



Impact of ISPR's Films and Dramas on the Perception of Youth about the Armed Forces of Pakistan

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Abstract

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), being the representative of the armed forces of Pakistan - Army, Air Force, and Navy has been investing commendable efforts to promote the positive national image of Pakistan and to generate goodwill among the public, particularly youth, through its productions such as drama, telefilm/film and national songs. This study has investigated the impact of ISPR's productions, particularly films and dramas, on the perception of youth towards the armed forces of Pakistan. Concluding Elaboration likelihood model, employing simple random sampling technique. The findings of Spearman's Correlation coefficient for the proposed hypothesis that there are significant effects of ISPR productions on youngsters as potential consumers and there is a significant relationship between Exposure to ISPR productions and positive perception of Armed forces in youngsters have been validated by 0.00 significant values. It has been analyzed that the production of ISPR influences, changes, and shapes the perception of youth about their armed forces positively. They are influential enough to generate loyalty, feelings of patriotism, and nationalism among them towards their armed forces and state.

Keywords

ISPR, Drama, Telefilm/Film, National Songs, Perception, Youth, Armed Forces

Introduction

Digital media has attained a central place in terms of the acquisition of information, entertainment, and exploration among youngsters (Anderson & Jiang 2018). Youth, being active users of media, be it traditional or social, are the consumers most affected by its content. They considerably interact with various kinds of media, be it dramas, telefilms, films, or songs, and their heavy consumption makes them the most influenced by them. Their opinions and perceptions are impressively shaped by the content they watch on media. Thus, Pakistani youth from urban or rural backgrounds enthusiastically consume media (Dattoo, 2010). However, not only the traditional but also the institutional media in Pakistan produce certain content that effectively influences and shapes the perceptions of Pakistani youth.

The armed forces of Pakistan, deeming themselves responsible, have been working for the image building of the country since 1947. The institution has made gradual yet perceptible progress in shaping the perception of the global community about Pakistan in the international arena. Armed forces, particularly Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), have been enthusiastically and exceptionally working to build a positive image for the Armed Forces. ISPR was established in 1949 as the media wing department of the Pak Army responsible for media management, image building, and narrative construction in order to foster a trustable relationship between the institute and the community. ISPR has produced popular media content, including movies, dramas, songs, and documentaries, to promote the image of the country and its forces (Rai & Azam, 2023).

Hussain et al (2019) applauded ISPR for its remarkable media productions by acknowledging that ISPR has been producing historical dramas such as Alpha Bravo Charlie, The Price of Peace, The Glorious Resolve, Sounds of Silence, Ye Ghazi, Ragon Main Jitna Khoon ha and many others which proved to be remarkable media productions of Army to make people emotionally connected to their homeland and to strengthen their love for Armed forces. In addition to improving the perception of the international community regarding Pakistan, building and maintaining the perception of its own youth about its armed forces is equally important. For that purpose, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), being the representative of the armed forces of Pakistan, has been making efforts to make the country's youth aware of the workings of its armed forces. Moreover, the productions of ISPR, including dramas, films/telefilms, documentaries national songs, etc. also tend to generate loyalty among the Pakistani youth towards its armed forces

ISPR has persistently worked to maintain a positive image of the country and its forces, ranging from the image building post-Kargil (1999) to the preceding events of the Army's actions in military regimes and counter-terrorism operations. The two major strategic approaches that have been employed by ISPR media content have been categorized as 1) positive-aggressive and 2) emotional. Positive, aggressive media content included the presentation of armed strength through weapons, and emotional content included the tributes to sacrifices of heroes for their nation and homeland (Makhlaiuk, 2023).

Remarkably, ISPR has played a significant role in nation branding, image building, and narrative formation not only at the national level but also at the international level. The negative image of Pakistan for being linked with extremism, intolerance, staleness, and radicalization has been incredibly shaken off by ISPR's image branding. Kayani (2022) acknowledged that ISPR has blended media strategies of national branding and public diplomacy in order to develop and promote a positive image of Pakistan at both national and global levels.

