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MEDIA USE AND HAPPINESS IN SERBIA**

Abstract

The Annual Attitude Examination Survey consisting of 366 questions was deployed on nationally representative sample in Serbia to get 2608 responses on the Oxford Happiness Inventory and Multiple Lickert scale questions concerning attitudes, fears, media use and closeness of different social categories to the participants. Research results confirm all hypotheses. Quantity of television use is negatively correlated to happiness. As for the quality of newspapers use, those consuming contents such as culture, sports and IT are happier than others. When looking at television use, individuals that prefer programs such as cartoons, culture, music, fashion, science, IT and sports are happier than others. This is the first research examining relationship of happiness and quality of media use. Future research should encompass data from online social networks in order to see how positive and negative emotions of media users are related to media content they are exposed to.

Keywords: Happiness, Media Use, Television, Newspaper, Serbia

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INTRODUCTION

Different inquiries have been dealing with personality, socio-economic and demographic variables as indicators of happiness (subjective well-being). One of the main findings is that quality relationships are connected with happier and healthier lives (Vaillant 2003). On the other hand, literature on relationship between media use and happiness is scarce. Also, happiness has not been the topic of previous research inquiries in Serbia.

Negative social well-being is positively associated with levels of uses of media that are essentially about interpersonal interaction such as phone and online communication, as well as uses of media that are not, like video, music, and reading (Pea et al. 2012, 327–36). Authors find video use, media multitasking is particularly strongly associated with negative social well-being indicators. On the other hand, they find face-to-face communication strongly associated with positive social well-being.

High overall electronic media use such as television, video games, computers and telephone is associated with poorer behavior, health status and health-related quality of life. Researchers find a favorable association between computer use and psychological distress, whereas high video game use was associated with poorer health status, health-related quality of life, global health, and depression (Mathers et al. 2009, 307–14).

Both older and newer media such as television, music, movies, magazines, the Internet, cell phones and social networking contribute to aggressive behavior, disordered eating, distorted ideas about relationships, earlier sexual behavior, as well as underage drinking and tobacco and drug use (Brown and Bobkowski 2011, 95–113). They also conclude that some of the early fears such as cyber-bullying media addiction and sexual predators may not be as problematic as initially thought, but can be problematic for those already at high risk.

Older people enjoy watching TV more and spend more time in front of a television set than young adults, while greater TV use is related to lower life satisfaction (Depp et al. 2010, 173–178).

Interestingly, the effect of income on life satisfaction is significantly smaller for heavy television viewers than for occasional viewers (Bruni and Stanca 2006, 209–225). Researchers conclude that increasing role of television viewing in modern society raises material aspirations, but at the same time contributes to offset the effect of higher income on personal happiness. The effect of higher income on happiness is offset by lower consumption of relational goods, with television playing a significant role in explaining under consumption of relationality (Bruni and Stanca 2008, 506–528).

On the other hand, researchers conclude that blogging may improve new mothers' well-being, as they feel more connected to the world outside their home through the Internet (McDaniel, Coyne and Holmes 2011, 1509–1517).

Lonely individuals are likely to develop strong compulsive Internet use behavior harming significant activities such as work, school, or significant relationships instead of relieving their original problems (Kim, LaRose and Peng 2009, 451–5). Researchers conclude Internet use isolate individuals from healthy social activities and lead them into more loneliness.

Although time spent on-line is not associated with daily well-being, the closeness of instant message communication partners was associated with daily social anxiety and loneliness in school (Gross, Juvonen, and Gable 2002, 75–90).

Gaming and entertainment usage of Internet is found to predict perceived social support, introversion and happiness, while use of the Internet for mischief-related activities such as downloading without payment, fraud and snooping is associated with lower levels of happiness and social support (Mitchell et al. 2011, 1857–1861).

