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*Shaping Lives...
Empowering Communities...*

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Shaping Lives...

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About the Journal

Centurion Journal of Multi-disciplinary Research

Centurion Journal of Multi-disciplinary Research is a refereed journal, which serves as a platform for exploring the current issues, challenges and linkages in the broad areas of development, technology, engineering and management. There is a special focus on skill development and education, its recognition and promotion in the country, especially with the 'Make in India' initiative by the government of India. The objective of the journal is to facilitate bringing together research based contributions in science, technology, management and skills that has direct implication for the development of under-privileged communities and empowering them. The journal links theory and practice in the above areas so as to have policy and programme implications, particularly in under-developed contexts. In addition to articles from individuals or collectives, the journal publishes book reviews.

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Centurion Journal of Multi-disciplinary Research aims at:

- Providing a platform for debate and dissemination of research findings, conceptual developments and new research areas and techniques that promise to change analyses and perspectives on science and technology, development, management, skill in developing societies;
- Disseminating and promoting research, good practice and innovation in all aspects of science, technology, management and skill development to its main audiences, including educators, researchers, graduate students, policy makers, and practitioners; and
- Encouraging multi-disciplinary cooperation and understanding, and enhancing quality research.

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In the journey of mankind from the caves to multitowered apartments, the search for knowledge has remained as the ultimate answer for humanity. May be in form of Gurukul or a university, academic institutions have always contributed to the pool of knowledge. They have answered to the queries of society through basic and applied research. Considering its responsibilities towards society, Centurion university of Technology and Management, has started 26 research centers to promote research to contribute to society in a better way. The youngest skill university of India has started its journey with the believe that these research centers will prove themselves useful for building a better tomorrow with the support and coordination from the academic community.

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Editorial

Sowing seeds of Hope

"For surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off"

Proverbs 23:18, The Bible.

Throughout the history of humanity mankind has learnt new things and acquired skills as a result of necessity. Such requirements have served as the seeds of change for a new beginning. The fast-moving life in the present days and the rapid growth in information technology has shifted our lives from physical space to virtual space. With each new sunrise, human race is moving one more step towards the virtual life and the growth of technology has moved to such a level that the tiny portable mobile devices have started controlling our lives. The small screen has started replacing the big screen and wireless system has started replacing the wires. In the Indian context, with the hopes of 5G round the corner, the wireless hopes have gone stronger.

We have started living in a society in which augmented reality, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, automation, internet of things and machine learning have started becoming the new areas to fascinate human life and inquisitiveness of researchers. The man machine interface has become a new area to explore and we have started reaching to the era of rise of the machines. In this Digital era, a sim card is cheaper than a Kilo of rice and Swiggy or Zomato are the managers of our food. Byzu or Udemy are the managers of our education. WhatsApp or Facebook are our new communication platforms for information dissemination. Coding has started becoming the new language of modern society and social network analysis has become the tool to analyze the communication behaviors of human beings. For all our needs we have started depending on the digital systems but this digital life or the life in the virtual space has placed challenges for us.

The modern virtual life has thrown psycho social challenges towards us and people have started gaining new experiences of digital life along with its advantages and disadvantages. The digital intervention has reached even to the rarely explored areas like marriage. Different matrimonial services have started providing new experiences in this area and at the same times these experiences have made the social scientists curious to reveal the truth behind digital intervention into the social institutions. Similarly convergence technology has started influencing the life of people in various ways. It has started creating a better experience of digital life for the human race. By opening new opportunities of entertainment, OTT viewing has gone popular. At the same time, has placed the challenge of choosing proper content for viewing.

However the story of digitization has become a story of a never ending journey. At each step it has created opportunities for us but at the same time the digital medium has created challenges for us. Those moments when we are in our attempts of flattening the curve, digital technology has brought us opportunities of staying together by minimizing the distance in the virtual space. Such digital intervention has brought many new experiences. Communication in the digital platform has promoted citizen journalism and social media helping information dissemination faster but at the same time no body can ignore the experience of infodemic during the pandemic. Thus, media literacy has turned to be the need of the hour.

Looking to the complete picture of this changing scenario we can say that we are living in the days of challenges in the psychological, social and cultural spaces due to the advent of a new digital culture. The challenges have reached to the social scientists in an attractive form.

The impacts of these new changes are required to be analyzed and understood to reinvent and redesign the better tomorrow. To say in a better way, we are living in the best of the days and we are living in the worst of the days. The pandemic has brought the worst experience of claiming lots of lives but it has opened new opportunities in the virtual life. We all are aware about facts like poverty, inequality, digital divide

and many such issues but amid all these truths, this pandemic has proved one thing that as long as human race is alive the tree of hope will never die and the process of social engineering will never stop. In this issue, the scholars through their studies have discussed the same and through their findings the journal has tried to open new questions for other researchers for further studies reflecting the ray of hope.

At the moment of writing editorial for this edition, I am expressing my sincere thanks to Prof. Mukti Kanta Mishra, President, Prof. D. N. Rao, Vice President and Prof. Anita Patra, Registrar of the University for their support and encouragement to move ahead in the academic life. I am expressing my heartfelt thanks to Prof. Supriya Pattanayak, Vice Chancellor of the University for her continuous guidance and support to complete this task and for considering me to assign me with this responsibility. I am thankful to Prof. Dipankar Bhattacharyay, Chief editor of the Journal, Prof. Smita Mishra Panda, Director Research of the University and expressing my thanks to my colleagues Dr. Ajit Kumar Pradhan, Dr. Susanta Kumar Patnaik and Dr. Biswanandan Dash for their support in the editorial process. I Sincerely thank all the authors for making this edition possible. Last but not the least I am thankful to Mr. Susil Kumar Sahu, my colleague, for all his supports in designing the journal.

Dr. Ambika Sankar Mishra

Associate Professor
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Online Marriage Market and Everyday Life

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Supriya Pattanayak¹

Abstract

Everyday life is rarely viewed with neutrality, the concept being marked with a rich history of hostility, envy and desire, expressing both nostalgia for the concrete and disdain for a life lacking in self-reflection and criticality. Also, the everyday is a space that seeks a deep involvement of the self and immediate responses. This article attempts to analyse the online Indian marriage market with all its nuances from the perspective of everyday life theory. For persons seeking potential partners, it particularly focuses on the movement from being the 'subject' of the knowing community to the 'object' of the virtual community.

Introduction

Traditionally, in Indian families, marriage a part of everyday life, took the support of extended family and relatives, marriage brokers, and later on newspaper advertisements. Social networks played a significant role in arranging marriages. Matching of horoscopes was central in the

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decision regarding a marriage being confirmed or not. But the internet has created new spaces for finding partners in the Indian context with online matrimonial sites emerging in the early 1990s. Technology is aiding the establishment of new methods of communicating and building relationships. While a number of parameters have got diluted in the process, some have further got cemented in tradition. In India, the focus is on marriage rather than relationships, which is the focus of their global counterparts. Increasingly in the Indian context, we find that there are generic sites, followed by regional matrimonial sites and even sites that focus on castes and other sub-groups. There are also specific sites for divorced or widowed persons as they link people in similar situations to each other, thus enlarging the pool of suitable candidates. These sites are also being relied upon as families are getting nuclearized, urbanized, highly mobile and divorced from their roots. Diminescu and Renault (2011: 687) argue that the design of these online matchmaking sites correlates with the highly stratified Indian social system's specificity. One could interpret this as what Sahlin (1999: ix) terms as the 'indigenization of modernity'.

Traditionally the family played an important role in the decision of marriage, that is, whether the boy/ girl was from a good family rooted in good values and tradition, whether the family was of equal status, whether their prospective bride/groom would be well taken care of and by extension of this logic, whether they would be a fit for the family, rather than the individual. However, with the commercialization of online networks, the notion of beauty has become paramount, highlighting the ever-increasing visual perfection of these sites. This excludes most other concerns of the family.

This article attempts to analyse the online Indian marriage market with all its nuances from the perspective of everyday life theory. For persons seeking potential partners, it particularly focuses on the movement from being the 'subject' of the knowing community to the 'object' of the virtual community.

Everyday Life and the marriage market

Everyday life is rarely viewed with neutrality, the concept being marked with a rich history of hostility, envy and desire, expressing both nostalgia for the concrete and traditional and disdain for the frivolity of modernity and a life lacking in self-reflection and criticality (Pattanayak, 2007). Also, the everyday is a space that seeks a deep involvement of the self and immediate responses. Lefèbvre's (1987, p. 11) view is that everyday life is simply lived experience, and in contemporary society this means that together 'modernity and everyday life constitute a deep structure' (1991, p. 97). Thus the uniform and repetitive aspects of human lives become more prominent. In the Indian context, the social event of marriage, a repetitive act in society is not only getting more prominent but is becoming highly commercialised. Alvin Gouldner (1975) suggests that the rapidly changing fabric of ordinary lives creates a new awareness of the mundane: that which was previously taken for granted becomes visible, in both its new and its traditional, disappearing forms. Therefore, where previously marriages were family/ community affairs; in recent years, have become ostentatious display of wealth and status.

There is a basic connection between the growing media access and profound changes within contemporary Indian society which has led to the increasing use of online matrimonial sites since the 1990s. Titzman (2013) notes that, in relation to marriage, the online spaces show the active intervention of the people in their own future planning. Further, she notes that notions regarding marriage, love and gender roles are gradually being reworked.

Like the blurred speck on the edge of one's vision that disappears when looked at directly, the everyday ceases to be everyday when it is subject to scrutiny. 'The everyday escapes' writes Blanchot (1987, p. 14), 'it belongs to insignificance'. In so much so, as the everyday escapes while being scrutinized, it does not pale into insignificance, it is part of lived experience and remains in the repertoire of the individual/

community to be drawn on when required. On the other hand, the everyday always holds out the possibility of its own transformation. With the advent of technology in the everyday, the transformations are extraordinary. If one looks at the context of online matrimonial sites in India, one finds the transformed everyday in which persons are objectified and commodified to meet the requirements of a consumerist society, where only the individual matters.

For Lefèbvre, 'moments' are those instances of intense experience in everyday life that provide an immanent critique of the everyday: they are moments of vivid sensations of disgust, of shock, of delight and so on, which, although fleeting, provide a promise of the possibility of a different daily life, while at the same time puncturing the continuum of the present (David Harveys 'Afterword' in Lefèbvre 1991b). Everyday life is typically distinguished from the exceptional moment; the distinctiveness of the everyday lies in its lack of distinction and differentiation; it is the air one breathes, the taken-for-granted backdrop, the commonsensical basis of all human activities. In this context, it is a matter of criticality, to determine whether the process of selection of a partner in the traditional manner is everyday or using the online matrimonial sites is everyday; where is the lack of distinction and differentiation from an exceptional moment present. In both instances, a lot of groundwork is done before the eventual selection of candidate, but the nature of the two are very different. In the everyday life of the online sites, the focus is on the 'beautiful', but 'beauty' as it is perceived in today's context was not a dominant feature of selection in the traditional marriage.

The mindset of Fair and Lovely

The 'Fair and Lovely' mindset is embedded in the Indian psyche so much so that it is the most important attribute in securing a marital partner. These attributes then colour the way in which women are portrayed in online matrimonial websites, often making a commodity of

prospective brides. India, a country whose cultural mosaic represents a unique amalgamation of social and religious stigmas and stereotypes, provides the ground for a number of corporates to successfully leverage business opportunities inherent in India's obsession or India's 'fairness fetish' as Nadeem (2014, p.2) aptly puts it, with lighter skin tones. There is enough evidence to show not only how the product but also the 'fair and lovely' mindset has percolated the everyday lives of people not only in urban areas but also in rural and remote regions of the country. A tribal haat in Odisha, for example, sold powders and creams that were 'Ponds' look alike (duplicates and plagiarised products), branded as 'Fonds'. The origins of this mindset can be traced back to well before the British colonial period to the caste system existent in India from times immemorial, wherein the priestly Brahmin class was associated with whiteness or purity and the inferior Shudras and Dalits ('Untouchables') with blackness or filth/ pollution. Picton (2013) in his study of advertisements during colonial times noted that the soap brand 'Pears', for instance, in a popular campaign, depicted a White child washing a Black child using the product, turning him White in the process and muddying the water that was used to wash him. This advertisement symbolised a perspective that identified the concept of 'purity' with the White race, and the 'White man's burden' of 'cleansing' the 'impure' dark-skinned peoples of the world. Light skin or whiteness, according to this narrative, stood for purity and goodness. This related to purity of both 'character' and culture and physical purity. Blackness represented the polar opposite - portrayed as impure, both in the physical sense and in the sense of (lack of) culture (Varghese, 2017). It is more about different cultures being interpreted as inferior, rather than a (lack of) culture. However, this position has been challenged by postcolonial scholars today who identify the significance of race and colonial discourse on colourism as we see it today.