Hussain and Nazar (2022) reported that it has always been among the top priorities of senior military personnel to remodel ISPR, the media wing of the Pakistan Army, to meet the challenges of media war and generate result-oriented content. The core objectives of investing intense efforts in ISPR's operations are to ensure positive image building and combat the challenges of warfare in both the field and media.

Musarrat et al. (2021) investigated the effects of ISPR productions broadcasted during the war against terror on youngsters of Pakistan. The study hypothesized that ISPR played a commendable role in enhancing motivational levels, fostering a positive image of Pakistan, and feelings of patriotism and nationalism in youth. The study also explored the contributions of ISPR to encourage young Pakistanis to join the Armed forces. Employing a cross-sectional survey as a research method and non-probability purposive sampling, the study concluded that ISPR's media content instilled a fervent attitude of youngsters toward nationalism and the Pak army.

The recent productions of ISPR titled 'Ehd -e- Wafa, Aik thi Marium, Ek ha Nigaar, Laal, Sinf-e-than in the last decade have efficiently portrayed the sacrifices that armed forces – Army, Air Force, and Navy – made for the sake of our beloved homeland and its citizens. Therefore, taking the elaboration likelihood model as its theoretical framework, the study has utilized the quantitative approach in order to explore the impact of ISPR's productions on the perception of youth about the armed forces of Pakistan.

Rationale of the Study

Youth and Armed forces are both the vital pillars upon which a nation and its future stand. Therefore, there must be faith and goodwill among both regarding each other. However, in certain situations and under certain circumstances the goodwill between both gets disturbed. Thus, in order to deal with such a situation in Pakistan, the media cell of Army – Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) – has started collaborating productions, including films, telefilms, and dramas with the local media industry so that the youth may get to know about the actual image of its Armed Forces.

This study intended to investigate the influence of ISPR's productions, particularly films and dramas, on the perception of youth about the Armed Forces of Pakistan because not much work has been done in this dimension by Pakistani academicians before. Moreover, it is the need of the hour for the youth and the Armed Forces to improve mutual relations to make Pakistan move and grow in the right direction in the future.

Significance of Study

Youth is the backbone of any nation. They can make or break a state and its institutions. Therefore, it is obligatory for the pillars of the states to keep their youth in the right direction and path. Moreover, it is necessary for youth to understand the functioning of their militia in order to know the workings of their strategic institution in its true letter and spirit. In developing countries like Pakistan, the Army has a great influence on the politics as well as the media of a country. The Media wing of the Army in such countries produces certain thought-provoking, moralizing, and patriotic productions in collaboration with the local media industry in order to inculcate patriotism among the youth and to make them aware of their army's functionality. Similarly, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) – the media wing of the Pakistan Army collaborates with the local media industry, from time to time, and produces certain marvelous, patriotic productions including dramas, telefilms films, etc. to tackle the deteriorating image of the Armed forces among the youth of Pakistan, due to some anti-state agents.

The core attempt of this study was to interrogate the influence of ISPR's films and dramas on the perception of youth about the values practiced by the Armed forces of Pakistan. The issue holds significance because in the wake of increasing terrorism in the country lately, people, particularly youth, have their faith in the Armed Forces and their work shaken. Therefore, in order to alleviate the mistrust of youth over the Armed Forces of Pakistan, ISPR started working actively, producing certain patriotic films, telefilms, and television dramas in collaboration with the local media industry. This allowed the youth to not only know about the functioning of the militia but also clear certain misconceptions about the militia of the country.

Objectives of the Study

- RO₁. To investigate the persuasive effect of ISPR productions on youth as potential consumers.
- RO₂ To analyze the effects of ISPR productions on the perception regarding armed forces among youngsters.

Research Questions

- RQ₁. What are the significant effects of ISPR productions on youth as potential consumers?
- RQ₂ How do ISPR productions affect the perception regarding Armed forces among youngsters?

