2012-03-26

The Fox News Effect: Does Polarized News-Media Fill Traditional News Roles?

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The Fox News Effect
Does Polarized News-Media Fill Traditional News Roles?
A Research Project Conducted by Braden Wayne Johnson
With Special Help from Professor Richard Davis of Brigham Young University

Consumers of Polarized News:
Those who describe their viewing habits of one of the following shows as frequent.

- The Sean Hannity Show
- The Rush Limbaugh Show
- The O’Reilly Factor
- The Glenn Beck Program
- Countdown with Keith Olbermann
- Hardball with Chris Matthews
- The Rachel Maddow Show
- The Daily Show with John Stewart

Non-Consumers of Polarized News:
Those who describe their viewing habits of all of the previous shows as rarely.

How do media consumers who view polarized media compare with those who don’t?

Current Events Knowledge

- Consumers of Polarized Media are the most likely to score well on a current events test, by a significant margin.
- All means are statistically different at a 95% confidence level which gives us reason to believe that the average Consumer will always score higher than the average Non-Consumer.

Newspaper Readership

- Consumers of Polarized Media are the most likely to read a newspaper daily, by a moderate margin.
- Consumers of Polarized Media and the Survey average are not statistically different at a 95% confidence level which gives us reason to doubt that the average Consumer will always score higher than the survey average.

Voter Registration Status

- Consumers of Polarized Media are the most likely to be registered to vote, by a significant margin.
- All means are statistically different at a 95% confidence level which gives us reason to believe that the average Consumer will always score higher than the average Non-Consumer.

This study seeks to analyze whether or not polarized news has beneficial effects on its consumers. Using a 2010 media survey conducted by the Pew Media Center, I group the respondents into categories representing those who view polarized media (n=780) and those who do not (n=760). I then test each group against the mean (n=3,007) in three different measures and compare the results. I find that consumers of polarized media are more likely to have a working knowledge of current events, read the newspaper daily, and register to vote.