Bollywood (the Indian film industry) and advertisements for creams that promise to lighten the skin are factors that further fuel this desire

for fairness (Shevde, 2008). The 'Fair and Lovely' cream initially targeted the middle class but recognising that there was a 'fortune to be made at the bottom of the pyramid' (Pralhad, 2004) was marketed in rural areas in the form of inexpensive and affordable sachets.

Shevde (2008, p 3) further notes, the collective mantra generated by the ad campaigns is simple: If you buy this fairness product, you will make your family proud, you will look beautiful, and you will secure a wonderful husband - all of which are considered to be vital determinants of a woman's happiness in the highly patriarchal and male-dominated Indian society. These products also perpetuate the particular pressure on Indian women to look beautiful, as the country's obsession with skin fairness is typically found to be gender-lopsided and targeted more towards women. More recently, though this divide is diminished and 'Fair and Handsome' (with its accompanying product) is also an attribute to be aspired for. Further, in recent times, American fashion magazines are filled with articles about how to maintain tan skin during the cooler months (Colino, 2009).

Bollywood, a popular escape mechanism for millions of Indians, propagates the Indian obsession with fairness, given its social power as the largest film industry in the world. Actors and Actresses become role models to the average person and this translates into not only a fair appearance, but also clothing and accessories of particular kinds to be emulated. All these are mimicked in the online matrimonial sites. Shevde (2008) further notes that the interactions between men and women in the marriage market is on the rise because of the growing number of women using 'Fair and Lovely'.

Women's Agency and Choice

Archer (2000) poses the stratified view of the 'subject' whose different properties and powers emerge at each level. The four strata she mentions are the self, the person, the agent and the actor. The latter two are the 'social selves' which emerge through our involuntary

interaction in society's distribution of resources and our voluntary involvement in society's many roles. They are dependent on the prior emergence of self-consciousness and co-dependent with the emergence of personal identity.

Further, Archer (2000) claims social identity is only assumed in society: personal identity regulates the subject's relations with reality as a whole. The kind of social beings that we become both individually and collectively, the social identities we acquire in the process are not recognised by the institutions or policies. The work women are engaged in is considered insignificant or secondary to their appearance. Only by shifting the standpoint on the everyday lives of women and the manner in which they are viewed by society as a whole, will the obsession in fairness and beauty decline. This will enable a person to be seen as creditable in her own eyes and those of his or her community.

Nadeem (2014) argues that the desire to become lighter is not merely a choice or preference; rather it is connected to the longing to become a privileged 'other'. The desirability of the 'other' is dependent on the existing power structures of the society, again, in the Indian context, connected with caste, class, and privilege. In other words, becoming lighter appears to be a legitimate way to access privilege and acceptance.

Underlying much of the tension that women face in negotiating the online marriage market expectations is the simultaneous demand for a 'productive' and 'beautiful' woman and the failure to reconcile this false divide. Titzman (2013) alludes to some contradictions, women describing themselves as ambitious and outdoors persons, also term themselves as simple and respecting traditions, which are not necessarily so. Such dualistic formulations miss 'the coordinated manner in which women are active and inventive in the specific local conditions of their lives' (Griffith and Smith, 1990, p 6) and where they are often unaware

and uncaring of their physical appearance, its representation or interpretation. Further, it fails to take into account women's agency (or lack thereof) in various spheres of life.

Increasingly however, the discourse is undergoing enormous transformation, from a 'beauty' stance to an 'empowerment' stance. For example, the current brand proposition for the cream - 'Fair and Lovely: The Power of Beauty' - implies a more modern message about choice and economic empowerment (Shevde, 2008). For most women, these brands symbolize breaking away from social barriers and cultural norms, and striving towards goals that they presumed would be otherwise unattainable due to their skin colour. It is a desire to be seen as a whole person, of being included in society by virtue of their ability and beauty and not merely the one. On the whole, online sites are expanding the 'capacity of human beings to engage in action' (Kim, 2008).

From the subject of the knowing community to the object of the virtual community

The idea of networks is far from new to the Indian context in relation to Indian matchmaking practice. People in the communities knew one another and related intimately with some people and often loosely with others in the community. Family, caste and community networks played an important role in identifying a prospective marital partner. The relationship was more of matching a family rather than individuals. A prospective bride was a subject of the knowing community where there was an embeddedness in relationships. Such relationships are intrinsically meaningful, their meaning emerges from intentionality, that is, by consciousness...we are continuously ordering, classifying and interpreting our various experiences according to various interpretative schemes (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974). There is no preconceived notion of a goal, but an understanding of the lived experiences of all actors that leads to an intersubjectivity. In the Indian context, like Husserl (1970: 253) notes '...self-consciousness and

consciousness of others are inseparable'. Similarly, when Schutz & Luckmann (1974: 67), insist that 'I experience myself through my consociate and he experiences himself through me', they refer to a 'reciprocal mirroring'. Therefore, mutuality and reciprocity are central to relationships in the traditional Indian context; family and community is a reflection of oneself and therefore, the attempt is always to do what is best for the family/ community and that would translate to what is best for the individual as the individual is subsumed within the community.

Matrimonial websites avail of the same network principles that family networks and caste associations have used for centuries. Titzman (2013: 232) notes that the visual language of these sites corresponds to their target groups. Consistent images of gender-specific ideal 'Indianness' are evident.

The prospective bride/ groom was the 'subject' of the community that was knowledgeable in the everyday ways of organising a marriage. There was an awareness of the unique moment of a marriage and its everyday elements, such as the mundane activities of getting the meals organised, the furniture and decorations procured and setup, the distribution of invitations, the purchase of clothes for relatives amongst many others. With the increased reliance on online matchmaking sites young men and women become the 'objects' of the virtual community where a voyeuristic gaze seeks to exercise choice from an array of prospective candidates. Several prejudices and stereotypes regarding caste, region, religion are reinforced and objectified in the visuals of these sites.

Conclusion

There has been a significant shift in the Indian marriage market with the advent of online matchmaking sites. While the highly nuclearized, urbanised and mobile communities are finding such sites potentially useful to locate partners, it is obvious that the focus on skin colour is

still paramount in the online matrimonial market. In the Indian society today, the everyday is undergoing several changes - here persons are objectified and commodified to meet the requirements of a consumerist society, where only the individual matters. In the adoption of the online marriage markets, one can see contrary to Sahlins, the 'modernization of indigeniety'. The subject of the knowing community and the object of the virtual community are intermingled, there is a movement from 'one to none and none to one', from a reductionist 'either or' to a holistic 'both and'.

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Introduction

In a brief presentation, I have chosen to discuss the future of human condition in a democratic political system of India. Market economy propelled by convergence of digital technology and global forces seem to have helped to leap the evolutionary process of human development. My attempt will be to identify non reversible change having social dimensions in which human relationships and interactions would be most affected. Time frame is a decade or on the eve of 18th Lok Sabha elections which should be in 2019. Also efforts will be made to decipher changes in the other aspects of the Indian Civilization that would be unaffected or retracted in a cyclical fashion that are least known elsewhere .

At the height of the popularity of National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee promoted the expression of "Shining India". In 2004 Lok Sabha elections,

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National Democratic Alliance fell apart and a new alliance, -United Progressive Alliance (UPA) emerged after prolonged courtship among over two dozen political parties. This time the slogan chanted across the world was high GNP touching almost 10% unprecedented in other democracies elsewhere which has fallen to about 5 percent, The expression, though alive, its shine is gradually fading to a large extent after economic meltdown globally and pulling out of left political parties from the government.

In the last five years, a great deal of wealth has been created in country by few Indians who have become centre of admiration, respect and role model for others to emulate. The changing fortunes have started showing in economic, social and technological realms of the country.

I have selected three digital technologies - telecommunications, broadcasting and computer to discuss and understand how these technologies are changing and might change human lives in India over next few years. Choice of digital technologies for analysis is because of their all pervasive and direct influences in multiple ways to a large segment of over billion people. The digital technology is integrated and supported by satellite technology. Satellite technology has provided major means of information transfer globally to create a world of highest human connectivity, information transfer and storage.

Close up Tongue is Talking no Stop

More than a quarter of century ago, while India was entering into satellite communication era, country's most eminent spaces scientist Professor Satish Dhawan confronted me with a poser: "What information will the villagers seek from the National or State Capital if they are connected with telephone". I could not think of an appropriate answer at that time and continue to ponder about an appropriate answer. The other question posed by Professor Dhawan was some what like this "What would be range of distances in which an average villager would exchange

information, share opinion and seek advice within family, friends and whole lot of political and official functionaries." At the time, I could not go beyond a district boundary for such communications. Even today, by and large, patterns of telephone use in the villages might be same except for migrant workers and their families.

There have been unprecedented qualitative and quantitative technological expansion in the human use of telephones in the country. It is predicted that telephones will be available to for every second person in the country by 2010. Currently one million mobile phones are being added every month along with some landline phones in the country. (Hindustan Times January 20, 2009). It is predicted that there will be over half a billion phones in India very soon. These phones will provide one to one talking facility, along with conference calls. Quarter of country ago, the number of phones all across the country was just about five million.

What are socio-cultural implications of 100 times expansion of phone in the country both in urban and rural areas? First, the notion of physical "remoteness" is getting redefined. Two, who is talking to whom for what purpose at what cost must be understood in order to examine the role of telephone as "change agent" in a Civilization that championed hierarchal and multilayered communications enforced, practiced and perpetuated by the jati, language and religious division within the Indian Civilization.

Before I start discussing telephone's role as change agent, it is essential to discuss the pervasiveness of telephone in the contemporary Indian Civilization by narrating few observations that are fairly common across various regions, social and economic strata.

In 2007, a migrant labour from Uttar Pradesh working as a part time gardener in several households in Ahmedabad came up with a request to buy a mobile phone for his wife who lives in rural Faizabad district

of Uttar Pradesh. I was surprised from his request. After questioning about the telephone signal availability in his village. I wanted to know as to why he wanted to give a mobile phone to his illiterate wife. The answer came out clear and loud: "I want to be in touch with my wife also, it would help me to know the welfare of my parents and two young children." After further discussion, it was decided to have a BSNL lifetime prepaid mobile phone so without any problem the gardner could call his wife provided she would charge the mobile phone. The gardner had access to electric connection in the home and village. The mobile phone is working as last reported.

In the metropolitan city of Mumbai, the house wife in an affluent household could not be contacted for several days as her landline phone was found to be perpetually busy. Face to face personal meeting unfolded another story. The housewife taking advantage of time difference between United State of America and Mumbai would keep her Internet on to talk to her son studying in Midwestern American University. Often the phone was left connected so her son could speak to mother on the speaker as and when he was free.

At any Railway Station, Airport or Busstand, one can hear non stop mobile ringing in a variety of tones. When you call a number you are for a sock as you end you listening to jazz music or Sloka from Gita or a popular song of an old or recent vantage. The vegetable vender where I live would insists that I should call him on his mobile to place order of vegetables for home delivery. High flying business executives, senior government officials could be seen carrying two mobile phones one for incoming calls and other for outgoing calls.

Any where within class or outside the class rooms of school, collage or university SMS has taken over other forms of communication especially among the youth. The business community has not been left behind who are using SMS for business deals, product deliveries and to check delivery status.

No doubt mobile or land line phones have helped keep individuals families and friends in constant contact. It has helped reduce and creates new kinds of insecurity and uncertainty in human relationships whether young and old alike. Waiting for phone calls and at times attempt to reach near and dear ones have multiplied many fold which has weakened as well as strengthen relationships. At the same time, it is common experience of a large number of caller to feel frustrated due to no response "switch off", or "voice mail" response and a whole lot of recorded messages.

An institutional car driver was given a mobile phone to ensure his availability during emergency. Phone was often found switched off. At a critical juncture when driver was required he could not be reached or traced. Later through personal contact the driver was traced who confessed keeping his phone off to save battery and avoid emergency duties. One can find innumerable cases of such human efforts to block and avoid exchange of information and to express displeasure and unhappiness.

All pervasive and omnipresent phone in its different technological configurations has deeply influenced users and non-users alike in the Indian Civilization. No other means of communication has helped break literacy barrier for sharing and exchanging information and views to bring about cultural change.

Satellite Television : Sharing of Common Experiences

In a remote tribal village of Chattisgarh State, Rs. 8000/- was spent by village head man's son to buy an used color television along with a DTH system. While visiting the village, I found that a large number of young children and few women were gathered around head man's house to watch television. The most important thing observed was an inverter attached to the television for uninterrupted viewing of the cricket match. Most of the viewers knew the names of both Australian

and Indian cricketers. The tension had gripped the viewers about outcome of the match.

In a town of Bihar, when I arrived in a winter evening, darkness welcomed me. I managed to reach to my host house where I felt it was mid night and every one seemed to be fast a sleep. However, I was surprised to see that the host and his wife were watching cable TV. Further probing indicated that private power connection was available which was utilized for television viewing instead of lighting the home. The couple was viewing a popular Hindi serial to be followed by news.

