

Television Vs Web 2.0 in the New Media Age: The effects of information upon university students¹

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Abstract: Information mechanisms tend to adopt new forms in order to adjust their functions in the overwhelming power of the Web. The Television Vs Web ‘competition’ brings ahead several effects, especially when it comes to youngsters. The paper examines these effects and, through them, the differences in the information mechanisms (promoting and enhancing information gaining and opinions development) exploited by the two dominant mass media of the 21st century. The results indicate that the source of information (TV – Web) plays a minor role in the formation of critical arguments and highlight the importance to integrate the use of the two media.

Keywords: Web 2.0, Television, university students, political information.

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WITH the rapid diffusion of the Internet new approaches to information gaining and knowledge development were created. More specifically, the technological advancement in information technology and telecommunications resulted in the development of the Web 2.0 and created the appropriate framework for user participation. The traditional one-way communication is transformed into a two-way communication and process of information. In Web 2.0 users are Contributing, Collaborating, Creating - the 3C's (Ala-Mutka et al, 2009). Various online tools have emerged such as blogs, wikis, discussion forums, online collaborative documents, online sharing of documents, pictures and videos, podcasts, RSS feed , etc. Millions of people use various social and professional networks, such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Delicious, Flickr, LinkedIn, Live Journal. Nowadays, with the advent of Web 2.0, the Internet has become truly interactive. The aforementioned tools and networks are excellent examples of how definitions, ideas, photographs, videos and voice can be shared over a powerful Web 2.0. Technology provides a realistic, visually compelling, and motivating interactive environment for developing the life skills and knowledge needed for today's globalized, hi-tech environment (Goddard, 2002). The Web 2.0 technologies became an essential tool of daily life and a crucial part of students' of any educational level personal knowledge tools (Lee, Miller & Newnham, 2008). Finally, it is suggested that the Internet use has great power to mobilize political participation and interest (Kann et al, 2007).

Main aim of the study

The current study aims to examine whether the television and the Web 2.0 can be used as tools to promote and enhance information gaining and opinions' development overall, and specifically on political issues by university students. Specifically, it investigates the role of the Web 2.0 (i.e. blogs, wikis, social networking, RSS feed) and Television in information gaining and opinions' development by university students. Additionally, it attempts to identify which of the two media (as sources of information) might be more effective in promoting

and enhancing political interest and participation, thus engaging students in politics. More specifically, the study aims to examine the following:

1. Are there any differences in university students' information gaining and opinions' development regarding a specific subject, between those getting informed via Television and those getting informed via Web 2.0?
2. What kind of differences can be identified in the opinions between university students informed via Television and those informed via the Web?
3. Which of the following demographics influence the differences between university students informed by Television and those informed via the Web 2.0 (gender, place of origin, and educational background)?

To achieve the above a particular subject was chosen, that is the USA Presidential Elections of 2012 and two separate groups of university students (journalism-major students and educational-major students) were requested to follow the news from two different sources (Television Vs Web 2.0) regarding the aforementioned subject.

Literature Review

Uses and effects of Internet Information

Dahlgren claims that a newer and perhaps a better version of Habermas's (1962/1989) notion of public sphere is being realized on line (Dahlgren, 2005). In this new version of public sphere two streams of conclusion can be identified in the academic literature. First, it is claimed that Internet use can mobilize political participation. In short, mobilization theories highlight how the Internet can facilitate activities with a political purpose, or how it forms a 'political playground' where people (especially the young ones) can exercise civic skills and obtain knowledge deemed important for political participation (Kann et

al, 2007). On the other hand, others argue that political web applications are mainly used by engaged and active citizens, uses that tend to normalize political participation (Chadwick, 2006). Hirzalla, van Zoonen and de Ridder (2010) argue that normalization conclusions are normally built on assessments of general Internet use patterns, whereas mobilization claims often build on Internet use in specific cases at specific moments. Actually, in their survey, conducted in the Netherlands during the 2006 elections, they found out that younger people (18 – 25 years old) tend to use online political information tools more often than older people.