Research suggests that increased levels of electronic media use predicted poorer well-being outcomes, while the likelihood of adverse outcomes in children ranged from a 1.2- to 2.0-increase for emotional problems and poorer family functioning for each additional hour of television viewing or e-game/computer use depending on the outcome examined (Hinkley et al. 2014, 485–92). Researchers conclude that higher levels of early childhood media

use are associated with children being at risk for poorer outcomes with some indicators of happiness.

While estimating a microeconomic life satisfaction function researchers find little support for the claim that television viewing, in general, has a negative impact on individual happiness (Kataria and Regner 2011, 53–58).

Finally, another research shows that media addiction increases with those who use media for fun, level of media addiction increases with users of new media and more interactive and less practical online applications such as social networks and chat are more addictive (Bojić and Marie 2017, 33–48). When looking into nature of new and old media addiction may be related to number of senses grabbed by media and media features, such as live broadcasting and interactivity.

There has been no research inquiry into relationship of specific television and newspaper contents and happiness. Therefore, these aspects of relationship between media and happiness will be explored by the following research questions and hypotheses.

Question 1. What is the relationship between quantity of media use and happiness?

Hypothesis 1. Quantity of TV use will be positively correlated with happiness.

Question 2. What is the relationship between quality of television and newspapers use and happiness?

Hypothesis 2. Preference of the following content in newspaper will be positively correlated with happiness: Culture: film, theater, literature; Basketball; Popular science, new discoveries, scientific findings, etc.; Tech programs focusing on mobile phone technology; and Tech programs focusing on IT in general.

Hypothesis 3. Preference of the following content on television will be positively correlated with happiness: Children programs; Culture: film, theater, literature; Music - classic, jazz, rock, pop...; Fashion programs; Basketball; Popular science, new discoveries, scientific findings, etc.; and Tech programs focusing on mobile phone technology.

METHODS

Subjects

TNS Medium Gallup Belgrade conducted The Attitude Examination Survey by - Public Opinion in November of 2009. Sections of this survey are Attitudes and Statements, Daily Activities, Emotions and Values, Satisfaction, Media, Relationship with Others, Society, and Politics, Demographics and Household.

As a part of their Media Analytics course students of the Faculty for Culture and Media had an assignment to conduct interviews with citizens. Out of those asked to be interviewed 75% responded positively. Duration of an average interview was 25 min. The interviewing had been done in cities such as Novi Sad, Belgrade, and Nis and in villages as well. Students provided 2966 interview inputs. After primary consideration, multistage random sample of 2608 subjects was valid. General Serbian population older than 15 years of age was represented by this sample.

Procedure and Measurements

Formation of the sample is done in three steps: first, sample points are randomly chosen from the lists of voting stations. Statistical database of voting points is used as a source for selection, which is conducted randomly (Branković, 2014). Each sample point received ten random respondents. Survey participants were chosen randomly and systematically.

Questionnaires/scales were deployed to gather data for the investigation. Confidentiality of the investigation was assured for each survey participant. They received a booklet with questionnaires, which they were asked to complete

Age, gender, marital status, levels of income and education were recorded for each of survey participants. Oxford Happiness Inventory (Argyle, Martin, and Crossland 1989, 189–247) was completed by Participants. Attitudes, fears, media use, and closeness were accessed by employing Multiple Lickert scale self-report inventory questions.

Analytical procedures

Statistical software was used to perform the analysis of data. Calculation of Pearson correlations was done to examine significance and strength of relationships. Following this, relationships were examined in more details by using multiple regressions, therefore providing final conclusions.

Survey questions

List of questions used in the survey is presented below given the fact that happiness measurements were brought into relationship with answers to survey questions that indicate certain aspects of personality.

Quantity of media use

Question A2 is: how much time in the past 24 hours have you spent in the following activities (express this in minutes; if you haven't had certain activity write zero): 1. watching TV; 2. listening to radio; 3. reading newspapers; 4. speaking on mobile phone, including texting; 5. talking on stable phone; 6. speaking face to face with other people and 7. Using Internet (e-mail and messaging apps).

