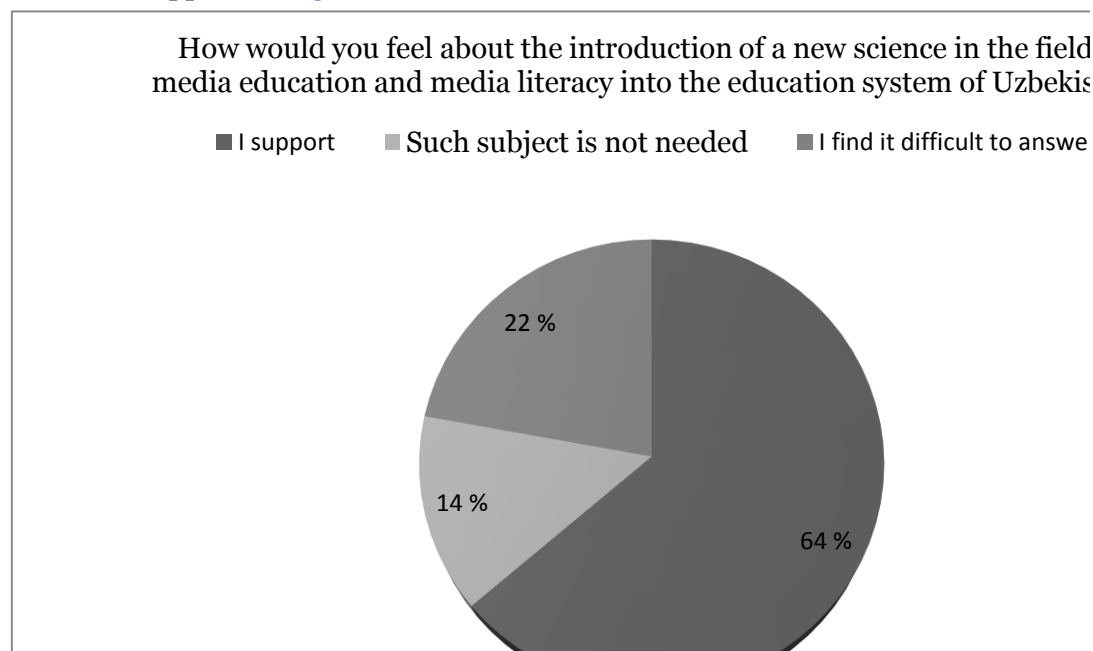


Fig. 11. Attitude to the introduction of Media education course

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that the opportunities for Uzbek youth to access the digital world are expanding, and they are actively using the media, especially the Internet. The level of media literacy for checking information is medium, with a low level of information creation. Young people do not have a deep understanding of the manipulative, commercial impact of information. While there has been progress in the consumption of digital media products, there has been a hierarchical regression in traditional media. The youth of Uzbekistan widely uses the media, has an idea of the need to regulate media consumption, the formation of media literacy. There is still no complete and complete understanding of the components of media literacy. The results of the study can be used in the development of the information policy of Uzbekistan, the introduction of media education, the integration of media education tools with other disciplines, and the creation of an information portrait of the youth audience.

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