Accordingly, young citizens tend to engage in politics, when this notion is perceived in their own terms, meaning that for them politics seem less attractive when it evolves around the old party system and more attractive when it is perceived either as identity politics or community activism (Farthing, 2010). Today substantial number of youth is engaging in political life through ‘participatory politics’, which are interactive, peer-based and not guided by traditional media or political norms, such as political parties (Kahn & Middaugh, 2012). This is why New Media gain more ground every day that goes by, since they can offer to young citizens all these advantages. In this perspective, youngsters perceive the Web as “their own” public sphere and the medium to express their anxieties and demands. At the same time, the Web offers them for free the opportunity to construct new participatory communities with citizens of the same age, representing new directions in politics for them (Harris, 2008). This new sphere of interest, created by the youngsters for the youngsters, although blurring between public and private, is widely exploited by the social media.

Uses and Effects of Television News in the New Media Age

Several scholars argue that the rise and dominance of the Web indicated the end for television’s prevalence over the public opinion and it no longer could constitute a significant means of study, since its functions would have been rapidly replaced (Levy, 2002 & Missik, 2006). However, they failed to take under consideration the fact that television was and is still evolving as a mass medium and is

adjusting its functions in the current social needs, based on digital technology. As Kompare (2011) argues, television's perpetual cultural and industrial instability has extended in recent years into more radical reconfigurations, as the medium has migrated from domestic set to networked node. Furthermore, it seems to have gained even more power the last years, since it integrated forms of social media, evolving into social television. For example, in September 2012, during the final night telecast of the Democratic National Convention in the USA, the 90 minutes of the convention aired in prime time television, inspired more than 2.5 million tweets, proving in fact that "TV is what people want to talk about, especially prime time TV" (Dumenco, 2012:14-15).

The effects of television upon the public offer a wide field for study, since the 1940s. Of course, the changes in television's economical structures as well as the alterations in its social and cultural role, in the current global society, have made extremely difficult the study of one-dimensional effects of its program, even within the national borders of a state (Levine, 2011). However, in every study concerning the television's effects, various factors are taken under consideration and most importantly the public of television.

A general description of the term 'television public' could be 'the majority of regular TV consumers' or 'the un-homogeneous majority of men and women that watch TV programs' (Maniou, 2013:22). In the case of newspapers or online media it may be easy to identify the number of readers/visitors. However, in the case of television we never really know, neither the size nor the width of its public, since all methods used for this purpose are based on representative measurements. In any case, the television public is the exact social group in which advertisers, opinion leaders and politicians aim to approach and communicate their message.

Undoubtedly, the Web has changed the way television is viewed by individuals, marking the so called "third era of television" (Moyer, 2009), since fewer people, and specifically youngsters, are showing great interest about television and, accordingly, its influence has been lessened. However, moving from the rise of television networks to cable and satellite television and moreover – today – to connected-TV, the medium deployed mechanisms to preserve its consumers against all odds in the previous years. But that happened with a price:

it had to prove to its public that it could offer them all the advantages of the Web: video on demand, time shifting television products, individual choice of programs and low cost services.

Television and young people

Until recent decades, researches concerning the public's preferences showed that usually young people tend to choose entertaining rather than informative programs (Couclinski & Seagelman, 1992). At the same time, young people (more or less until the age of 30) tend to disdain television as a medium for their information (especially concerning political issues), mainly because of the way it chooses to broadcast the news.

However, in recent years a new tendency has aroused. In the rise of the 21st century, due to the sweeping prevalence of the Web and the rise of social media, the power of television has declined. But even if all these is true, television still remains an important value in every day life, since every household possesses more than one television sets, and usually the second device is placed in the room of the younger members of the family (Adriaens et al., 2011), to which youngsters tend to spend much of their free time. According to Van Rompaey και Roe (2001), the specific use of television is explained as a tendency to privatize the use of mass media, which offer them a means of shifting the power over the TV-control device from parents to children, showing the will of the latest to feel independent and autonomous from their family. Moving on to the age of 18, although most of the students are heavy Internet users and can be characterized as digital literate; they have not disregarded television, since it is not the same medium it was five or ten years ago, although it manages to maintain the cultural centrality it acquired more than fifty years ago (Kompare, 2011). Moreover, the initial framework that the television operated, that is to make public all that perceived to be personal (Costin, 2010) – it is the Web's dominant advantage for youngsters. Besides, that was the framework that guided the development of social media.