In a metro city of Mumbai, the house owners refused to meet me until half an hour Zee TV serial was over. In city of Ahmedabad, an eighty year old widow refused to answer son's long distance call because she was watching her favorite television show. On the international Indo-Bangladesh border in an Indian town several individuals got together to watch a television programme from across the border. Similar observations can be made all along the Indo-Bangladesh and India- Pakistan borders where viewers share news and views from both countries.

In a recent survey of television viewers, it was found that in over 75% households television viewing is a family activity. Over a period of time, family viewing has not changed after television access has increased many fold in country. (Anonymous 2009)

In the Indian Civilization visual literacy is an integral part of socialization process and means of learning and method of information storage. Television on the heels of very vibrant cinema, in over dozen languages, has reached where formal education, health care and development have yet to make any dent in the life of an ordinary person.

Computer for Business, Education and Information

Almost quarter of a century ago, Computer Literacy and School Studies

(CLASS) project was introduced in India (1984-85), so as the Indian Civilization should not be left behind technologically advanced nations of the world. While evaluating the effects of the CLASS on the teaching and learning of the school children, teachers and educational management, I had observed keenness of children to learn computer. The study indicated high degree of receptivity of children in learning computer while same could not be said about their older teachers. (Agrawal 1996 and Anonymous 2004). The success story of computer training of the Indian students at all levels in almost all fields of education have been largely supported by private enterprise and individuals. To-day, several million Indian software experts men and women hold the key to the future human progress.

In spite of slow pace of computer access in the homes, use of computer has increased like a wild fire. In the last decade of twentieth century, I was very pessimistic while assessing the use of computer technology in the Indian higher education. (Achutan et. al 1993)

Human Future in the Indian Civilization

In India, a significant minority and corporate have accumulated a great amount of wealth after economic liberalization. The convergence of digital technology has touched and influenced the human condition and life.

In several spheres of the Indian Civilization digital technology has been helping to reduce uncertainty and provide instantaneous information regardless geographic location, remoteness of the area and education. How has digital technology penetration access and use helped reduce social and economic gap, human suffering and insecurity? At present and in the coming decade the gap will grow among majority of the poor since they lack ability and capacity to convert information into action. At same time those who have the ability and resources to convert information into action consciously will keep the poor from

utilization of the information. Continuous bombardment of religious telecast might help reinforce the perpetuation of the gap.

The intensive and enhanced use of digital technology reflects increased inter and intra family communication within national and international boundaries. Both time and space seemed to have collapsed. How has digital technology influenced family structure? One of the observations is that the lip tight child in front the parents has started talking non-stop. The one way communication has turned into two way communication. The exchange of information, sharing and advice of parents have turned into dialogue, discussion and counter questioning by strengthening kinship relationships at various levels. On the other hand communication interventions have influenced human interaction by generating responses often devoid of contemplation, self reflection and consideration of consequence. Given the growing insecurity in the Indian Civilization, closeness in the family structure will continue to grow more than the destruction of the family structure. The conclusion is contrary to the popular sociological conclusion that the family structure in the Indian Civilization would break after industrialization, urbanization and modernization and now "communication revolution".

Studies like education of Satellite Instructional Television Experiment(SITE) and several health related communication researches focusing on women have reaffirmed what has been known all along in the Indian Civilization - the sharp gender differences in communication patterns and its consequences on man-woman relationships. Exceptions apart, an asymmetrical communication pattern between female and male is very prevalent in which most of the time female is on receiving end.(Agrawal and Rai 1982) How has digital technology is influencing man and women relationships? How attitude towards female has changed? Has participation of women in workfoce, awareness of comodification of women sexual behaviour and demand of equality

between sexes altered especially among the young women? Recent survey on sex behaviour by India To-day shows that over 40% women use Internet for information on sex. The telephone use is higher among women compared men to keep in touch with family friends and co-workers. In 10 years the use will further increased leading to higher assertion of equality, privileges and rights and by women.

The digital technology is highly decentralized and has access to a large number of India's population so is information. The moot question is who benefited from it. On face of it digital technology has an equitable, access and use by all. But digital technology has invisible centralizing and controlling ability. The forgoing analysis is a depressing story of human condition in the Indian Civilization. I firmly believe that digital technology will further enslave the poor in the coming years.

Hence, digital technology has given higher control to rich over poor by way of close monitoring and exploitation. Digital technology can be used to block or subvert vital and useful information by rich against poor.

The "digital divide" was coined to express the view that high use of computer by rich nation and rich social class will create access gap in its use. In the process, knowledge and information content gap will increase between few "rich" and large "poor" majority every where including in the Indian Civilization.

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Gender & Digital inequality: Exploring the Role of Digital Media Literacy in Empowering Women in India

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Abstract

In the era of new digital technology, digital media access through the internet is an essential resource, and inequality in internet access is a primary concern for social science researchers. Gender inequality in terms of access to the internet, the use of digital devices, and digital media fluency are important factors. The impact of this inequality can be understood through the framework of a comparative study of the impact of inequality on access and use of digital media technologies. Mainly women's access to and use of these digital technologies. In India, women's digital literacy rate is lower compared to that of men. The divide in digital literacy is due to various factors; those are geographic, education, government policy, as well as socio-economic and cultural systems. The urgency has signified the need to allow Indian women in using digital technology through digital media literacy. It is well anticipated

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that women will not only gain information but also improve their quality of life. This paper tries to find out a range of factors that underpin gender digital inequality by using a qualitative descriptive research approach. It also, try to understand the obstacles to access, affordability, awareness, as well as inherent biases, and sociocultural norms, restrict women's ability to benefit from the opportunities offered by the digital media transformation. The efforts were taken through increasing Indian women's capacity through five key aspects; that is accessed, analyze and evaluate, create, reflect, and act. It aims to empower and support the equitable participation of women in the digital age.

Keywords: Gender, Digital inequality, Information communication technology, Digital divide, Digital media literacy, Women empowerment

I. Introduction

Digital media literacy is of the utmost importance in today's era of digital society. Digital Society is a society that cannot be alienated from digital technology and the internet to support the needs of getting information in everyday life. Information Communication Technology (ICT) certainly gives a considerable contribution if people have the ability and skills in their use. However, to use digital media technology, the conditions have required anyone to have digital literate. Similarly, one has to acquire skills or ability to use digital media tools such as computers, the internet, smartphones, messaging apps, and social networking sites (SNS). Their acquaintance with technology and dependence on digital communications will transform the way we work, entertain, collaborate, consume, and create.

To get ready for the wave of digital transformation, developing digital skills is as essential as creating digital infrastructure. To begin with, a specific focus on digital media literacy. Those who not have either will find themselves handicapped and sidelined from the mainstream of society. This necessity has been accepted as UNESCO's Sustainable

Development Goal 4 (SDG4), where one of the indicators calls on countries to track digital media literacy skills (*Sustainable Development Goal 4*, 2016). Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Nielsen in September 2019, titled *India Internet 2019*, report that India has 451 million monthly internet users (about 37% of the total population), second only to China. The use of digital technology in India is still dominated by men. This can be seen from the data of the report, which finds a much more substantial gender disparity, with male users accounting for 67% of the country's Internet population, meaning women account for only 33% of India's Internet users (*Knowledge Centre - IMAI*, n.d.). Based on these data, there are silent gender digital inequalities between men and women in India, where there are many Indian women who are significantly lacking in the use of digital technology. *Digital India, through a gender lens (2018)*, found that most women have little knowledge, ability, and opportunity of access to digital technology. According to Anita Gurumuthy and Nandini Chami, the barriers of women in using technology include a lack of confidence, no money, inability to use smartphones, laptops or high-tech devices, and a lack of training in technology (Anita Gurumurthy & Chami, n.d.).

The digital inequality is not only seen in the digital literacy between the gender but also the accepted role in the field of ICT. According to Amy O'Donnell & Caroline Sweetman, the development of information technology is still dominated by men (O'Donnell & Sweetman, 2018).

Gender digital inequality issues are about equal access to digital technology that is faced by women. ICT is also needed by women for various activities, such as in families, social, as well as economic activities. Therefore, the competence of women in the ICT field needs to be improved because it becomes an essential pillar in the nation's progress. Based on these problems, the researcher is interested in describing the importance of digital media literacy for the empowerment of women to overcome gender digital inequality in the now and the future.

2. Literature Review

Gender and digital inequalities mainly centered on gender disparities concerning the form of digital engagement. Few recent studies attempt to examine the components which trigger these differences and investigate the reason for different factors such as building social capital, employment opportunities, and educational achievement. Research evidence suggests that digital inequalities intersect with gender primarily on skills and content production patterns and employment processes associated with jobs involving technology. Women are more likely to utilize the internet for communication and social support (Cotten & Jelenewicz, 2006). Women also think little of their online aptitudes and capacities compared to men. Indeed when men and women do not necessarily differ in their genuine online abilities, women judge theirs possess aptitudes more modestly than their male partners (Hargittai & Shaw, 2015).

The study indicates that digital technology was mostly represented as a male-dominated (Badagliacco, 1990). The gap in digital technology usage between women and men is the outcome of both socio-economic and gender-specific differences (Bimber, 2000). Researchers observed that gender-specific differences had their origins; women report less confidence in their technical competency and more negative attitudes about technology adoption than men (Fallows, 2005). It was concluded that men have more superiority in terms of technology adoption than women (Buche, I C.E.).

The intensity of internet usage and internet-related abilities impact the probability of earning higher compensation; moreover, it influences individuals' desire to engage in an entrepreneurial activity such as human capital, monetary capital, and social capital influence both digital inclusion and entrepreneurship (Jennings & Brush, 2013). The study revealed that women utilize ICT in their lives in

different ways, and with distinctive accentuation than men within the same societies and social orders. The study further enumerates the reasons related to ICT use for the proficient and working environment needs as well as domestic, family, and individual care such as wellbeing and educational needs, managing an account, travel, and leisure activities (Thompson & Paul, 2016).

Research shows that gendered roles are socially constructed. It makes our socio-cultural comparative study vital in the discussion on digital media literacy impact. The socio-cultural desires of women about digital technology usage are not always gender-oriented, but gender can play an essential role in deciding interest in and selection of new digital technology (Li & Kirkup, 2007). This argument relates to some extent in the way women use ICT has to be considered based on relevant components and life-course events. Personal and working environments and other social settings impact the adoption and use of ICT in everyday lives (Castaño & Webster, 2011).

According to Intel's report, 31% of women in India are disinterested in information communication technology-related awareness, and 40% unable to understand its need in their lives (Intel, 2013). The report further stated that 48% of Indian women were familiar with digital technologies. The Intel report covers the perspectives of women's ICT use that reflect the reality of gender digital inequality within the Indian context. It urges for timely measures to contain any far-reaching consequences.

3. Research Method

This paper used a qualitative descriptive research approach through library research by collecting the data or scientific papers aimed at the research objectives (Nassaji, 2015). In other words, library research is carried out to solve a problem that is based on the definitive and in-depth study of relevant library materials.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The concept of digital media literacy

The concept of digital media literacy was first introduced by Gilster, in his book entitled “Digital Literacies.” It explains the ability to understand and use information from various digital contexts effectively and efficiently, such as love, career, and everyday life (Gilster, 1998). Research suggests that digital media literacy is the capability to create and share in different modes and forms (Hague & Payton, 2010). This extends a new type of digital media literacy based on computer and information literacy. Computer literacy was developed in the 1980s when microcomputers were rapidly used, not only in the business environment but also in the community ((8) (PDF) *Information and Digital Literacies*, n.d.). Meanwhile, information literacy was established in the 1990s, when the information was more easily compiled, accessed, and circulated through networked information technology.

Thus, it can be concluded that digital media literacy is not only emphasizing the skills of operating and using various information and communication technology devices but also requiring the capability of individuals to “read” and “understand” the contents of the information presented as well as the process of “writing” and “giving birth” to a new age knowledge. At present, the prime challenges in the application of digital literacy in society include the ability of the community, especially women, in carrying out their roles, such as having the ability to look for, track, process, and assess information effectively and efficiently.

4.2 Important components in digital media literacy

Digital media literacy is an ability that must be acquired and mastered in the use of information communication technology. Steve Wheeler identified nine crucial components in the world of digital media literacy (Wheeler, 2012):

- i. **Social networking.** Social networking sites (SNS) are one example of social networking or online social life. The use of SNS services needs to be selective. The skills to utilize the features offered by each social networking site are varied. For this reason, it is necessary to know and master the essential functions of each feature. On the other hand, the ethics of using social networking sites did not go unnoticed. Digital literacy provides a way for good social networking.
- ii. **Trans-literacy** is defined as the ability to use all different platforms, particularly to create content, collect, share, and communicate through various social media, discussion groups, smartphones, and various online services available.
- iii. **Maintaining privacy.** The most critical component of digital literacy is about how to maintain privacy in the online world—understanding all types of cybercrime, such as online theft through credit cards (carding), getting to know the characteristics of fake sites (phishing), fraud via email, and so forth. In social networking sites, displaying personal identity should be minimized to avoid something that is not wanted.
- iv. **Managing identity** is related to how to use the right identity in diverse social networks and other platforms
- v. **Creating content** is related to the skills to build content in various online applications and platforms. Besides, it also includes the ability to use various e-learning platforms.
- vi. **Organizing and sharing of content** signify content to be more easily disseminated. For example, the use of social bookmarking sites facilitates the dissemination of information that can be accessed by many users on the internet.
- vii. **Reusing/repurposing content** is the ability to make content from various types of accessible information to produce new

content that can be reused for various needs. For example, a teacher creates content about certain subjects with a creative commons license. Then the content is uploaded on the Slideshare website so that many will download it. It can be used by others who need it by carrying out the information or knowledge according to their needs.