Quality of television and newspapers use – preference of content

Question M3 is: Media contents that can be consumed through TV and in newspapers are listed in the following table. Please grade how much each of these thematic media programs is attractive to you. Provide grades for each of them on scale from 1 to 5, in which 1 means content is repulsive to you, while 5 means it is attractive to you – answer separately for TV and for newspaper contents. Listed are segments for grading by survey participants in terms of television and newspapers use: 1. Politics – foreign affairs; 2. Politics – internal issues; 3. Economics, business, startup, and entrepreneurship; 4. Social issues; 5. Discovering unknown details about important events from recent and distant history; 6. Criminal; 7. Football; 8. Basketball; 9. Tennis; 10. Other kinds of sport

(boxing, handball, volleyball, water polo...); 11. Travel programs about various destinations, countries and cultures and similar; 12. Celebrity reports from different events, concerts, parties, etc.; 13. Porn – sex; 14. Humor (caricatures, jokes, anecdotes about celebrities); 15. Celebrity gossip; 16. Mysteries and paranormal activities; 17. Popular science, new discoveries, scientific findings, etc.; 18. Religious topics; 19. Automobiles; 20. Tech programs focusing on IT in general; 21. Tech programs focusing on mobile phone technology; 22. Health; 23. Culture: film, theater, literature; and 24. Ads.

Quality of television use - preference of content

Question M3 is: Media contents that can be consumed through TV and in newspapers are listed in the following table. Please grade how much each of these thematic media programs is attractive to you. Provide grades for each of them on scale from 1 to 5, in which 1 means content is repulsive to you, while 5 means it is attractive to you – answer separately for TV and for newspaper contents. Listed are segments for grading by survey participants in terms of television use: 25. Domestic series; 26. Latin series; 27. Comedy series, etc.; 28. Domestic films; 29. Foreign films: action, criminal; 30. Foreign films: dramas, romantic comedies; 31. News; 32. Political talk programs; 33. Show programs such as talk shows and quizzes; 34. Fashion programs; 35. Sports broadcasts and other sports programs; 36. Educational programs; 37. Children programs; 38. Reality show programs; 39. Music (classic, jazz, rock, pop...); 40. Music (country music); and 41. Folk music.

RESULTS

Quantity of media use

Significant positive correlation of weak strength has been found between feeling of happiness (OHI) and A2/1 in relation of quantity of TV use ($r=-.160$, $p<.000$, $n=2406$).

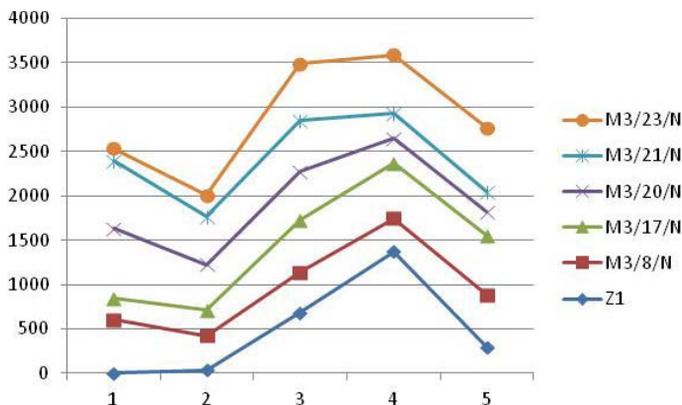
Correlations have not been found between feeling of happiness (OHI) and the following variables: A2/2 in relation to the “lis-

tening to the radio”, A2/3 in relation to the “reading newspapers”, A2/4 in relation to the “speaking on a mobile phone, including texting”, A2/5 in relation to the “talking on stable phone”, A2/6 in relation to the “speaking face to face with other people” and A2/7 in relation to the “using Internet (e-mail and messaging apps)”.