Von Drehle et al. (2008) suggest that until recently, young people up to the age of 25, no matter their educational level, tended to show less interest for the political news aired by television channels. However, this tendency started to alter after 2000, especially for university students and graduates, since they started showing interest for political issues probably since the Web and the social media were widely exploited. For example, Obama's first presidential campaign in 2008 highlights this tendency, since all around the U.S. young people between 18 and 25 became largely interested for the campaign issues, probably since it widely exploited the potentials of the Web and, especially, social media (Von Drehle et al., 2008). Towards this direction, one could argue that young individuals are more open to political information when that derives from online media and the Web. On the other hand, the fact that young people search for political information through the Web does not necessarily mean that they easily assimilate or integrate them in their knowledge and opinions (Enyon & Malmberg, 2011). As studies of the last decade prove, adolescence of the individual usually connects with the tendency to spend less and less time in watching television programs, since this habit is replaced with outdoors activities (Eggermont, 2006). However, when it comes to comparing television to the Web, recent studies show that young individuals watch television while also using their computers to access the Internet. Especially for the ones below 30, media multitasking is rapidly becoming the modal form of television and computer consumption, switching their attention between the two media at a high rate (Brasel & Gips, 2011).

In any case, the individual's age is considered to be a crucial factor for choosing a television program (McQuail, 2003). The so called interest groups, especially the associational ones, are composed by people of the same age (Calvert, 1993), which – most of the times – share the same television preferences. Accordingly, the individual's age defines the free time one has to devote to television viewing (Lenk, 2005). In this perspective, a person above 65 is more likely to watch television programs more frequently than a person below 30, who has more options in his/her free time (Eggermont, 2006). Furthermore, even with today's relative abundance, with more than 60 or 80 channels offered to every household, most people stick to only a few channels. A study conducted

at the UPenn Annenberg School for Communications as early as 2005, showed that when people (especially young ones) were offered more programming choices, they stuck to fewer selections and, alarmingly, watched fewer news shows (Levy, Stone & Ordonez, 2005).

The individual's age is even more important for the procedure of understanding and assimilating TV news. Towards this direction, a person above 40 is likely to understand and assimilate news shown in the TV faster than a person below 25, since the younger person does not have previous real time experiences of the news aired, so as to understand and analyze the information received through television. But even if the younger person holds previous real time information, knowledge for the subject, this knowledge is perceived only in theoretical terms and it does not constitute own's past experiences. For example, a television story regarding the Gulf War is not very likely to be easily assimilated by a person, who was born after the '90s, since this person does not hold own memories of what had happened. At the same time, viewers below 25 tend to prefer television programs which depict characters close to their age (Comstock & Scharrer, 2001). But as they grow up, while experiencing the pressure to develop 'grown up identity, they search for information concerning the grown up world, through television programs that depict grown up characters, with whom youngsters tend to identify themselves (Brown & Pardun, 2004).

In this perspective, the key issue for television, in order to maintain its power and credibility upon young citizens is its content, in a basis of strong legal control. For example, studies between the years of 2007 and 2009 showed that viewers' interest shifted from television to the Web, since they could easily watch programs of their choice before they were aired in television channels, i.e., new episodes of specific TV shows with high viewing percentages shown 'illegally' through specific websites (Lapan, 2009).

Research Methodology

For the purposes of the current study, a case study approach was employed where quantitative data was mainly collected through semi-structured

questionnaires (pre- and post questionnaires) (Creswell, 2003). The sample of the study consisted of senior university students, aged 18-25 years old, from two university departments: the Department of Education and the Department of Journalism. The experiment and the data collection process took place within two courses. Specifically, 20 students from the Department of Journalism attended the 'Directing TV Documentaries' course and 20 students from the Department of Primary Education attended the 'Educational Technology' course during Fall 2012. The journalism-major students were asked to get information regarding the USA Presidential Elections only via Television and the education-major students were asked to be informed only via the Web. There was no specific instruction concerning the Web source for the education-major students and, in this perspective, they were free to choose the Web source they preferred. The same applied for the journalism-major students; they were not directed which specific TV channels to watch (local, national or international). All students were kindly requested not to be informed by other sources than the one their group was assigned to. The experiment and the data collection process took place during Fall 2012 and specifically during October – December 2012. The two separate groups had no contact between them since the two departments operate in different campuses (of the same university) and in different cities of Cyprus. The particular subject was chosen (USA presidential elections) since it is a universal, of world-wide interest and it is given great focus and attention by the media in general. Additionally, the outcome of the USA presidential elections is of great influence for various countries around the world besides the USA and Cyprus is one of them (mainly because of issues concerning the effects of Turkish occupation of the Northern part of the country since 1974).