- viii. **Filtering and selecting content** is the ability to search, filter, and select information accurately following the desired needs, such as, through various search engines on the internet.
- ix. **Self-broadcasting** aims to share exciting ideas, personal experiences, and multimedia content, such as, through blogs, forums, or wiki. This is a form of sharing in online social society.

4.3 Digital media literacy competencies

In the age of digital technology that continues to develop so rapidly, the ability of digital media literacy is vital so that everyone can take advantage of the opportunities brought by these developments. Renee Hobbs outlines five competencies in digital media literacy (Hobbs, 2010).

- i. **Access** (access), the ability of a person to find and use digital media skillfully and share information that is relevant to others
- ii. **Analyze** (analysis and evaluation), which means understanding the message and using decisive thinking to check the type of message and its quality, truthfulness, the credibility of the message, and the point of view, then consider the possible effects or consequences of the message.
- iii. **Create** (content creation), which includes writing or producing content using creativity and self-confidence to express themselves, supported by an awareness of the goals, readers, and composition techniques.

- iv. **Reflect**, which refers to the ability to reflect the social and moral responsibility, principles on one's identity and life experience, as well as communication behaviour.
- v. **Act**, which means action while working individually and in groups to share the knowledge and resolve the problems.

4.4 The advantages of digital media literacy

Ten advantages of digital literacy in an infographic entitled Top 10 benefits of digital media literacy, maps these benefits as time-saving, faster learning, money-saving, ensure safety and security, updated information, connectedness, better decision-making, working motivation, happiness, and global influence (Wright, 2012).

4.5 Digital gender divide

Although the digital divide in the 1990s focused on first-order effects, namely the focus on accessibility to Information Communication Technology infrastructure, namely on ownership, availability, and affordability of ICTs, at present the digital divide problem is usually focused on the second-order effect which is related to the use of ICTs in daily life (Gunduz, 2010).

Peggy Parks, in his book titled "The Digital Divide," suggested that the digital divide means the gap between individuals having internet access and those who do not (Parks, n.d.). Meanwhile, sociology professor Manuel Castells proposed that the digital divide is unequal access to the internet because it is a requirement to omit the difference among the people (Castells, 2001).

Access divide is the gap that is related to the rights of access to information and communication technology. The usage divide refers to the difference in the use of ICT. Meanwhile, the quality of use divide means the gap between the qualities in terms of the use of ICT. Among the causes of the gap is gender, where women have constrained in

accessing digital media platforms and limited opportunities to connect any social media community. The worse there has stereotyped built by women, such as techno-phobia, low excitement, and less competence of using technology (Suwana & Lily, 2017).

A research conducted by Tracy Kennedy and his team revealed several factors influencing the digital divide (Kennedy et al., 2003). They included demography (age, gender, education, and income), geography, government policy, culture, and economic system. The present study emphasizes the digital divide between genders. It is well clear in the amount of penetration and the number of internet users. In India, the number is dominated by men, with the percentage of 67%, while female users were only 33%. A survey conducted by Accenture to supports the fact that digital fluency for women in India ranked the lowest among 20 countries of global internet users (India was the lowest in the survey) (Accenture, n.d.). The following figure illustrates the relevant condition.

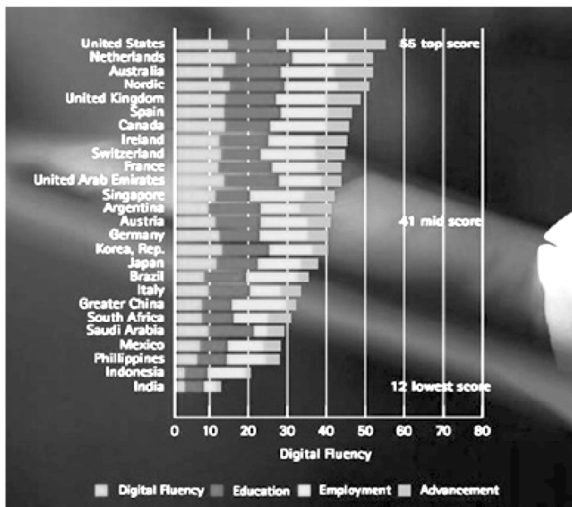


Fig. I. Getting To Equal: How digital is helping close the gender inequalities at work (Accenture, n.d.)

According to Accenture, women are more excited about their social relations, rather than to their digital fluency. Mostly, Indian women use digital technology for social life, with as much as 60% for those aged 20-25 years old. The rest is for work (40%). Meanwhile, women aged 26-35 years old use the internet for social life (70%) and work as well as education (30%). Fowlie and Biggs also explained that culture becomes a barrier for women to access the internet. Besides, other barriers include education level, income, irrelevant content due to male domination, and security issues while going online (Suwana & Lily, 2017).

Therefore, it can be concluded that women come across several barriers to accessing information communication technology.

- i. In general, geography impact and influences the access for women to information and technology. Women are more confined in terms of mobility in the conservative society, where religion and customs prohibit them from taking a trip in public without men.
- ii. Related to education, many women are uneducated due to minimal access to education and information, unequal training on ICT, limited time as well as economic and financial facilities.
- iii. The policymakers are less concerned with women's particular needs for accessing and using ICT.
- iv. Most industries in ICT are male-dominated, which is evident in their number occupying the executive or director positions.
- v. In public space or social media, women are attached to negative stigma with image and stereotype, such as sexy, taking fewer efforts in removing them.
- vi. Cultural patriarchy has linked men with duties and functions outside the households, while women with anything at home, such as taking care of the children. It influences them in using ICT, a view that technology is part of men's obligation and is in the masculine domain.

At the same time, other countries, such as the US, Netherland, Australia, UK, and other Nordic and European countries, hold the different perspectives of women. They are given equal rights to that of men in expressing their potentials. Therefore, women must have digital literacy, which may lead to progress in the nation's potential.

4.6 Women's participation through digital media literacy

The global advancement with the rapid progress of digital technology requires women to take part in it. Several steps have been taken to encourage the digital literacy of society. One of the ways is to involve women in the Digital India movement because the use of technology is not only to gain information but also to improve their quality of life. Indian women use technology for their children's learning and their family, business, and works. According to Kim, women can use the internet to help them in increasing productivity, facilitate access to the new market, improve education, open better job opportunities, as well as contribute to the economic aspect (Andreasson, n.d.).

Women empowerment through digital literacy should pay attention to several aspects. First, access to digital information and an individual's capabilities can be used to build up their social life. Second, they should find their inspiration to use technology. The third is related to an individual's social ability, where women are required to use the media pro-actively and confidently. Women empowerment in digital media is well anticipated to increase their capabilities to take part in social development, to open job opportunities in entrepreneurship, and to transform the roles and functions of women in the organization.

Digital media literacy is the ability of an individual to access digital media in five aspects; those are accessed, analyze and evaluate, create, reflect, and act.



Fig.2. Digital media literacy competencies: Access, Analyze, Create, Reflect and Act

The first competence includes women's skills in accessing the computer and the software as information sources. In this, women should also master the jargon used by each device. In taking the benefits of the internet instrument, the skills also cover the ways to navigate themselves in surfing the online information. The information should be relevant to the method to take notes to make the visual organization. If they should share the information with others, they should think first about the truthfulness and the advantages.

Second, analyze means the ability that begins with interpreting the data in the forms of text, illustrations, voice, and the combination of those. The higher the capability in interpreting the information, the more benefits they gain. Besides, the evaluation skills will lead women to think critically, to sort relevant and trusted information. People are exposed to enough information; in that, they do not know whether

they are eligible to access the information or not. The ability will help to select appropriate information. Besides, if people want to share the information with others in social networking, they will be able to consider the effect and consequence of the information.

The third competence, create, expects women to write and arrange the information logically, thus creating quality and ethical products. In creating the content, the product is directed to the one beneficial, thereby preventing the creator from producing “electronic trash.”

Forth competence, reflect, is women’s ability to write accountable information for the people, to hold the ethics in communication behaviour, and to understand the rules in using digital media. Various regulations established by the government are used to protect the users and are expected to prevent less ethical behaviours. Besides, women are suggested not to reveal their identity or their families in social networking.

The fifth aspect is acting, which means a woman’s ability to use digital media to help them to solve any problem. Digital media can help women to overcome family problems through the information offered in it. In a working environment, it helps them to achieve and improve their performance. Meanwhile, in the society, women are expected to take part as a good citizen.

The success of digital media literacy for women, can be achieved if competent parties, such as government and educational institutions, support them. Women can attend the training program using digital media offered by the government or other institutions. Digitally literate women can improve the welfare of the people in general, the Indian in particular.

5. Conclusion

The advance of digital technology has undergone rapid progress in India. The activities of using digital information do not only serve to support daily activities but also functions to create fundamental changes in all aspects of life. The condition requires people be to gain literacy, skills, or abilities in using and utilizing digital media. However, in India, the utilization of digital technology is still dominated by men, thereby creating a digital divide.

India has the world's second-largest online population, with over 560 million internet users, out of which only 33% of India's online users are women. If urban and rural areas split the numbers, the gender digital gap is even more extensive. This gender digital gap, if not adequately addressed, is likely to lead to gender digital inequalities in many areas, including inequalities in women's political participation, civil rights, and less financial inclusion of women.

Considering the significance of the issue, it is necessary to make an effort to ensure women's digital media literacy in India to participate in the digital era. Women are required to develop competencies in digital media literacy aspects such as access, analyze, create, reflect, and act.

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Strengthening hyperlocal news outlets: an antidote to spreading of misinformation

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Abstract

The menace of misinformation reached such a head during COVID-19 that the World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom had to declare it as 'Infodemic', a pandemic of misinformation. The outbreak of misinformation, however, is not a new phenomenon. With the increase in news and information distribution and consumption through online platforms, bypassing the mainstream media gatekeeping process, the freedom of the prosumers (consumers becoming producers) to post on social media, political and ideological interests and the trust deficit between the mainstream media and the news consumers have added to the wave of misinformation for the last couple of years. Lack of grassroots journalists and required infrastructure to source news from the ground by the mainstream media has added to the problem. In India, several hyperlocal digital news

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platforms are operating independently either through a website or a Facebook page or YouTube channel. Most importantly they are operating from small district towns and in Indian languages. They have a robust network of news sources in the geographical location they are working from. They mostly obtain first-hand information. These hyperlocal news outlets have their eyes and ears rooted to the small geographical locations they operate from. Through the qualitative method of in-depth interviews of the news publishers of the hyperlocal news outlets in Bengal, this study wants to look at the effectiveness of their newsgathering and verification process in countering the wave of misinformation. This article also suggests forging collaboration among these news platforms mainstream media and the fact-checking organisations may help in better dissemination of verified information as well as reaching out to a broader audience.

Keywords: Misinformation, Hyperlocal Media, Community Journalism, Online Journalism

Introduction

Along with the digital disruptions in the news and information ecosystem, the issue of misinformation has cropped up as a major challenge in societies across the globe. The continuous flow of misinformation in various forms and formats, perpetrated by individuals or groups of individuals with vested business, political or ideological interests, plagued the social media as well as the mainstream media outlets. Increasing access to the internet, availability of cheap internet data (especially in India), use of smartphones and the popularity of the social media have thrown the news consumers in a vulnerable situation. The issue of misinformation or misleading and false information has gone to such a head that the Director-General of the World Health Organisation Tedros Adhanom (2020) went to compare it with a pandemic during the COVID-19 outbreak. He has termed the problem as 'Infodemic'.

It is observed that people tend to trust their friends and families more than media outlets. The interactions among the friends and families on closed or open social media platforms coupled with inflow and outflow of unfiltered information have undermined the role of mainstream media. The gatekeeping role of the mainstream media has been diluted. So has the line between the news and opinion. On the face of the pace of information circulation, the news consumers and often the professional news producers are falling prey to consumption and distribution of false news.

At the same time, the mainstream media outlets have been cutting down their grassroots network of journalists as part of the cost-cutting measures. There is a dearth of local news in mainstream media outlets as some of them are heavily capital-centric, event-driven in their news coverage or politically motivated. Many language newspapers have launched district-based editions, but those are trying to generate revenues rather than increase genuine local news coverage. This has caused a trust deficit between the news consumers and the mainstream media.