Hypotheses

- H₁: There are significant effects of ISPR productions on youngsters as potential consumers.
- H₀: There are no significant effects of ISPR productions on youngsters as potential consumers.
- H₂: There is a significant relationship between Exposure to ISPR productions and positive / negative perceptions about Armed forces in youngsters
- H₀: There is no significant relationship between Exposure to ISPR productions and positive perception of the Armed forces in youngsters

Literature Review

The public relations and media management of organizations and institutions have become the most vital and indispensable predictors of success in modern times. Now organizations with effective PR and media management are strong and successful. The success of organizations and their image among people highly depend on their media management and PR which significantly and directly affect their organizational image and strength (Ahmad and Khan, 2019). Considering this fact, a number of organizations, including defense departments and the Armed forces, hire PR experts and media managers to manage their image in the public. Lodhi (2021) discussed how Hollywood has been working with the US Defense Department to maintain their PR and work for their influence and narrative building over the public to shape their opinions and maintain an image for them.

Pakistani institutions also need media experts to manage their positive image among the public. Fatimah and Ali (2024) shared insights from the proceedings of the Pakistan Media Summit organized by the Karachi Film Society. They highlighted the need to interpret the role of Pakistani media in image building as a soft power. Pakistani media could have used its power to inspire youngsters and set a positive image of the country and its institutions at both national as well as international levels. Positive image building also leads to growth and development in social, cultural, and economic arenas. Today, digital media has attained incredible power to attract young minds with its engaging content. This demonstrated that Pakistani institutions need to use the power of media for

their positive image building and to ensure maximum growth and development in social, cultural, and economic domains as well.

Hussain et al. (2019) discussed the role of visual Contents of ISPR in the Image Building of Pakistan through dramas, docudramas, documentaries, and national songs. The study reported that respondents believe that ISPR's visual contents are more reliable and closely related to our cultural values than that of our customary media. The respondents are also firm in their responses that ISPR's visual contents take into account the public perception of Pakistan more keenly and are building the image of Pakistan more decisively as compared to our traditional media.

Media has a significant impact on the image formation, identity, image, and reputation of organizations (Nagarajan, 2013). According to Barbara Czarniawska, in her book 'Narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity,' the leaders within an organization play certain roles, just like the actors do in the dramas, in order to build and maintain an organization's identity. She added that a leader within an institution is responsible for making the rest of the employees recognize that they are equally vital for the image-building of their organization (Czarniawska, 1997). The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of the Pakistani Army, has been laying utmost effort to ensure a trustable relationship between youngsters of Pakistan and the Army by using the platform ISPR to communicate that the Armed forces are committed to ensuring the provision of safe, secure, stable, and resilient status of Pakistan for its youth.

Media plays a decisive role in making public opinion about something, be it political or social. In this way, a more consistent perception of the real world is drawn into people's minds. Therefore, individuals react to situations in accordance with their pre-built perception of them. Consequently, a mutual relationship between the display of the content on media, public perception about it, and then their ultimate reaction towards it is established. (Lippmann, 1946) Besides this, a study entitled 'The Medium and the Message in Mental Imagery: A Theory' claims that the content, in the form of images, gets imprinted on human memory for a longer time with deeper impact and, thus, can be used in various ways. It occupies a certain space in human cognition and gets stored there to be used for several purposes (Kosslyn, 1981).

Moreover, in terms of Pakistan, the study entitled 'Media and Youth Identity in Pakistan: Global – Local Dynamics and Disjuncture' investigates the perception of Pakistani urban youth about their local norms and values influenced by the Indian entertainment industry. The paper, in particular, analyzes the performance of certain students on a skit in their annual school function. For that purpose, the author uses the theoretical framework of structuration by Anthony Giddens and adopts the methodology of focus group discussion to explain how media content is disseminating globalization and is being used for creating cultural hegemony by certain nations of the world. The study further discloses that youth not only use media content merely for the sake of entertainment. Rather, they interpret it as per their cognition and build their perception of their local norms accordingly. Conclusively, the perception of youth regarding their socialization and their identity as Muslims has been greatly influenced and manipulated by Bollywood (Dattoo, 2010).