Description of the pre- and post-questionnaires

In order to examine students' prior knowledge regarding the USA presidential elections as well as the effects of Television and Web on information gaining and opinion's development pre- and post- questionnaires were given to students.

The pre-questionnaires consisted of 9 closed-type questions regarding the USA presidential elections.

The questions addressed the following issues/subjects: 1) status of knowledge about the USA presidential election; 2) sources of information; 3) which kind of internet source do they use for information purposes (i.e. websites, online newspapers, blogs, social networking sites, others); 4) USA presidential elections candidates; 5) current USA president and his political party; 6) which candidate is ahead the past few days at the polls; 7) the candidate to be elected and his positive influence on European issues; 8) the candidate to be elected and his positive influence on Cyprus-related issues; 9) current USA president and his policy/strategy in the following areas: economic, foreign policy, social services, education and health.

The post-questionnaire consisted of 6 closed-type questions. The questions addressed the following issues/subjects: 1) to define the source of information regarding USA presidential elections; 2) which kind of internet source did they use for information purposes (i.e. websites, online newspapers, blogs, social networking sites, others); 3) USA presidential elections winner; 4) the newly elected president and his influence regarding European issues; 5) the newly elected president and his influence regarding Cyprus-related issues; 6) the newly elected president and potential changes in his policy/strategy in the following areas: economic, foreign policy, social services, education and health.

At the end of both questionnaires, three demographics questions were included: gender, department and region.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics for all variables in pre- and post questionnaires were conducted and included the following: frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Given the small number of participants, the inferential statistics included non-parametric analysis in order to compare and contrast information gaining and opinion's development between the two separate groups (the students from the Department of Journalism and the students from

the Department of Education) and therefore identify the differences between the influence of television and Web 2.0. Specifically, the following non-parametric statistics were conducted. For the demographics (gender, region and department) between the pre- and post- data collection in both departments (separately) the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z Test was employed (Corder & Foreman, 2009). In order to examine the difference between the students' responses in pre- and post- data collection for each department separately the Kruskal-Wallis Test was employed (Corder & Foreman, 2009). The aforementioned test compared specific questions from the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire, i.e. question 7 (pre-questionnaire) to question 4 (post-questionnaire); question 8 (pre-questionnaire) to question 5 (post-questionnaire); question 9 (pre-questionnaire) to question 6 (post-questionnaire) – for each section. Finally, regarding the statistical significant differences between the two departments in questions 7, 8 and 9 the Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted. The purpose was not to generate the results however to examine and compare the influence of the source of information (TV Vs Web). The value of 0.005 was used as the threshold for statistically significant difference in both tests in information gaining and opinions' development.

Research results

The following analysis presents the results of the questionnaires in three parts, the descriptive statistics – pre-elections analysis, the descriptive statistics – post-elections analysis and the inferential statistics – non-parametric analysis.

Descriptive statistics - Pre-elections analysis

As the analysis revealed, most of the journalism-major students (70%) were in general informed concerning the USA Presidential campaigns before the elections take place and the same results were revealed regarding the education-major students (See Table 1).

	Department of Journalism students		Department of Education students	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	14	70%	13	65%
No	6	30%	7	35%
Total	20	100%	20	100%

Table 1 – Frequencies & Percentages: Do you consider yourself generally informed about the US presidential elections?

When the students were asked questions concerning the candidates in the USA presidential elections, 70% of the journalism-major students and 75% of the education-major students provided the correct answers, which were Barack Obama and Mitt Romney (See Table 2).

	Department of Journalism students		Department of Education students	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Correct answer (Barack Obama & Mitt Romney)	14	70%	15	75%
Wrong answer	6	30%	3	15%
No answer	-	-	2	10%
Total	20	100%	20	100%

Table 2 – Frequencies & Percentages: Who are the two major candidates in the USA presidential elections of 2012?

Respectively, when they were asked who the current USA President was and which was the political party that supported him, 95% in both groups of students gave the correct answer (Barack Obama and the Democratic political party), as shown in Table 3.