At this juncture, this paper argues, the hyperlocal digital news platforms which are mainly operating out of small district towns in India, disseminating information in local Indian languages, using social media platforms to reach out to their audience, can act as a potent antidote to the spread of misinformation. Reducing the trust deficit and increasing the ground-level news coverage, the wave of misinformation can be fought mainly because of their verification mechanism.

What is misinformation?

The news that is intentionally and verifiably false and can mislead the readers have been termed as Fake News (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017). The term which got popularised during the US Presidential elections

in 2016 (Ribeiro and Ortellado 2018) has evolved over the last couple of years. In the recent discourse, the term fake news has been replaced by mis- or disinformation. According to Wardle (2017), the reason why we need to replace the term 'Fake News' is simply because the issue is beyond 'news' and it is disrupting the whole information production and consumption mechanism. She defines misinformation as 'the inadvertent sharing of false information' and disinformation as 'the deliberate creation and sharing of information known to be false'.

Misinformation or disinformation may come in different forms like news, satires, propaganda, misleading content, imposter content, false context, false connection, manipulated content among others (Wardle 2017, Tandoc et al., 2018).

During COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a rise in medical misinformation over the virus. According to Mian and Khan (2020), "As Covid-19 turns into a full-fledged public health crisis, multiple theories regarding the virus' origin have taken hold on the internet, all with a common theme: the virus was artificially created in a lab by a rogue government with an agenda." There has been a rise of the 'anti-science groups' which are causing a disconnect between the scientific knowledge and the ordinary people. Apart from the conspiracy theories regarding the origin of the virus, the topics that dominated the information ecosphere were the cure for the disease, vaccine safety, among others (ibid).

An analysis of the fact-checked stories by independent fact-checking website Boom Live (Chowdhury 2020), has also found that a bulk of the COVID-19 related information on the social media was on communal rumours, false allegations against the Muslims and purposive spread of the virus.

However, this is not a new phenomenon that the misinformation has been floating during a health crisis. There have been such instances

during HIV, Ebola or Zika virus outbreak as well (Scrase 2019, Zhou and Zafarani 2018).

Misinformation and Hyperlocal News

Hyperlocal newspapers are common and have grown out of small towns or villages to cater to the people of that particular locality over the decades in many countries. Now, with the advent of technology, apart from the hyperlocal newspapers, internet-based hyperlocal news websites devoted to a small community or shared interest are growing in high numbers. They act as, according to Baines (2010), “town criers” mainly providing information to the communities about the local affairs. They are also taking the help of social media platforms like Facebook or YouTube to disseminate information for the local community, which is not limited by the geographical location. People with emotional or other connect to the small town, but living outside it are also finding a space to keep themselves updated about the news of the locality. Metzgar et al. (2011) defined the hyperlocal journalism as “geographically-based, community-oriented, original-news-reporting organisations indigenous to the web and intended to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement.”

The appetite for local news still persists when the mainstream media has created a vacuum in the local news coverage (Chatterjee 2019). This appetite has provided for a scope for the hyperlocal news platforms to create a space for themselves. Among many characteristics of the hyperlocal media, the participation of the audience in the news production process has been enabled by the interactivity features of the web and the social media platforms (De Meulenaere 2016).

Explaining the relation between the public and the media, with an example in the Indonesian context, Ritonga and Syahputra (2019) point out that public distrust in mass media due to its political partisanship has contributed to the public discussions of various issues on social

media platforms. They are just not at the receivers' end in the information cycle. The public is equally contributing to the information generation through constant interactions. This is true about India as well. Here, common people have found a voice in social media platforms. Direct communication channels have been established among the people bypassing the mainstream media.

While the process has made the platform more democratic, it has got many pitfalls as well. As it has been observed that the social media platforms, without the rigorous gatekeeping like in mainstream media, has turned out to be the breeding ground for misinformation.

Thus, the presence of hyperlocal media on social media platforms delivering local news, high interactivity quotient among a captive audience and the community-building efforts by them can be beneficial for better communication between the news producers and the consumers. This may play an important role in combating misinformation.

Growth of hyperlocal media in India

Local newspapers or community radios are nothing new to India. However, the internet-mediated Indian language digital news platforms are part of the recent hyperlocal community journalism. Chatterjee (2019) mentions that there is not the only appetite for local news in India, but also they want to consume it in the local Indian language. Moreover, the opportunity for the regional language speakers to access information on the web in their native language has widened over the last couple of years. This has diminished the monopoly of the English-speaking elites in information production, dissemination and consumption (Rao 2019). A KPMG study (2017) found that entertainment and news dominate most of the content available in Indian languages. Almost 60 per cent of the language-internet users want to consume region-specific news in their native language.

In India, the mainstream corporate media houses attempted to reach out to the hyperlocal audience with localised editions (Neyazi 2011). However, they were more concerned with the advertisers than building a community around the local issues and the people (Vincent and Mahesh 2007).

As Rao (2020) explains, a considerable part of the Indian population resides outside the metro cities. About 66 per cent of the population is from rural India, and they want to keep a tab on the current affairs in their own language. Founder of Lokal, a conglomerate of hyperlocal news in different Indian languages, Jani Pasha (As quoted by Rao 2020) explains that India having 729 districts across 29 states has got different language, dialect, culture and food habits in every 50 kilometres. There is massive scope for the hyperlocal news to grow in this area.

Lokal is one such example of delivering hyperlocal news to the Indian language audience. There are several such examples of popular hyperlocal digital news platforms across the country like CGNet Swara, a voice-based portal operates from Chhatisgarh for the tribal community, Gaon Connection is based in Himachal Pradesh, and various news apps like LocalPlay focuses on Moradabad, Circle operates out of the Agra, Mathura, Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh.

They all target the audience of the small towns and are operating in regional languages and acting as hyperlocal news outlets (Pai 2018). In West Bengal, there are hundreds of such district-based digital news platforms which have not been adequately mapped yet.

This article tries to find out what is the mechanism that these hyperlocal news platforms follow to gather information and verify them and if the said process along with the interactivity feature of these outlets can be helpful to facilitate the process of reaching out to the audience with authentic and fact-checked information.

Methodology

In order to answer the moot question of this article, the qualitative method of in-depth interviews was employed. The study focused on the hyperlocal digital media platforms operating out of various district towns in West Bengal and producing stories in the Bengali language. The news outlets which have either dedicated website and/or Facebook page, deal with only news, produce original news pieces and don't act as an aggregator, were randomly chosen for this purpose. In-depth interviews of 20 hyperlocal journalists of these digital news platforms were conducted to find an answer to the questions regarding the process of news gathering, news verification and the challenges of these hyperlocal digital media platforms. The interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 induced lockdown period and the discussions hovered mainly around the journalists' experience of this period. Since qualitative methods are applied to form a deep understanding of the issues and in-depth interviews help in the analysis of the experience of the research participants (Charmaz 1990), this method was found to be suitable for this study.

Findings and discussions

The interviews of the hyperlocal digital news platforms which are quite young as they have mostly come up in the last couple of years have revealed the potential of the hyperlocal news in combatting the misinformation.

i) Newsgathering process

Most of the journalists working in these hyperlocal media outlets have prior experience of reporting from the ground. They are mostly working with mainstream media as the stringer reporter from the district, or they used to work with the mainstream media organisation. Therefore, they have got very good news sense, and their eyes and ears are rooted to the ground. "We have reporters in every administrative block in the

district, and they file reports for the website,” said P7. Whenever there is any incident or any breaking story, the reporters from different parts of the district send the visuals and the text through the smartphone. It has been observed that the editor uploads the news items on the website using mobile phones. In most of the cases, the core team is very small and often consists of 3 to 10 people. The editor also visits the field to gather news. So, their newsgathering process mostly follows the traditional method of visiting the field, meeting or talking to the primary sources.

They also receive a lot of User Generated Content. “We have a WhatsApp group administered by me. We distribute news through this social media platform and also get news alerts from our readers. They post the information, image and visuals related to their neighbourhood on our WhatsApp group,” said P11. Most of the journalists who were interviewed reveal that they generally do not directly pick up the information from the WhatsApp groups and upload them immediately on their site or Facebook page. After receiving any information or content, they alert the reporter of the neighbourhood or the village concerned and ask them to verify and file the story.

The news outlets heavily depend on the information provided by the administration. “During the Covid-19 lockdown period, we have covered the press conferences of the district administration and police regularly. The officers requested us to disseminate the information to our audience so that people of the area are aware of the administrative measures,” said P12. Another journalist from Bankura [P1] said that the administrative officials often take action based on their stories. “One old lady was almost starving during the Covid-19 lockdown. Soon after we reported, the local block-level office sent their officials to help the lady,” said P1.

ii) Verification

Though some of the interviewees have admitted that they had, on a few occasions, taken the UGC directly on the site, but later found

them to be false. It was mainly due to the fast pace of news production on the face of competitions among the hyperlocal media outlets which had driven them to commit this mistake. Nevertheless, most of them follow a particular regime of verifying information. “We always ask the reporter who is covering the area to verify from the ground,” said P15. “They, in order to verify, go to the spot and send us a report or ask the local people over the phone to find out the details.” Since they have a strong local network of journalists, the process of such verification is not complicated and fast.

They also contact the local administration to verify the information. “For example, one of our readers sent a video of a fire in a residential building in the nearby neighbourhood. The visuals were quite enticing to put it up on the Facebook Page we run. We controlled the urge to break the news. We called the Fire Brigade to confirm the news and get more details from the official sources. After the confirmation by the Fire Brigade, we decided to run the news,” said P14.

Similarly, the journalists frequently call up the local member of the village panchayat or the councillors of the urban bodies to confirm any information generating out of the area they represent. “They are the resourceful people who have the verified news of the locality. Sometimes they ask for time to send their people to the spot to verify and call us back with details,” said P16. Politicians with reliable local contacts also come handy for the hyperlocal journalists when it comes to verification of any political or administrative information.

There is a collaborative approach among the hyperlocal journalists. If the news is generating from neighbouring districts and the news producers have got any visual from there, they would call the journalists from the said district for verification of the item. Similar kind of collaboration is also seen inside the district among the hyperlocal journalists. “Unless someone is doing any exclusive story, all of us share information with each other in the district,” said P8.

However, it was found during the interviews that almost all of the news publishers were apparently not aware of the online verification tools like reverse image search, InVid verification tools, among others. “I think we need thorough training in using such tools to verify content online,” said P19.

iii) Effectiveness of the mechanism in combating misinformation

Almost all of the journalists who were interviewed have demonstrated that they do not do reporting only from the comfort zone of the newsroom. They extensively do leg work to gather information. They visit the spot of the incident, meet the people to produce stories. At the same time, the news outlets have a robust network of sources in remote areas, and the local reporters collaborate with each other, irrespective of the news outlets they work in.

Having trained in either mainstream print or television media, they follow the traditional method of verification to verify every piece of information from the source. So, there is less chance of putting out unverified information on their news platforms. In most of the cases, they apply strong editorial judgment before publishing any news story. Even though they are using social media to disseminate information, there is adequate ‘gatekeeping’ in news processing practices.

The grassroots infrastructure and the traditional methods of verification coupled with the tilt towards the values of ethical journalism drive these hyperlocal news platforms to practice good journalism. This helps them in avoiding the trap of spreading false information among their readers.

For example, if there is any video of a police officer dancing in uniform inside a police station, the hyperlocal journalist will not take time to go to the police station to verify the authenticity of the video or directly talk to the officials of the police station. The reporter can easily recognise the police officer due to his proximity to the department for day to

day reporting. A purported video of any political party or community doing something mischievous may cause much damage to the government. However, in this case, as well, the reporter at the ground level may rush to the politician or the neighbourhood to confirm the information immediately.

The interviews have found that these digital news platforms are highly interactive in nature. They are active across social media platforms. They continuously receive feedback from the audience and interact with them on social media as well as over the phone. The feedback helps them double-check the information from the audience or listen to the readers if they have any questions, doubts, queries or claims. Moreover, the hyperlocal digital media outlets also build a community around their publication that helps them to connect more closely with their audience. This may contribute to reducing the trust deficit the news consumers have grown vis-à-vis the mainstream media.

Many fact checkers believe the relations the hyperlocal media builds with its audience may be useful in reaching out to the audience faster than the traditional ways of disseminating fact-checked information.

Conclusion

Indeed, misinformation does not always generate from the ground, or they do not revolve around the issues of the locality all the time. For instance, if there is any fake video of the Prime Minister or if a data is manipulated to present a distorted fact about the invention of vaccine for COVID-19, it is not related to a particular community or locality. To debunk these types of misinformation, we need professional fact-checkers or journalists who can work on it sitting in the newsroom using online verification tools. However, if any misinformation emanates from the ground like a person is being assaulted by a group of people and if that is blamed on a particular religious community, the hyperlocal journalists will be the right person to debunk the piece of misinformation

using their local sources. They can also debunk false news faster if the fake items are using local Indian language in audio or text.