Quality of newspapers use – preference of content

Significant positive correlations of weak strength have been found between feeling of happiness (OHI) and the following variables: M3/23/N in relation to the “Culture: film, theater, literature” ($r=.158, p<.000, n=2404$), M3/8/N in relation to the “Basketball” ($r=.118, p<.000, n=2405$), M3/17/N in relation to the “Popular science, new discoveries, scientific findings etc.” ($r=.116, p<.000, n=2403$), M3/21/N in relation to the “Tech programs focusing on mobile phone technology” ($r=.107, p<.000, n=2404$) and M3/20/N in relation to the “Tech programs focusing on IT in general” ($r=.106, p<.000, n=2404$). Answers on questions relating to quality of newspapers use are presented on Figure 1.

Figure. 1. Feeling of happiness (OHI) is correlated to different kinds of newspaper use. Survey answers on OHI, M3/8/N, M3/17/N, M3/20/N, M3/21/N and M3/23/N are presented as stacked line graph in which number of answers is presented on Y axis, while answers (1 to 5) are presented on X axis.



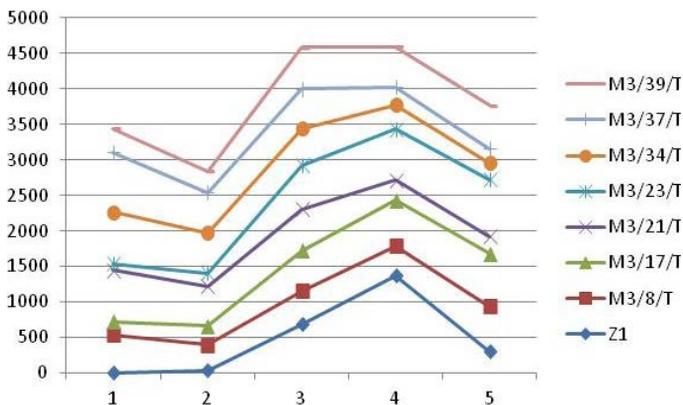
Source: Processed by the author

Correlations have not been found between the feeling of happiness (OHI) and the following variables: M3/1/N in relation to the “Politics – foreign affairs”, M3/2/N in relation to the “Politics – internal issues”, M3/3/N in relation to the “Economics, business, startup and entrepreneurship”, M3/4/N in relation to the “Social issues”, M3/5/N in relation to the “Discovering unknown details about important events from recent and distant history”, M3/6/N in relation to the “Criminal”, M3/7/N in relation to the “Football”, M3/9/N in relation to the “Tennis”, M3/10/N in relation to the “Other kinds of sport (boxing, handball, volleyball, water polo...)”, M3/11/N in relation to the “Travel programs about various destinations, countries and cultures and similar”, M3/12/N in relation to the “Celebrity reports from different events, concerts, parties etc.”, M3/13/N in relation to the “Porn – sex”, M3/14/N in relation to the “Humor (caricatures, jokes, anecdotes about celebrities)”, M3/15/N in relation to the “Celebrity gossip”, M3/16/N in relation to the “Mysteries and paranormal activities”, M3/18/N in relation to the “Religious topics”, M3/19/N in relation to the “Automobiles”, M3/22/N in relation to the “Health” and M3/24/N in relation to the “Ads”.

Quality of television use - preference of content

Significant positive correlations of weak strength have been found between feeling of happiness (OHI) and the following variables: M3/37/T in relation to the “Children programs” ($r=.172$, $p<.000$, $n=2406$), M3/23/T in relation to the “Culture: film, theater, literature” ($r=.153$, $p<.000$, $n=2406$), M3/39/T in relation to the “Music - classic, jazz, rock, pop...” ($r=.148$, $p<.000$, $n=2406$), M3/34/T in relation to the “Fashion programs” ($r=.123$, $p<.000$, $n=2406$), M3/8/T “Basketball” ($r=.117$, $p<.000$, $n=2405$), M3/17/T in relation to the “Popular science, new discoveries, scientific findings etc.” ($r=.107$, $p<.000$, $n=2404$) and M3/21/T in relation to the “Tech programs focusing on mobile phone technology” ($r=.104$, $p<.000$, $n=2405$). Answers on questions relating to quality of television use and happiness are presented on Figure 2.