	Department of Journalism students		Department of Education students	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Correct answer (Barack Obama)	19	95%	19	95%
Wrong answer	1	5%	1	5%
Total	20	100%	20	100%

Table 3 – Frequencies & Percentages: Who is the current US President and which is the political party that supported him?

However, when the students were asked more thorough questions concerning the USA presidential elections, the answers between the two groups were considerably different, showing mainly superficial knowledge of the news and not a deeper and thorough knowledge of the issues addressed. For example, at the question concerning the candidate ahead according to the latest polls, the majority of the journalism-major students (70%) gave the correct answer (Barack Obama) and the majority of the education-major students (65%) gave the wrong answer (Mitt Romney), as shown in Table 4.

	Department of Journalism students		Department of Education students	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Correct answer (Barack Obama)	14	70%	5	25%
Wrong answer (Mitt Romney)	1	5%	13	65%
No answer	5	25%	2	10%
Total	20	100%	20	100%

Table 4 – Frequencies & Percentages: Which USA Presidential candidate is ahead, according to the latest polls?

On the other hand, as the questions became more opinion-related, requiring in-depth knowledge regarding the USA presidential elections, the students in both groups revealed to have formed an opinion, as shown in Table 5. For example, the majority of the journalism-major students (65%) supported that Barack Obama would have a more positive effect upon issues concerning the EU. Education-major students also formed an opinion, however half of them (50%) supported Barack Obama and 40% supported Mitt Romney. Only 10% of the education-major students and 35% of the journalism-major students did not have an opinion formed since they responded that they do not know who would have a positive effect upon issues concerning the EU and Cyprus.

	Department of Journalism students		Department of Education students	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Barack Obama	13	65%	8	40%
Mitt Romney	-	-	10	50%
I do not know	7	35%	2	10%
Total	20	100%	20	100%

Table 5 – Frequencies & Percentages: In your opinion, which candidate, if elected will have a more positive effect upon issues concerning the EU?

Similar results are presented in Table 6 in comparison to Table 5. Specifically, the students in both groups revealed to have formed an opinion, as shown in Table 6. For example, the vast majority of the education-major students (85%) supported that Mitt Romney would have a more positive effect upon issues concerning Cyprus. Journalism-major students also formed an opinion, however half of them (50%) supported Barack Obama and 10% supported Mitt Romney. Only 15% of the education-major students and 40% of the journalism-major students did not have an opinion formed since they responded that they do not know who would have a positive effect upon issues concerning Cyprus.

In both cases, the education-major students seemed to have formed a better understanding regarding the USA pre-election scenery. Emphasis must be given to the fact that Education major students appear to be different concerning the effects of the two candidates strategy. In this perspective, concerning European issues, the education major students (those followed the news through the Web

2.0), 50% of the students supported Barack Obama, whilst, when it comes to issues related to Cyprus, 85% supported that Mitt Romney would have had a positive effect. On the other hand, journalism major students (those that followed the news through television) appeared to be more consistent and stable in their opinion, since – in both cases – supported that Barack Obama would be the one with the positive effect upon issues concerning the EU and Cyprus.

	Department of Journalism students		Department of Education students	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Barack Obama	10	50%	-	-
Mitt Romney	2	10%	17	85%
I do not know	8	40%	3	15%
Total	20	100%	20	100%

Table 6 – Frequencies & Percentages: In your opinion, which candidate, if elected, will have a more positive effect upon issues concerning Cyprus?

Finally, when students were asked to report their opinion regarding Barack Obama's strategy and policy effectiveness in various sectors (economy, foreign policy, social services, education and health) in the last four years, their answer became even more perplexed, showing a superficial knowledge of news and not a deeper knowledge of issues, as shown in Table 7. Regarding the economy and foreign policy, the journalism-major students revealed to form an opinion, however regarding social services (35%), education (50%) and health (60%), many students responded that they did not know

As far as it concerns the education-major students, the results revealed that they did not form as strong opinion as the journalism-major students since lots of them responded that they did not know in all of the sectors: economy (35%), foreign policy (40%), social services (65%), education (65%) and health (70%).

Sector	Department of Journalism students			Department of Education students		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
Economy	35%	40%	-	35%	30%	35%
Foreign Policy	50%	20%	-	30%	30%	40%
Social Services	65%	-	35%	20%	15%	65%
Education	40%	10%	50%	30%	5%	65%
Health	30%	10%	60%	20%	10%	70%

Table 7 - Frequencies & Percentages: In your opinion, do you believe that the current US President followed an effective policy in the following sectors?