Despite the effectiveness of the hyperlocal media mentioned above, the lack of professionalism and proper training in journalism in some cases do cause damage to the information dissemination process by these media outlets. There are high chances of falling under political or other pressure. The revenue model of these outlets is also not yet strong enough for their independent survival. A study by Pal and Dwivedy (2020) has found that the hyperlocal digital news platforms in Bengal are dominated by general news of events and incidents. Despite having a vast potential, they are not yet motivated to practice development journalism on serious community-based issues like health and education. There is hardly any awareness about debunking misinformation and reporting them regularly.

Therefore, it is essential to strengthen the hyperlocal media in Indian languages, equip them with online verification tools, create awareness among these hyperlocal journalists about the mis- and disinformation so that they can serve the community better.

A collaboration between the hyperlocal media and the mainstream regional or national media can aid the fact-checking process. The independent fact-checking organisations also can collaborate with the hyperlocal media in order to verify certain information and disseminate the fact-checked stories from their organisations in different Indian languages. This will help in reaching out to the desired audience with the truth behind false information faster than any other route.

As mentioned earlier, the audience builds a relationship of trust with the hyperlocal media, and that can boost the process of circulating quality information. Since these news platforms are not financially or technologically strong, funding, imparting training in innovate ways to monetising their content and technical know-how are required to strengthen their position in the community.

This paper has a limitation in terms of the scale of sampling and interviews of the journalists of the hyperlocal media, further larger sample, quantitative and longitudinal study and probing the audience perspective may help in getting a clearer picture about the effectiveness of the newsgathering and verification process of the hyperlocal news publishers in combating misinformation.

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From Screening to Streaming: Impact of OTT on Indian Cinema

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Abstract

Over-the-top (OTT) video streaming platforms have opened up a new avenue for filmmakers as well as producers in India. With newer players, India is projected to be one of the top 10 OTT markets in the World by 2022. This article deals with how OTT is affecting and going to affect Indian Cinema in many ways. It describes how movie viewing pattern has changed, how creativity in cinema has taken a new shape. Freedom in creativity has taken the front seat as far as contents in the OTT are concerned. Similarly, it also suggests new and growing sources of revenues for those producers whose content is being shown in the OTT platform.

Key Words: OTT, India, Cinema, Creativity, revenue

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I. Introduction

If there is one thing, other than Cricket, the Indians are obsessed with then it has to be Cinema. So much so that people follow the actors' daily routines in their lives; a huge chunk of the young ladies use the beauty products the actresses use; the young boys look up to their fashion icons in the cinema. Not just entertainment, cinema mirrors Indian society and at the same time, it affects the social lifestyle of the people.

The Journey of Cinema dates back to the late 19th Century with a screening of soundless short films by a man named Marius Sestier sent by famous Lumiere Brothers of France in Watson Hotel of Bombay in July 1896. Indians got exposed to motion pictures for the first time and India's tryst with cinema commenced. The show was highly popular and soon it was shifted to bigger Novelty Theatre and continued for about a month (Srivastava, 2016). Encouraged by its success, Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatavdekar, popularly known as Save Dada, imported a Camera from the UK. He shot a motion picture on a wrestling match in 1899 (Hutchinson, 2013). Indian Film Making was born. However, the first full-length film of India was released in 1913. From 1996 to 2013, films from other countries were screened in India, though several attempts have been made to make Indian content by various persons. (Srivastava, 2016).

Directed by the legendary Dadasaheb Phalke, Raja Harishchandra is considered to be the first full-length film of India. Though it was a silent film, it was a torchbearer for the cinemas to be made in the coming days and the Bollywood industry to be established later.

Then came Alam Ara that gave Bollywood its voice. Released in 1931, it was the first Indian talkie. A period fantasy about an aging king and his two rival queens, the film faced difficulties during its making because of the poor recording conditions.

After a few years, in 1937 the Indian audience got to watch the first color film of the country. Directed by Moti B. Gidwani and produced by Ardeshir Irani of Imperial Pictures *Kisan Kanya* wrote its name in the history of Bollywood for being the first coloured film. Though it was not a commercial success, it will be remembered forever for changing the colour of Indian cinematography.

India is now the largest producer of films in the world. As per UNESCO Institute for Statistics, India produced 1986 feature films in 2016, compared to 853 films by China and 656 films by the USA in the same year. Indian Cinema is also popular across the globe. In India, Cinema is watched by millions of viewers through approximately 9,600 screens, out of which 2950 are multiplex screens (KPMG, 2019). Indian films are also screened across the globe. Revenue from the overseas market has been a key driver for the growth of Indian films.

Indian Cinema Industry has embraced technology at various points of time to be relevant and attractive. R D Burman's last film as a music composer, *1942: A Love Story* was also the first film in Indian cinema which had Dolby sound.

Chhota Chetan, released in 1998, was the first 3D film in Bollywood. However, the first 3D film in Indian cinema is *My Dear Kuttichathan* which was released in the year 1984 and later dubbed in Hindi 1998. The visual appeal of 3D films drew a large number of audiences to the cinema hall.

The visual effects used in movies like *Ra.One* and the magnum opus, '*Baahubali*' demonstrates the evolving technological standard of films in India. Cinemas have entered a whole new phase and technical expertise has become an indispensable part of it and all these things combined have resulted in a rise in the number of the viewers.

Over-the-top (OTT) video streaming platforms have opened up a new avenue for filmmakers as well as producers in India. With newer

players, India is projected to be one of the top 10 OTT markets in the World by 2022 (PwC, 2018).

2. OTT streaming services and Indian Cinema

There is no universally agreed definition of Over-the-top (OTT) services. The Study Report of the European Parliament's Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection defines OTT services as "an online service that can be regarded as potentially substituting for traditional telecommunications and audio-visual services such as voice telephony, SMS and television" (p. 23). According to BEREC's Report on OTT, it is defined as "content, a service, or an application that is provided to the end-user over the public Internet" (p. 14). Commonwealth Telecommunication Organisation (2016), in a study report (2016) regards OTT as "online services which can potentially substitute traditional telecommunications services such as voice telephony and SMS" (p.4). OTT content and services are directly delivered to the user/viewer through the internet. Voice over IP services, chat services, instant messaging services, and video and audio streaming services are some of the OTT Services delivered by various service providers. According to a Consultative Paper by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (2015):

An OTT provider can be defined as a service provider offering Information Communication Technology services, but neither operates a network nor leases network capacity from a network operator. Instead, OTT providers rely on the global internet and access network speeds to reach the user, hence going "over-the-top" of a telecom service provider's network. (p. 8)

OTT Media Services which includes streaming of audio and video content has significantly transformed the media and entertainment industry. Video and audio content is delivered directly to the viewers, bypassing traditional distribution networks such as cable networks or

satellite-based set-top boxes. Users access OTT Services through various devices connected with the internet such as personal computers, smartphones, tablets, digital media players, smart television platforms, etc. OTT Services are monetized in various ways. It can be paid subscription-based or advertisement-supported or others.

OTT video streaming service is highly popular among users across the globe. OTT services and Video on Demand (VoD) services are almost synonymous now. Video on Demand is defined as “Video content that is controlled, enabled, and consumed whenever a viewer wants after its official release date or original air date and time” (MFA, n.d.). According to a whitepaper by Frost & Sullivan (2018), mobile video forms 50% of total OTT Video viewership and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 14.8% by 2021. Citing a survey by Netflix, the whitepaper says “in India, 44% of viewers consider OTT content as one of the top travel essentials and close to 67% of Netflix viewers binge-watch TV shows on their handheld devices while traveling” (p. 2).

OTT Video streaming services offer access to existing films and television contents as well as original content exclusively produced for the service. Some OTT services such as iTunes require that the video be downloaded first and then played, while other OTT services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video streams live when the viewers watch. The record of simultaneous users watching an OTT program was set at 18.6 million during the 2019 IPL final match played between Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings by Disney’s Indian video streaming platform Hotstar.

OTT Video Streaming service started in India with the launch of BigFlix by Reliance Entertainment in 2008. However, the number of OTT video streaming service provider shot up after 2015 when mobile data started to become cheaper and 4G data service by telecom companies spread across the country. Globally renowned OTT video

service providers like NetFlix and Amazon Prime Video has also joined the OTT media market in the country. Currently, there are about 40 OTT media service providers in India. OTT Video Streaming service providers in India can be divided into five broad groups: Independent Companies and Platforms, Broadcasters, Companies with Content Presence, Telecom Companies, and Distributors (Emkay Global, 2017). Independent Companies and Platforms include service providers like YouTube YouTube, Vuclip, Hoichoi etc. Broadcasters like Zee Entertainment, Viacom 18 and Star India have their own OTT platform, which are ZEE5, Voot and Hotstar, respectively. Similarly, Telecom service providers have also their own OTT platforms such as Airtel TV by Airtel, Jio Cinema by Jio Telecom and Vodafone Play by Vodafone Idea. Video /TV content producers like Balaji Telefilms (ALTBalaji), Shemaroo (ShemarooMe) and Eros International (Eros Now) have started their own OTT streaming service. Besides, these, direct to home television service providers or distributors like Dish TV and Tata Sky also offer video streaming services through internet-connected devices. According to a survey by MoMAGIC (2019), as reported in Trak.in (2019), OTT platforms is fast emerging as a preferred choice for video consumption. The survey finds that 55% of the respondents prefer to view various video content such as TV shows/movies/sports /movies on OTT platforms, whereas only 41% prefer DTH.

The survey also finds Hot star to be the most preferred OTT Video streaming platforms. Hot star, owned by Novi Digital Entertainment, a subsidiary of Star India, which itself is a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company has 300 million subscribers. Amazon Prime Video and Netflix are the other two popular OTT streaming service providers with a subscription of 13 million and 11 million. Other major OTT Video service providers are ZEE5, VOOT, Arre and SonyLIV (Kajarekar, 2019).

With access to internet rocketing in the rural pockets of India lately, the minds behind the different OTT platforms started using this opportunity to reach the audience they have never reached before. With the drastic reduction in data prices across networks, the number of internet users rose ly in the mid-2010s and the producers exploited this opportunity and started doing something on OTT platforms that became hugely popular day by day.

Cinema constitutes a major component of the offering by the video streaming service providers like Hotstar, Netflix or Amazon PrimeVideo. All the leading OTT video platforms make 100 of Indian cinema, both old and new, available for viewers. People can choose cinemas from the '70s, '60s, and '50s, as well as the latest blockbusters to watch at their convenience. not just acquiring rights for existing cinema, these OTT Platforms are also making a big investment to create new original content.

As per media report, Netflix has partnered with Dharmatic Entertainment, which is the digital content arm of Karan Johar's Dharma Productions for making 'exclusive feature films, long-form and short-form content in both fiction and non-fiction space for the video streaming platform' (Saini, 2019). In the year 2019, Netflix released eight original films as well as five original series produced in India. One of the highest profiles of the production by Netflix, 'Bard of Blood' was produced by Red Chillies Entertainment, owned by Shah Rukh Khan and his wife, Gauri Khan Amazon Prime video also released 10 original Indian shows during 2019. (Arora, 2019). The top video streaming service providers in India, including Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, MX Player, AltBalaji, and Zee5 etc released two to three new original web series every month during 2019. Because of the success of these original web series and films sevral leading actors of Indian Cinema industry like SaifAli Khan, Akshay Kumar, RadhikaApte, Manoj Bajpayee, Nawazuddin Siddique Vivek Oberoi now prefer to be part of the original video content by these video streaming service providers.

3. Impact of OTT Streaming Services on Indian Cinema

OTT streaming service has significantly impacted the media and entertainment landscape including cinema. Viewing Cinema is no longer about sitting for some hours in a cinema hall or in front of the television. People can watch their preferred film whenever and wherever they choose to. According to The Nielsen Global Video-on-Demand Survey Report (2016), every day many people across the world view on demand video – both download and streaming. As per the report, people who watch on demand video at least once in a day constitute 43 percent of total respondents who view any kind of VOD programme. Regarding the cinema, the report finds “Movies dominate the type of VOD content watched across all regions and generations. Eighty percent of global respondents who watch on-demand content say they view movies, followed by on-demand TV programs (50 percent)” (p. 9) A similar trend is also reported in India. As per KPMG’s Report, Unravelling the digital video consumer (2019), Full length films or movies are the most preferred content on OTT Platforms in India. As per the report 30% of Indians prefer watching movies on OTT Platforms.

The impact of OTT on cinema has been both on content creation as well as consumption. Some of the major influences of OTT streaming on films are:

3.1 Movie Viewing is now More Flexible & Personalised

Rise of on demand video and streaming services on OTT Platforms has brought up a new trend in consuming video content. Binge-Watching, which refers to watching multiple episodes of the same television programme in one setting, has become a new viewing pattern for people across the world. The ‘whenever and wherever’ feature of the OTT Steaming service has encouraged people to watch video for a long period. Movies which are often of longer durations make a perfect fit for such viewers.

