

Abstract

Over the past 20 years, comedy news programs such as Saturday Night Live and The Daily Show have increasingly become one of the primary sources of political information for young people. This paper seeks to discuss how comedy news effects its viewers political decision making and information retention. This paper looks at partisan biases associated with the hosts, viewers and content of the shows. It evaluates who watches comedy news and how these viewers differ from similar demographics that do not watch the same programs.

This paper evaluates frames in communications and partisan bias in comedy news and compares them to conventional television news programs. Using data from the American National Election Studies and the National Annenberg Election Survey, this paper looks at voting habits and levels of political engagement among participants who watched comedy news programs. An experiment was conducted as a part of this research in which participants viewed either a comedy news or conventional television news clip on a selection of topics and answered questions about their opinions on the topics they viewed. Participants answered follow up questions after a period of one week to assess their information retention on the topics they viewed.

The findings of this research show that there is a positive relationship between viewership of comedy news and voting rates. Viewers of comedy news are more likely to have opinions that agree with those of the show's host and remember details from the comedy news program. Comedy News is an effective way to communicate political news information, and shows just as much news content as conventional television news programs.