Descriptive Statistics - Post-elections analysis

The post election research was conducted in the same groups of students with a significant variation factor. As aforementioned the journalism-major students

were instructed to follow the election news through Television, whilst the education-major students through the Web. There was no specific instruction concerning the Web sources for the education students and, in this perspective, they were free to choose the source they preferred. As Table 8 shows, the majority of the education-major students chose to visit social networks (60%). The journalism-major students were not asked to report the television channels viewed.

Internet Source of Information	Frequency	%
Websites (i.e. online newspapers)	5	25%
Blogs	3	15%
Social networks	12	60%
Total	20	100%

Table 8 – Frequencies & Percentages: Which Internet source did you choose for your information concerning the US Presidential elections of 2012?

When they were asked about the winner of the USA Presidential elections, the vast majority of the students gave the correct answer (100% of the journalism-major students and 90% of the education-major students), although there was a small number of students that provided the wrong answer (10%). Those students belonged to the group that followed the news through Internet sources that is the education-major students.

Regarding the influence of the new USA President that was expected to have upon issues regarding the EU, most of the students that followed the news through television (the journalism-major students) supported that it would be positive (20% totally agreed and 50% probably agreed), whilst students that followed the news through the Web (the education-major students) did not seem to develop a specific opinion. Given the results shown in Table 9, half of the students (50%) responded that they did not know and 40% responded that most probably the new USA president would positively influence EU related concerns (See Table 9).

	Department of Journalism students	Department of Education students
Yes	20%	-
Probably yes	55%	40%
I don't know	20%	50%
Probably no	5%	5%
No	-	5%
Total	100%	100%

Table 9 – Percentages & Frequencies: In your opinion, do you believe that the new US President will have a positive influence upon issues regarding the EU?

Accordingly, regarding the influence the new USA President was expected to have upon issues that concern Cyprus the same results as the previous question were revealed. Specifically, the journalism-major students (followed TV channels) suggested that it would be positive since 15% responded “Yes” and 45% responded “Probably Yes”. However, once more, the education-major

students (followed Internet sources) did not seem to form a specific opinion since half of them responded “I do not know” and 30% responded “Probably Yes” (See Table 10).

	Department of Journalism students	Department of Education students
Yes	15%	-
Probably yes	45%	30%
I don't know	20%	50%
Probably no	10%	10%
No	10%	10%
Total	100%	100%

Table 10 – Frequencies & Percentages: In your opinion, do you believe that the new US President will have positive influence upon issues that concern Cyprus?

Finally, when students were asked to provide their opinions whether the new USA President would proceed in changes concerning his strategy and policy in various sectors (economy, foreign policy, social services, education and health), once more has been revealed that the education-major students were not very well informed in order to develop an opinion regarding the presidential elections since half of them responded that they did not know if the new US president would have a positive influence upon issues regarding Cyprus. The journalism-major students revealed to form a better opinion regarding the subject under investigation since fewer students (20%) responded that they did not know.

In contrast with the pre-test where students' opinions between the two majors were differentiated regarding the influence of the US president regarding EU and Cyprus issues; at the post-test a consistency is revealed. Similar percentages and in some cases same percentages were given by students within the same major about the influence of the US presidents regarding EU and Cyprus issues (see Table 11).

	Department of Journalism students			Department of Education students		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
Economy	80%	-	20%	40%	15%	45%
Foreign Policy	60%	15%	25%	40%	10%	50%
Social Services	55%	5%	40%	35%	15%	50%
Education	45%	10%	45%	35%	5%	60%
Health	50%	-	50%	20%	10%	70%

Table 11 – Percentages – Frequencies: Do you think that the new US President will proceed in changes of policy concerning the following sectors?

Inferential Analysis - Non parametric statistics

Although the descriptive frequencies analysis above shows minor differences in the opinions formed between the two groups, the inferential analysis revealed no statistical significant differences between the journalism-major and the education-

major students; thus indicating that in no way can lead to the assumption that the source of information (TV or the Web) plays a significant role in the information gaining and opinions' development.