Even if people do not watch a movie in one sitting, with OTT streaming they have all liberty to complete their movie viewing from in multiple sessions. As per the Findings in KPMG's Report (2019), movie viewing has become more flexible. The report finds:

OTT Platforms, by providing anytime and anywhere access, have empowered flexible viewing for longer forms of content like movies. Our survey result revealed that users have started to use their discretion more often when viewing movies on OTT Platforms. More than half the respondents who preferred movies watch is more than one session. (p. 18)

Movie viewing no more requires sitting for hours in a fixed location at a particular time. People now watch movies at their own convenience and time.

In most of the middle and lower class families, there is only one TV set available in the family. All the members have to watch the same programme – movie or serials or news. With video streaming services this viewing pattern is also changing. People have access to a wide range of content, including films, at their fingertips. As a result watching movies or videos is being shifted from being a shared and family activity to personal interest. In a same family, in same location and at the same time, different members of the family can watch different types of movies or video, depending upon their interests. OTT Streaming service providers are also helping this viewing pattern by sending personalised recommendations and notifications based on the viewer's interest, device type and even internet speed.

3.2 More Creative Freedom to tell the story

Unlike feature films and television programmes, the video streaming industry in India is beyond censorship. Though some of the industry players have adopted self-regulation, the absence of censorship provides more creative freedom to filmmakers and storytellers to portray

different socio-political issues and touch upon unconventional narratives that are difficult to do in mainstream cinema. For example it would have been impossible in mainstream cinema to portray the bold character of Cuckoo, a transsexual cabaret dancer, in the popular web thriller 'Sacred Games' by Netflix. Lust Stories, an Indian anthology film consisting of four short film segments directed by reputed film directors earned critical acclaims for its bold storytelling, besides strong performance.

OTT Video Streaming platforms have opened up an entirely different new space for storytellers and filmmakers for experimentation. They are using the platforms to make fresh content with new stories which are unconventional, differentiated and strong message based. They have more freedom to build more bold characters. As OTT Video consumers span across language and geography, filmmakers have the liberty to tell their story in their preferred language to attract more audience. Not just government censorship OTT platforms also save filmmakers from opposition by fringe groups, often seen in case of mainstream cinema. The creative license also helps the filmmakers to cater to the interest of a wide range of consumers and achieve commercial success. This has also attracted several leading actors and directors to enter into the video streaming industry.

3.3 Consumers now have more Choice

Video Consumers have now access to wide range of films on OTT platforms available at their fingertip. In fact Video Streaming service providers compete with each other to add more and more movies and other video content in their library. They are entering into agreement with film producers for exclusive rights to stream movies on their platforms, post-theatrical release. In 2017, Amazon Prime Video has signed an exclusive five year deal to secure online streaming rights of all the future films by 'Salman Khan Ventures' (Choudhary, 2017, Aug 02).

Besides, these service providers are making huge investments in producing original content, exclusive for their respective platforms. Not only Indian films, the global players like Netflix and Amazon Prime video are also offering a collection of international films in India. Now people have an enormous choice. OTT video streaming platforms offer great films from across the globe to watch. Without these services watching these movies would have not been possible for many. They can now watch an Indian classic or a sci fi drama whenever they want. They have to choose their preferred movie from 1000s of choice. The choice ranges from regional to international, classics to blockbusters and many more. According to Samtani & Jindal (2018), "Availability of a wide variety of content has attracted a large number of people across the country with differing sensibilities and choices" (Entertainment Goes Online A \$5 billion opportunity, Boston Consulting Group, p. 17).

3.4 Drive for Original Content by OTT Players

Most of the OTT streaming players in India started with syndicated films, TV shows and other videos. However with the entry of international streaming giants like Amazon Prime Video and Netflix the streaming video market become more competitive. Original content has turned out to be one of the important differentiators for OTT streaming players in the country. Intending to achieve exclusivity and attract more viewers video streaming players are investing hugely in the creation of original content. Netflix has committed an investment Rs. 3000 Crore in India between 2019 and 2020 for making original content. It's Founder and CEO of Netflix Reed Hastings had 'announced around 24 feature films and 16 web series', as per report by the LiveMint.com (2019, Dec 07). Other players like Amazon Prime Video, Hotstar, Voot, AltBalaji and Zee5 etc. have also earmarked crores of rupees to make original content, including movies. These 'original content' videos are being made in collaboration with reputed production houses in the cinema industry. The original content includes not just web series

or short videos. Several streaming services providers are investing huge money to make original movies. The original content, which is often localized, holds very high value in the eyes of viewers. These are also key drivers for the growth of OTT Players subscription and revenue. As informed by Netflix CEO, according to media report, original content is helping the company to get more subscriptions and higher watch hours by consumers (Ganguly, 2019 April 18). This has expanded the scope of film makers and production houses to monetize films. With huge investment by the OTT players are expected to offer better films in terms of content and technology.

3.5 Opportunity for Independent Producers and Small Budget Films

While OTT players are investing heavily for original content and films, OTT platforms have created new opportunities for independent filmmakers and small budget films. For various reasons, including limited theatrical windows, several independent film makers and small budget films find difficulties in theatrical releases. In such scenario such films could reach the viewers, irrespective of the quality of content and production. OTT video streaming platforms have emerged as new distribution and revenue platforms for such players. Instead of traditional practice of theatrical releases, the film makers prefer to go digital route such as Amazon Prime Video or Netflix to release their films. Some of the highly acclaimed films released directly on Netflix are Ronnie Screwvala's 'Love Per Square Foot' and Yoodlee Films' 'Brij Mohan Amar Rahe'. This is also proving more economical for the producers, as it saves money towards marketing, promotion and distribution. Through OTT platforms they are reaching millions of viewers across the globe. As EY's Report on India's Media & Entertainment Sector (2019) finds:

2018 saw Indian filmmakers releasing small budget films first on digital platforms such as Netflix and Amazon. The logistics of Indian film production, distribution and marketing make a theatrical release for a

small budget film an unviable proposition. With the wide reach-and heavy marketing-of digital platforms across all age groups, especially youth, digital releases for a certain set of films ensures that producers do not shell out big amounts for distribution and marketing of the films. (p. 80)

Several film makers are now making message-based quality content for digital only platforms. Such content is also benefiting both the OTT platforms as well the consumers. OTT platforms get content at lower cost, whereas the consumers get wider verity of content.

3.6 New and growing source of Revenue for the Producers

Digital Rights is fast emerging as new stream of revenue generation for Film Producers. Aggressive strategy by OTT Video Streaming service providers for acquiring exclusive content has made led to more competition in the market, resulting in higher earnings for the production house. Film producers earn a sizable amount in selling the music and film rights to these service providers. These players are not only acquiring the rights of new films, they are also rights to stream older films and classics. This has given fresh lease of life to some of the ailing production houses.

Though traditional revenue streams such as theatrical rights, overseas rights, satellite rights, dubbing and remake rights etc. continue to big earners for cinema, earning from digital rights is growing in India. As KPMG's Media Ecosystem: The walls fall down (2018) Report, "Sale of digital rights is one of the fastest growing revenue streams for movies, growing in conjunction with the rise of OTT Platforms. In FY18, this segment garnered nearly INR 6.2 billion, registering a growth of 28.6 per cent over last year" (p. 64). The increase in revenue from digital rights is attributed to the focus on exclusive content by OTT players along with reduction in theatrical window 'from three to four months to about eight weeks', resulting in the audience's preference to wait for digital release of certain films, as per the report.

4. Conclusion

According to IAMA's (2019) 'India Internet 2019', as reported in livemint.com, India has second highest number of internet users in the world. With 451 million monthly active internet users as on 31 March 2019, India is second only to China. And the internet adoption among India is also growing. "The impressive scale of the market and a liberal foreign investment environment will continue to be attractive to global streaming platforms looking to capitalize on the country's fast growing digital consumption" according to Ernst & Young's (2019) Report - A billion screens of opportunity India's Media & Entertainment Sector (p. 24). Several local players have also joined the industry.

All the OTT Video streaming service providers are competing with each other to draw the attention of viewers with a wide range of content. As a result the consumers get more choices and better content, to watch whenever and wherever they want. With OTT Streaming services the control of watching cinema has been shifted to the viewers. They are now deciding what to watch and when to watch and how much. Not just content, the viewers have also the freedom to choose their device to watch a cinema. At the same time it has provided opportunities for several content creators to draw the attention of viewers with their unique and powerful stories. Overall, OTT video streaming services is changing and will continue to change cinema production and watching in India.

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A Review on Public Sphere as Virtual Sphere

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Abstract

The word 'Public' gives the thought of a group or community with common interest and aim. In Democracy, people have rights to express their opinions, thoughts and ideas. The term public sphere is made up of private people or common people gathered as a public, and articulating the needs of society within the group or with the state. Public sphere helps to generate opinion, thoughts and attitude of the public which help in forming the public opinion. It gives a challenge or guide in the affairs of a state. Over the time world has changed with due acceptance of technologies and it became a global village. Now the concerns of a well being society are not limited with the boundaries of countries. It has extended and has risen above the periphery of state. It has given a new platform for discussing and discourses to the people. This article analyzes how virtual sphere shapes as a public sphere in this 21st

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century. This article also illustrates essence and nuances of public sphere which gives shape to the public opinion.

Keywords: Public Sphere, Virtual Sphere, Public Opinion, cyberspace

Introduction

Public sphere is a sphere of common people where people from all strata of society come together to form the public opinion regarding particular issues and concerns. Public sphere takes shape when private individuals assemble to form the public body and to have conversations for example town hall meeting, kiosk etc. It is a participatory approach to democracy. It is a kind of communication infrastructure where people send and receive information and conduct conversation as their private affair. It can be the notion of good governance. It requires a free flow of information. Public Sphere is relevance in promoting democracy and public accountability. Public sphere gives an idea of Public opinion; public opinion refers to collective opinion of public body forms through critical arguments based on norms and welfare of society.

The concept of Public Sphere was given by German Sociologist Jurgen Habermas. Public Sphere is related to field of Philosophy and Social Science. Jurgen Habermas gave an overview of historic transformation and nature of public sphere. He defines public sphere as “Network for communicating information and points of view... the streams of communication is, in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions”. The public sphere may give us “archeology of the ideas and ideologies that inform current practices and policies of the media”.

In sum, Public Sphere where people of different strata, caste, creed and religion come on a single platform to have a discussion on some burning or crucial issues related to welfare of society, nation and human kind, it gives shape to public sphere and gives birth to public opinion.

As today online media emerged as a new platform for public discussion. It has become a part of our life and has a virtual world or a Virtual sphere.

Virtual Sphere is an online platform. Advancement in technology has reinvigorated public sphere. The relationship between public sphere and new media has been proliferating since last two decades. Habermas sees the public sphere as a model of norms by which public opinion can be guaranteed. These norms and mode of behavior include – a) general accessibility b) Elimination of all privilege c) Discovery of general norms and rational legitimation. The Internet gives the freedom to behave on norms as it gives general accessibility to common people, eliminate all privilege who come on to have a discussion and it also tries to find out general norms and rational legitimations. Therefore internet has become a medium of creating a public on virtual platform termed as virtual sphere.

Mobile technology has become a boon in the process of creating virtual sphere. Easily accessibility of internet at moderate price made it more effortless. India is the second largest user of Internet in the world after China. According to Cisco's visual Network index (VNI) report, there is going to have a surge in India (that is estimated to be around two billion) of networked devices in 2021. The managing director, Service provider of Cisco India and member of SAARC said not only mobile devices are getting better in India but also connection from lower generation to higher generation (2G, 3G,4G, 5G). India has emerged as one of the fastest evolving telecommunication network in the world. Telecommunication in the country has witnessed a transformation over the past decades, owing to the extensive reforms and policies of various governments. Mobile phone with bandwidth technology became the best medium in the formation of virtual sphere. The accessibility of online from one's pocket has made more popular among public. Mobile phones are available in less price and internet packs are cheapest. This also helps

in revolutionize the communication of the 21st century. Mobile technology enhances the virtual sphere in the form of public sphere.

What is Public sphere?

Jürgen Habermas, German Social and Political thinker associated with Frankfurt School. In 1962, He published his book named as 'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere', where he discussed about public sphere and transformation of public sphere from feudal state to democracy. Mass media emerged as public sphere as contrast to earlier times; it attributed authority as public and forming of 'public opinion'. Representative of public was authorities that authorities were existed at all levels of pyramid by feudal law (feudalism). Today with advancement in information technology, virtual sphere has become a sphere for public discussion.

Public sphere is the sphere of our social life in which interaction takes place among public and form public opinion. People from all strata of society come as individual regardless of their profession and they do not consecrate themselves to the subject of legal regulation of state bureaucracy and obligated to obedience, conduct conversation as their private affair. Here Habermas emphasizes that citizens conform public opinion uncoercively on the matter of public interest. Unlike feudal system of state where representative of public used to take part in discussion or in formation of public opinion, today newspaper, radio and television are the media of public sphere. Mass media plays an important role in the process of creating public opinion through disseminating of information, arguments and influences. There is difference between opinion and public opinion. Public opinions are liable to change over the time where as opinion seems tenacious and unchanged.