Figure. 2. Feeling of happiness (OHI) is correlated to certain kinds of television use (M3). Survey answers on OHI, M3/8/T/T, M3/17/T, M3/21/T, M3/23/T, M3/34/T, M3/37/T and M3/39/T are presented as stacked line graph in which number of answers is presented on Y axis, while answers (1 to 5) are presented on X axis.



Source: Processed by the author

Correlations have not been found between the feeling of happiness (OHI) and the following variables: M3/25/T in relation to the “Domestic series; M3/26/T Latin series”, M3/27/T in relation to the “Comedy series, etc.; M3/28/T Domestic films”, M3/29/T in relation to the “Foreign films: action, criminal”, M3/30/T in relation to the “Foreign films: dramas, romantic comedies”, M3/31/T in relation to the “News”, M3/32/T in relation to the “Political talk programs”, M3/33/T in relation to the “Show programs such as talk shows and quizzes”, M3/35/T in relation to the “Sports broadcasts and other sports programs”, M3/36/T in relation to the “Educational programs”, M3/38/T in relation to the “Reality show programs”, M3/40/T in relation to the “Music (country music)” and M3/41/T in relation to the “Folk music”.

DISCUSSION

All hypotheses of this inquiry are confirmed. It may be possible to conclude that unhappy individuals tend to watch TV the most. TV provides information and entertainment, among other

functions (Frey and Benesch 2008, 413–424). However, excessive consumption of television can lead to some negative effects, which are easily overseen. One these effects may be lack of time spent with family and friends. Individuals that watch lots of TV tend to have less social contacts and poorer relationships. This may be one of the reasons for negative correlation of TV consumption and happiness.

As for quality of television and newspapers use, those consuming contents such as culture, sport and IT are happier than others. The main reason why people who follow these types of contents may be generally happier is because of the content itself. Information Technology related contents can be about practical information related to work activities. Sport is mostly related to healthy physical activities. Finally, culture contents are based on creativity and imagination. These issues are generally “brighter ones”, when compared to others in media. They are related to less negative news, while having more positive connotation. Issues in culture, sport and IT are often related to notions such as achievement and success.

On the other hand, research has also shown lack of correlations between happiness and topics such as politics, crime and social issues. According to anecdotal evidence, media tend to put an emphasis on negative news. Individuals that are already in depressive states may prefer to consume negative news. Other group of intensive TV consumers may be simply more susceptible to this kind of content because of some personal traits. In other words, those individuals that are already less happy and more susceptible and information-hungry than others may be attracted to negative media content. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that consumption of media content makes individuals more unhappy. On the other side, there are scientific indications that negative content can provoke spree of negative emotions. Media may be engraving different forms of fear making their consumers constantly feel anxious and always concerned for themselves and others. This notion needs further scientific exploration, but basically this would mean that although people start intensive media use because they are already in negative mood or personally susceptible for negative information, media consumption may increase levels of

negative emotions. Negativity bias implies that negative content has a much greater impact on a person's condition than neutral or positive. There are already some research results related to the theory of negativity bias implicating that negative emotions that spread via social media contribute to the rise of negative emotions in a society (Rozin and Royzman, 2001).

When looking at the television only, those that consume thematic programs such as cartoons, culture, music, fashion, science, IT and sports are happier than others. Similar to explanation related to newspapers, reason for this may be that these contents are relaxing and designed in such a way to free people from stress and daily concerns. Also, there are indications that humoristic undertone of certain programs contributes to its popularity. Scholars in the field of political communication have confirmed that humor has been significantly understudied in communication studies, given the fact that it can have enormous effects on electorate and a society as a whole (Boukes, 2019). Therefore, humorous and satirical TV shows should be explored in relation happiness and media use.

Contribution of this research may be in examination of the relationship between happiness and specific media contents, highlighting what happier people love to watch and read.

At the same time, adequate research inquiry of social media posts should be conducted in order to see how media contents affect positive and negative emotions as well as other psychometric parameters of exposed social media users.

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