As aforementioned, in order to examine the difference between the students' responses in pre- and post- questionnaires for each department separately the Kruskal-Wallis Test was employed. Along the same lines, the analysis revealed no statistical significant differences between existed knowledge (prior the elections) and the knowledge acquired through various sources after the elections. Beginning with the journalism-major students no statistical significant differences revealed between the opinions existed and opinions formed regarding Barack Obama's (former president) influence upon EU issues ($x^2=0.511$, $df=2$, $p=0.744$) and upon Cyprus issues ($x^2=1.032$, $df=2$, $p=0.597$) (pre- and post measurements). The same results revealed regarding the education-major students where no statistical significant differences revealed between the opinions existed and opinions formed regarding Barack Obama's (former president) influence upon EU issues ($x^2=0.638$, $df=1$, $p=0.425$) and upon Cyprus issues ($x^2=0.106$, $df=1$, $p=0.744$) (pre- and post measurements).

Additionally, there were no statistical significant differences regarding the opinions existed and the opinions formed between pre and post election results within the journalism-major students regarding the former and expected strategy and policy of the USA president regarding economy ($x^2=1.033$, $df=2$, $p=0.597$), foreign policy ($x^2=1.411$, $df=2$, $p=0.494$), social service ($x^2=3.291$, $df=2$, $p=0.141$), education ($x^2=1.801$, $df=1$, $p=0.180$) and health ($x^2=1.714$, $df=1$, $p=0.191$) (pre and post measurements). The same results revealed as far as it concerns the education-major students. Specifically, there were no statistical significant differences regarding the opinions existed and the opinions formed between pre and post election results within the education-major students regarding the former and expected strategy and policy of the USA president regarding economy ($x^2=3.176$, $df=2$, $p=0.204$), foreign policy ($x^2=0.651$, $df=2$, $p=0.722$), social service ($x^2=0.615$, $df=2$, $p=0.735$), education ($x^2=1.713$, $df=2$, $p=0.425$) and health ($x^2=0.152$, $df=2$, $p=0.927$) (pre and post measurements).

Specifically, between the two groups of students (journalism-major and education-major), as far the pre- election analysis is concerned; the Kruskal-

Wallis Test showed no statistical significant differences between the opinions formed regarding Barack Obama's (former president) influence upon EU issues and source of information (TV vs Internet) ($\chi^2=0.106$, $df=1$, $p=0.744$) as well as upon issues related to Cyprus and source of information (TV vs Internet) ($\chi^2=0.205$, $df=1$, $p=0.651$).

Accordingly, the pre-test analysis between the two groups of students (journal-major and education-major students) reached the same conclusion as regards to Barack Obama's (former president) strategy and policy about economy ($\chi^2=0.705$, $df=2$, $p=0.703$), education ($\chi^2=4.234$, $df=2$, $p=0.120$), foreign policy ($\chi^2=8.115$, $df=2$, $p=0.017$), health ($\chi^2=1.200$, $df=2$, $p=0.549$), social services policy ($\chi^2=0.096$, $df=2$, $p=0.953$) and source of information (TV Vs Internet).

As far as the post-election analysis is concerned, the Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed no statistical significant differences in opinions formed regarding the new President's influence upon EU issues and source of information ($\chi^2=2.419$, $df=3$, $p=0.490$) as well as regarding Cyprus-related issues and source of information ($\chi^2=1.599$, $df=3$, $p=0.660$). Finally, the analysis revealed the same results regarding opinions formed about the new President's influence upon his strategy and policy on various sectors and source of information (TV vs Internet): economy ($\chi^2=1.930$, $df=2$, $p=0.381$), education ($\chi^2=1.206$, $df=2$, $p=0.547$), foreign policy ($\chi^2=2.955$, $df=2$, $p=0.228$), health policy ($\chi^2=2.171$, $df=2$, $p=0.338$) and social services ($\chi^2=0.903$, $df=2$, $p=0.637$).

Finally, the Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Z test showed that regarding pre-measurements there were statistically significant differences due to gender ($p=0.002$ and $p=0.0011$, respectively) and region ($p=0.000$ and $p=0.000$ respectively) within education-major students and within journalism-major students. The same results revealed regarding post-measurements; there were statistically significant differences due to gender ($p=0.002$ and $p=0.000$, respectively) and region ($p=0.000$ and $p=0.000$ respectively) within education-major students and within journalism-major students. In other words, there seems to be an interrelation between gender, region of living and overall knowledge concerning the USA elections, rather than source of information and overall knowledge of the subject.

