Report on the Media’s Affect in Relation to the Creation of Optimism or Pessimism About the United States

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Introduction

The U.S. media has an important impact as a source of information. However, does the U.S. media’s reliance on partisanship and commercialism, which leads to a greater reporting of negative stories make the American public more pessimistic about the U.S.? Pessimism could lead to a decline in voter turnout, political activism, and other behaviors.

Research Question: Does the United States media increase optimism or pessimism about the United States, or have no affect at all?

Variables

The independent variables that will be used for this study are “How Often Trust The Media To Report News Fairly”, “Internal Political Efficacy”, “Summary: Personal Optimism”, “Employment Status”, and “Household Income”, while the dependent variable is “Summary: Optimism/Pessimism About The U.S.”. All of these variable came from the National Election Study of 2008 (NES) of 2008, which was conducted before the 2008 Presidential Election.

Hypotheses

• Distrust in the U.S. media increases pessimism about the U.S.
• That internal political efficacy increases optimism about the U.S.
• High personal optimism favors high optimism for the U.S. with Americans being optimistic about the U.S.
• Both independent economic variables (“Employment Status” and “Household Income”) increase pessimism about the U.S.

Results of Regression

The adjusted R-square of .249 means this model only explains about 25% of the variance, which means that a lot of the variance in this model is unexplained.

• The t-values are well above and below two or negative two for “Summary: Personal Optimism” (22.077), and “Household Income” (2.288), which means we reject the null hypothesis in these cases.
• These variables are the only variables that have a significance level that is less than or equal to .05, meaning we reject the null hypothesis on these grounds.

Hypotheses

• Does the United States media increase optimism or pessimism about the United States, or have no affect at all?

Crosstabs

The results of the cross-tabs indicate that the majority of people in each independent variable group are “Somewhat optimistic” about the United States.

Heteroskedasticity

Using scatter-plots, it can be determined if a linear relationship exists between the variables, and if the variances remain similar as you move along the line, or heteroskedasticity exists.

Multicollinearity

Using the correlation table the Pearson correlations between the variables can be observed, and it is shown that the Pearson correlations all lie within -.75 and .75, thus based on this rule multicollinearity is not present between the variables.

Conclusion

Any policy recommendations presented here should be held suspect for the following reasons: .75% of the variance in this model is left unexplained. Difficult to explain why people are optimistic or pessimistic about the U.S. Further research is needed before we can fully understand the media’s impact on optimism or pessimism about the U.S.

Policy Recommendations

• Regression results show “Summary: Optimism/Pessimism About The U.S.” has more to do with household income and personal optimism rather than distrust in the media.
• In order to increase optimism about the U.S., create policies that benefit high income earners, since increases in household income lead to more pessimism about the U.S.
• Possible Reason for pessimism?
• Actual and perceived increase in taxes under President Obama.
• Lower taxes could be the solution
• The creation of policies that make people optimistic about their futures could help.
• Hard to decide what generates high personal optimism, so policy makers maybe should not consider it if they want to raise optimism about the U.S.

Assessment of the Model

Most of the regression assumptions were violated other than multicollinearity. The relationship between “Personal Optimism” and “Optimism/Pessimism About the U.S.” was proven to be that personal optimism increases optimism about the U.S., which corresponds with my hypothesis.

• The relationship between “Household Income” and “Optimism/Pessimism About the U.S.” was proven to be that household income increases pessimism about the U.S., which corresponds with my hypothesis.

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