A similar study coined in the book 'Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to Dad's Army' explores the role of films in the image-building of the British nation. The author explores the role of British cinema in establishing, evolving, and maintaining the British national identity in terms of movies and other cultural components. Moreover, the study also reveals the interaction between British cinema and British culture. (Richards, 1997) In addition to this, while reviewing 'Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film' (Suid, 2002), the reviewer explains that even though Hollywood film producers make military movies with the guidance of the American military personnel, yet they create the content, exaggeratedly. However, by stating a number of scenes from a number of war movies and by mentioning the characters, the reviewer states that certain American movies have disseminated the notion of American supremacy in the US fought wars among the public (Fyne, 2002).

ISPR Productions and its new media teams have remarkably worked out of the box to bridge the gaps and build new bridges among the Armed forces, the music and drama industry, and the people of Pakistan. The magical influence of new songs and dramas has set new directions for the entertainment and music industry in Pakistan. These collaborations between media houses, actresses, singers, and creative brains of ISPR's new team are bringing incredible media content that is being liked by youngsters (Isani, 2021).

ISPR has produced about sixty patriotic songs, ten television serials, twenty documentaries, and movies. These media messages played a certain role in shaping public narratives and setting their agenda setting in favor of the Armed forces. The efforts of ISPR got an enthusiastic boost after the initiatives of former Director General Asif's enthusiasm to create awareness and maintain a positive image of the Pak Army to combat the challenges of 5th-generation warfare. ISPR has produced outstanding content since then, including songs, dramas, short films, and series for OTT platforms. ISPR also conducted "*National Amateur Short Films Festivals*" (2021) to promote young talent and encourage them to produce short films with positive projections of Pakistan and the Armed forces. Former Prime Minister Imran Khan also applauded these efforts, and this led to another military-themed female-centered serial, "Sinf-e-Ahan", which demonstrated the concern of the army for Pakistan's youth is beyond any discrimination and prejudice (Subramanian, 2021).

All the above-mentioned studies relate to this research in such a way that they provide a wider background regarding the variables being used in this study and, hence, offer a sound context to it. Moreover, they will enable us to identify and fill the gaps in this study.

Theoretical Framework

Elaboration Likelihood Model

The elaboration Likelihood Model was introduced by Richard E. Petty and John Cacioppo almost three decades earlier. Since then, it has been altered, drawn out, and brushed up many times (Kitchen and Schultz, 2014). The main idea of the ELM is that attitudes hold much importance because they give directions for decision-making and also guide other behaviors. The model puts forward two routes of persuasion that are the central route, in which persuasion occurs by understanding and analyzing information, and the peripheral route, in which persuasion occurs through characteristics like charming personality, attractive colors attention-grabbing sounds, etc. High-involvement decisions require a central route, whereas low-involvement decisions require a peripheral route of persuasion (McAlister and Bargh, 2016).

The Elaboration Likelihood Model relates to this study in such a way that it tends to explore the impact of ISPR's productions on the perception of youth about the armed forces of Pakistan. Therefore, to investigate this, it is necessary to know about the inclination of youth, that is, their pre-established notions and attitudes towards the armed forces.

Research Methodology

Quantitative Approach

Babbie (2015) considered Quantitative Approaches to be methods that emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys or by manipulating preexisting statistical data using computational techniques. Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon.

Universe

The universe for the commenced study is made up of students from the universities situated and established in the various cities of Pakistan.

Target population

The target population for the study is the students of the media departments from various universities in Lahore.

Sample

The sample chosen for the study consisted of a total of 200 students from the media departments of several universities in Lahore. Moreover, the number of male and female students, separately, is exact; it is not random. Furthermore, students from both civil and armed backgrounds are chosen to get their responses regarding the impact of ISPR's films and dramas on the perception of youth about the armed forces of Pakistan.