Finally, between the two groups of students (journalism-major and education-major), or in other words the source of information, there were no statistical significant differences due to gender ($p=1.000$) and region (urban Vs rural) ($p=1.000$) as far as it concerns the pre-measurements. However, statistical significant differences revealed to exist due to gender regarding post-measurements ($p= 0.002$) and no statistical significant differences due to region ($p=0.988$).

Discussion

As far as the first and second research questions are concerned, it can be suggested that even though young people search for political information through the Web, it does not necessarily mean they can easily assimilate or integrate this information into their knowledge and opinions (Enyon & Malmberg, 2011), as earlier analysed in the theoretical framework. When it comes to comparing TV to the Web, as sources of information, the analysis has shown that young people watch television while also accessing the Web and, in this perspective, media multitasking has become the modal form of news consumption, switching their attention between the two media at a high rate (Brasel & Gips, 2011).

In other words, the results of this study suggest that university students do not separate TV from the Web, as sources of valid information. This means that it might not be possible to separate the two media in terms of information gaining and opinions' development, since they seem to co-exist and be interconnected and interrelated although it might be implied that university students choose to read different kinds of news from TV and the Web 2.0, based on their interests. Accordingly their interests can be formed by factors such as place of origin or content of studies. All these can explain the differences detected among journalism-major and education-major students.

Furthermore, the results of this study seem to be in alignment with Brown and Pardun (2004) results, suggesting that as older as someone is (above 40), he/she is likely to understand and assimilate news shown on the TV faster and easier than a younger person (below 25). The aforementioned is supported since

both categories of students (all below the age of 25) seemed to appear difficulties to assimilate the information gained either by TV or through the Web into their own knowledge. For example, most of them could answer correctly in question regarding current information (i.e., the winner of the election or the results of the polls). However, both categories of students had difficulties answering questions regarding the connection of US presidential policy and its relation to the EU issues or Cyprus issues, since they needed to have prior knowledge to the subject in order to critically assess the current situation.

Finally, as far as the third research question is concerned, gender and place of origin (rural – urban areas) seem to gain more ground when it comes to assimilating thorough knowledge and forming critical arguments about timeliness information. In the case of Cyprus, the place of origin can affect access to the Web or access to specific TV channels. In accordance, gender is important since it seems to characterize the level of interest for specific kind of information.

Conclusions

The results of this study suggest that a combination of the two media (TV and Web 2.0) might be the best approach on information gaining and opinions' development for young individuals. It was anticipated that journalism students would have presented a better understanding of issues concerning the international timeliness, especially information related to elections, due to prior knowledge and subject of study. However, as indicated by this research, this factor plays a minor role when it comes to forming a deeper and thorough opinion about issues of reality, although this group of students seemed to have a slightly better knowledge of the political reality (as shown in the first part of the analysis above).

In addition, the data deriving from this research indicate that the source of information (TV – Web) plays a minor role in the formation of critical arguments concerning the current international environment, as this is presented through the different forms of media. Some scholars might argue that a wider international sample of students might lead to safer conclusions. However, special attention

should be drawn to the fact that the content of journalistic products in television and the web (or other forms of media) are interrelated, since the two sources ‘feed’ each other with information and most of the times journalistic products are copied in the different sources (Dumenco, 2012; Maniou, 2013). In the Cypriot news environment this seems to be a common practice, since the various media belong to the same media enterprises/networks and this means that the same journalists are working for a television station, a web page, etc, and the same product is ‘published’ over and over again in different sources of information. In example, even the videos posted in the web and the social media, are products of local/national television stations. The overwhelming economic crisis in the Cypriot media environment adds further limitations in this situation, since a small number of journalists is currently trying to cover a large variety of information and most of the times this leads to superficial coverage of news or news products directly reproduced from national or international news agencies.

In order to reach safer conclusions regarding the influence of the source of information, further study needs to take place concerning the content of the different media that is offered to the public. The study’s results provide the foundation for further research to be conducted where a larger sample would be involved as well as three different groups of participants would be tested; the influence of TV, Web 2.0 and a combination of the two is the next step in the process of this research, since a comparison of these three different groups of participants can lead to safer conclusions.

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