Sampling Technique

Simple Random Sampling is a type of probability sampling. In simple random sampling, each unit of the population has an equal probability of being included in the sample. The sampling technique was used to gather data individually from male and female students in various media departments at different universities in Lahore.

Hypothesis Testing

H₁: There are significant effects of ISPR productions on youngsters as potential consumers.

H₀: There are no significant effects of ISPR productions on youngsters as potential consumers.

Correlations

			I watch ISPR's productions on TV?	Perception Regarding Pakistan
Spearman's rho	I watch ISPR's productions on TV?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.432**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	200	200
	Perception Regarding Pakistan	Correlation Coefficient	.432**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation: The Spearman Correlation coefficient test has been applied to the accumulated data to study the correlation between the variables. The findings show that the correlation is significant, with a value of 0.007. Hence, the proposed hypothesis has been validated.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between Exposure to ISPR productions and positive / negative perceptions about Armed forces in youngsters

H₀: There is no significant relationship between Exposure to ISPR productions and positive perception of the Armed forces in youngsters

Correlations

			I watch ISPR's productions on TV?	Perception Regarding Pak Army
Spearman's rho	I watch ISPR's productions on TV?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.387**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	200	200
	PerceptrtionRegradingPakAr my	Correlation Coefficient	.387**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation: The Spearman Correlation coefficient test has been applied to the accumulated data to study the correlation between the variables. The findings show that the correlation is significant, with a value of 0.007. Hence, the proposed hypothesis has been validated.

Discussion and Analysis

The data for the undertaken research study was accumulated from two hundred respondents who are active consumers of ISPR productions. A closed-ended questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument for conducting an online survey. The study opted for a Simple random technique for data collection. The accumulated data include demographics as well as other important information about the respondents, which helped to analyze the effects of ISPR productions on consumers.

Demographics

The demographic information accumulated for the study includes gender, age, family background, and educational level of respondents. The respondents of the present study included an equal sample of both males as well as females, with a ratio of (50%) males and (50%) females. As the study was aimed to be conducted on youngsters the age limit of participants ranged from 16 minimum to 30 years of age maximum. The educational level of respondents was bachelor's to PhD.

The selected sample for the study was heterogeneous and diverse in terms of demographic and psychographic backgrounds. It was representative of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and diverse schools of thought. The accumulated data has been analyzed through SPSS for descriptive statistical analysis, and the generated findings have been discussed and analyzed in this chapter in light of the research questions, objectives, and proposed hypothesis of the study.

Analysis In the Light of Research Questions and Proposed Hypothesis

RQ ₁ : What are the significant effects of ISPR productions on youth as potential consumers?	H ₁ : There are significant effects of ISPR productions on youngsters as potential consumers. H ₀ : There are no significant effects of ISPR productions on youngsters as potential consumers.
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Contemporarily when media has become the most indispensable and substantial part of human life. The studies focused on analyzing media effects have become more dynamic and fascinating (Adetunji, 2022). Media have become the most influential source of information, awareness, entertainment, and whatnot. They have become the most persuasive and strong stimuli in the lives of consumers. There is an incredible formal linkage between Media effects and the science of Persuasion.

The study tended to explore the popularity and effects of ISPR productions among Pakistani youngsters as an audience and potential consumers. As per the findings of the Survey, almost (24.0%) of respondents always, (26.5%) often, (32.5%) sometimes, (and 13.5%) rarely actively watch ISPR productions and content as potential consumers. The results of the survey also exhibit that of 200 respondents (28%) strongly agreed, (42.5%) agreed, (19.5%) were undecided, (4.5%) disagreed and only (5%) strongly disagreed with the statement that ISPR productions are promoting a positive role in promoting the positive national image of Pakistan.

The respondents have demonstrated highly positive responses in endorsing (37.0%) agreed, and almost (32.5%) strongly agreed to the proposed hypothesis and the fact that they feel proud after watching ISPR productions. At the same time (39.5%) agreed, and (27.5%) strongly agreed with the statement that they feel more patriotic after watching ISPR productions.

The participants of the survey also acknowledged that they feel passionate about serving Pakistan after watching ISPR productions (33%) agreed and (27%) strongly agreed with the statement. The results of the survey have reported that from a total of 200 respondents (8%) strongly disagreed, (11.0%) disagreed, (17.5%) were undecided, and almost (35%) agreed as well as (28%) strongly agreed to the statement that they I think the films and dramas of ISPR have influenced my perception regarding Pakistani Armed Forces.

Hence, the survey findings reported that Exposure to ISPR content has significant effects on consumers' perceptions of the Pakistani Armed forces and Pakistan itself. The more exposure to these ISPR films, dramas, songs, and documentaries, the more emotional and patriotic the consumers will be about their forces and country.

RQ ₂ : How do ISPR productions affect the perception of Armed forces among youngsters?	H ₂ : There is a significant relationship between Exposure to ISPR productions and positive/negative perceptions about Armed forces in youngsters H ₀ : There is no significant relationship between Exposure to ISPR productions and positive perception of the Armed forces in youngsters
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The findings of the survey reported that more than (37.5%) agreed and (31%) strongly agreed with the statement they think the production of ISPR is generating feelings of devotion among the youth towards the Armed Forces of Pakistan. The findings of the Survey also reported that of 200, more than (35.0%) agreed and (29%) strongly agreed with the statement that they feel proud of the Armed Forces after watching ISPR productions.

The results of the conducted survey have reported that a total of 200 respondents (9.5%) responded, and more than (51%) replied positively to the statement that ISPR's productions have changed their perception towards the Armed Forces of Pakistan negatively. So, the above-mentioned research question and hypothesis have been tested and validated by the findings of the survey.

In light of the above-mentioned facts, this study has analyzed and validated that ISPR content has been produced by the creative department of Pakistan's armed forces to promote a positive image of Pakistan and its armed forces among people. The study has established that they aspire to promote patriotism and loyalty towards the armed forces and Pakistan among their consumers.

Conclusion

The study tended to explore the effects of ISPR productions on youngsters regarding their perception of the armed forces of Pakistan. Exposure of the audience to some particular type of content always has specific effects. These effects can be short-term, and in some cases, they can be longer as well.

Youngsters are considered to be the most potential and important asset of every nation, and substantial consumers of any content are as well.

This study focused on studying the effects in light of the Elaboration likelihood model. It has been reported that the audience has an emotional attachment to the armed forces of Pakistan, and their patriotic feelings toward Pakistan make this emotional attachment even stronger. They have a zealous emotional attachment to ISPR content and its stories, songs, and other productions.

So, most of the ISPR productions, which are based on real-life stories, have an intense level of popularity among consumers. At the same time, nationalistic songs and dramas are not less in any consumption and favoritism among youngsters. As the youth of any country is very passionate and emotional about their country so in the light of the data collected and analyzed through a literature review, a survey, and an Elaboration likelihood model, it has been found and concluded that ISPR productions are strong stimuli and youngsters are affected at an intense level and the route to persuasion their cognitive mind adopts is peripheral most of the times.

The emotional attachment of youngsters to their country and the Armed forces makes them potential consumers of ISPR's content and serials based on true stories portraying the sacrifices of the Army serve as strong stimuli for people. These serials have set an inspiration for youngsters to join the Pak Army, and they idealize the life of armed heroes. Serials featuring female heroes of the Pak army have raised new inspiration and motivation among young girls as well, giving them the confidence that the Pak army honors its young blood on the basis of merit and does not abandon its youth on the basis of any prejudice or discrimination.

ISPR has set remarkable trends for national branding, image building, and public relations at all levels. It has not only made commendable efforts to promote trustable relations among the armed forces and people of Pakistan, but it has also made an incredible contribution to promoting a strong, resilient, positive image of Pakistan at the international level. ISPR's content has set new inspirations for youth, and this has proven that the Pak army is unbeatable in all domains, including warfare in the field as well as in the 5th generation media warfare.

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