The Liberal Model of the Public Sphere

Public discussion is a first medium where debate takes place. Previously the estate had negotiated agreements with their princes (as feudal

system) and settling their claim of power. There was different development in England, where princely power was revitalized through parliament then on continent. The 'third estate' (the common people) then broke with this mode of equalizing power. According to Habermas Public Sphere is democratic process where people come together and conforms opinion to political issue. Public sphere gives platform to have all crucial discussion. He divided formation of public sphere into categories "private" and "public" as per the feudal system. The society as sphere is of private autonomy; but the person who is possessing that status in (according to pyramid) represents it publicly, they represent their autonomy before public; the function of public sphere is between two spheres. But with the invention of media technologies, the function of public sphere was taken by media. The member of public and representation of state got one platform; media started providing arguments, interpretation and solution too. It became vehicles and guides of public opinion and weapons for political parties.

The Public Sphere in Mass Welfare-State-State Democracies

The liberal model of the public sphere began to change (with its instruction related to normative claim) with the Chartist movement in England and the February Revolution in France. It was not applicable within the industrial advance and constituted mass democracy as a social welfare state. With the spread of the press and propaganda, the public expanded beyond the confines of the bourgeoisie. Public lost its cohesion given by institution (private person) due its social exclusion. The public sphere became a field for competition among interest groups. It led to kind of "refeudalization" of the public sphere. In the democracy, plebiscitary system plays an important role. For the creating of public opinion political parties use such platform in camouflage of public sphere. Laws which have originated under the 'pressure of the street' can scarcely understood by the private person in the public discussion. Now, public administration is been done social

organization or through the mediation of political parties. Democratic public sphere is different from feudal public sphere, Now Public opinion in order for the development media systems emerged as an institution of public sphere. In democratic public sphere, Media systems works as lineage between public and public officials, it generates public opinions and make officials accountable for their actions. We need free and independent media systems that facilitate two-way communication between citizens and public officials. In present scenario, Two-way communication between public official and citizen is easily found on virtual world. Political motives are also fulfilled by using this medium. That is how Public sphere has transformed from feudal state to democratic state. Now it is transforming from mass media to social media or virtual sphere.

Social networking sites (SNS) are interactive sites which allow users to share their information; Facebook, Whatsapp, twitter, youtube, flicker etc are examples of social networking sites. Most of discussions have done on social networking sites and it can be considered to have a best place for creation of public opinion. There are various reasons for using of social networking sites, People use social networking sites due to peer pressure, exploring new things, and having a modernize attitude is important as it makes them feel modernize, updated. Gender differences also produce different influences of using social networking sites. Social networking sites became a medium of entertainment as well as infotainment. The use of social media tools are- email, photo sharing, text messaging etc. This also gives a medium to express themselves on media. No other media has become so successful in short span of time. It is all because of the user friendly tools of social networking sites. People use social media to have access of connectivity with others, sharing information, to avoid their loneliness etc. Social networking sites not only give freedom to share stuff but also 'Right to Express' which is basic fundamental right of Indian citizen. It is a new media applies on itself 'Right to Express' but also give freedom to send it many people

simultaneously. This medium of connection over social networking sites to one and many at same time or different period of time give birth to a public sphere.

Cyberspace

Since the birth of internet, computer network have grabbed enormous attention. It has now grown in global network connecting 30 and 40 million people (Elmer- Dewitt, 1995). Cyberspace is an electronic medium which represents a virtual world through the links of interconnection of networks and devices. Internet connects people to people in ways which makes it interactive. It gives opportunities to express themselves through information sharing in the form of photo sharing, video sharing and text message etc. Cyberspace, The net, Online, and web whatever term it; it defines different forms of network and its meaning, role, impact. Cyberspace allows people to have new rage of social space over internet in which one can meet and can interact with another. Cyberspace is the medium which blurs lines of interpersonal communication and mass communication. It gives freedom to have both kind of communication on cyberspace. People use cyberspace to have communication than any other activities. Ideologies are discussed through social networking sites. Some ideologies are promoted. Cross- ideological issues are mentioned also takes place on the issues of politics. The posting of one message by the internet users in a group is carried by the thousands of newsgroups by internet site. These newsgroups form what is formally is called the Usenet. The sent message over the newsgroup is disseminated over the other networking sites, so creating a “thread” or connected series of messages, Other may or may not respond to that message or just simply read it called as “lurking” (Hahn & Stout, 1994). Their message are then disseminated to all internet sites carrying that newsgroup others may respond to a particular message, thereby creating a ‘thread’ or connected series of messages, or they may read without responding (called

“lurking”). Cyberspace has extended our communication without radically affecting the nature of communication.

The Idea of **Virtual Sphere** might have emerged from the association of “virtual community”, the idea was given by Howard Rheingold, His book “ Virtual Community : Finding Connection in Computerized world” , he argues similarities between Public Sphere and Virtual Communities that having an intimate connection between informal conversations, that takes place in communities and virtual communities too.

The virtual sphere of connection on the internet is creating a public sphere and forming the “opinion of public”, Opinion on the internet also are divided researcher sees it as “internet divide”. We can not deny the importance of virtual world in our daily life. It is not only medium of information but also the medium of dissemination of the information. It gives a platform to general public where they can have all kind of discussion. In the new era of technology, people have not much time to talk. This technology has reduces time limitation and space limitation.

Conclusion

Indeed various online platforms and technologies have created ‘spheres’ which is available for the common people at reasonable prices. These spheres include ‘political’, public, private, commercial sphere, collectively it can be called as public sphere. Public sphere is different from public space that only provides a space to public that doesn’t mean a healthy public. Internet provides yet another forum for public sphere. Public sphere doesn’t mean only to have discussion over some issues it means forming of ‘public opinion’ also through involvement of representative of public or public itself. Technology itself doesn’t create public sphere but the society who put it to use. The creation of opinion by the IT cells of particular political parties by focusing on some aspects of issues

than other , shapes opinion of public and it followed by many groups. The virtual sphere gives space to public for political discussion but it doesn't ensure the forming of public opinion. Lack of solid commitment of people negates the potential of virtual sphere as public sphere.

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The nouveau variants of Media during COVID-19 marks the watershed in Communication and Culture

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Abstract

A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the souls of its people

- Mahatma Gandhi

Culture is the ingenious term of a society exhibited through its lifestyle, beliefs, rituals and values over phases. Communication and culture are intertwined as a thread. Communication encourages and disseminates the behavioural outline of a society for social amalgamation. It moulds the cultural know-how for millions of people. The media are intimately related to culture. It is through the media that creative people vent out their artistic advocacies. The media have the potential to make acquainted people with the finest of human ingenuity and culture. Yet this bonding of culture and communication can be battered by commercial enterprises to underpin hegemonic values and precedence. Over the

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next decade, communication will radically transform and determine how we converse with others. This global pandemic of COVID-19 has taken a huge leap in this process and added a paradigm shift from the traditional mode of communication. We have been forced to embrace digital modes of communication for our everyday survival likewise through online advertisements, social media, online financial transactions, augmented reality and video conferencing etc. Let's take a look now at some of the ways in which communication is set to revolutionize this decade. The author of this article has conducted a brief online survey on the changing pattern of communication regarding varied mass media platforms on 51 people in the range of 20 years to 80 years. There was a mixed bag of responses as most of them embraced the nouveau changes but they also shared their concern about the challenges of varying communication modes and suggested to value both offline and online modes of communication. How these alterations affect our Mass Culture, why? and how? In the decades to come it may toss us amidst the challenge of either digital amalgamation or digital divide.

Keywords: Communication, Culture, Mass Culture, Society, COVID-19, Survey, Online, Offline, television (TV), Doordarshan (DD National), Radio, Music Apps, Books, E-books, OTT, Internet, Mass Communication

Introduction

To comprehend the effects of the Internet on society, we should consider that technology is substance culture. It is shaped in a social process in a given institutional milieu on the basis of the ideas, values, interests, and information of their producers, both their early producers and their consequent producers. In this progression we must embrace the users of the technology, who apposite and acclimatize the technology rather than adopting it, and by so they modify it and produce it in an incessant process of interface between technological creation and social exploit. So, to measure the significance of Internet

in society we must evoke the specific features of Internet as a technology. Then we must set it in the context of the alteration of the general social structure, as well as in liaison with the cultural characteristic of this social structure. Indeed, we subsist in a new social structure, the global network society, categorized by the mount of a new culture, the culture of autonomy.

Mass Culture

“Culture is perishing in overproduction, in an avalanche of words, in the madness of quantity.” Milan Kundera, Czech novelist

Mass Culture is not the culture of the masses. It is not even a form of creative expression. It does not have any enduring artistic merit. On the contrary, it is a pseudo-cultural commercial commodity for the distraction and diversion of the masses from the rude reality. Unlike unadulterated culture, mass culture intends to swindle rather than inform, deplete rather than enrich, exploit rather than enthuse. Mass Culture seeks to swap the creative and critical art forms that might prompt people to enquiry social inequalities. The masses have no association in mass culture. They are made-up to succumb to the seductive appeal of the mass culture as passive consumers.

Literature Review

Theodor Adorno (1903-1978), a scholar of the Frankfurt School, maintains that mass culture churns out a debased mass of unsophisticated, sentimental products. He described mass culture as ‘the ever-changing production of what is always the same.’ Mass culture in tandem with consumer culture offers a dazzling array of goods and services that induce people to plunge into a system of commercial gratification. Adorno identified mass culture as the reason for people’s apathy in overthrowing the capitalist system. He argued that capitalism fed people with products of ‘culture industry’ – the opposite of ‘true’ art – to keep them complacent and politically apathetic. He feared that

mass culture would lead to a depoliticised working class. He believed that vulnerability to fascist domination is a direct outcome of mass culture.

Critics identify a number of aspects of mass society in today's mass media – the unseemly emphasis on crime, fashion, lifestyle, gossip, astrology, and scantily-clad starlets. Mass culture, however, needs to be considered not exclusively in evaluative terms. It should be viewed primarily as an upshot of the inevitable processes of a capitalist society: the rise of the market, the dominance of big industries, and the use of new technology for mass scale cultural production.

The expansion of social networking sites has led to a spectacular augmentation in sociability with all courtesy to web. Ironically, the virtual life is more social than the corporeal life, now personalized by the organization of work and urban livelihood.

But people do not live a virtual reality, indeed it is a real virtuality, since social norms, like connection, integration, and livelihood all aid in the virtuality.

To fathom the hi-tech influence on media culture, we may extend the notion of bias introduced by Innis. There are five types of media bias as follows. There is a bias of sense skill, the bias of structure and illustration, the bias of message content, bias of perspective of utilization and bias of affiliation, contrasting one-way with interactive media.

As a social-cultural philosophy, postmodernism undercuts the conventional concept of culture as a bit hierarchical. It favours forms of culture that are transient, of the moment, superficially pleasing and appealing to sense rather than reason. Postmodern culture is capricious, specious, kaleidoscopic and riotous. It provides more importance to emotion over reason. Mass media culture has the benefit of engaging to many senses as well as being related with uniqueness and transience. Generally, popular media reflect postmodernist elements.

Denis Mc Quail in his book 'Mass Communication Theory' opines, "Media are the centre of the whole complex and the central task for theory has had to be redefined. In the earliest period of self-consciousness about the media in the first half of the 20th century it was possible to debate the 'effects' of radio, television, television, film and so on, something that was called 'culture', usually referring to a valued set of objects, practices, relations and ideas. This formulation is now largely outmoded, although there is some opportunity for observing cultural shifts at moments of development in technology, as with the so-called 'new media'. The elimination of the 'causal model' does not, however, lessen the number of questions that can be addressed, or prevent answers being provided by alternative routes and methods and from new perspectives. There is still an axis of critical thinking that can be applied to what we observe. There are still many new problematic (as well as positive) features of culture in the media age to be studied and debated."

The Indian Scene

Mass culture seemed to invade India in a big way during the 1960s when the United States became the dominant, global cultural source for popular fashion and entertainment. The young people in the urban, affluent society came under its hypnotic hold through the rock stars and the hippies, the movies and the cheap, paperback thrillers. The advent of satellite television further accentuated the vicious trend during the 1990's. The mindless copy of the American jazz, rock, disco, hip-hop, salsa and pop music, the punks' way of life and the banal effect of the Hollywood films produced a synthetic and superficial kitsch that seemed to strike at the very root of spontaneity and creativity. Despite these aberrations, the mass media seemed to promise a democratic culture, a cultural life aimed not only at the elite but also at the hoi polloi.

Popular Culture

Whoever controls the media – the images – controls the culture. – Irwin Allen Ginsberg, American beat poet

Popular culture is seductive; high culture is imperious. – Mason Cooley, US aphorist

Popular Culture is associated with cultural preferences of the uncultivated and the unthinking. It is criticised for its coarse character and is seen as lacking the inspiring qualities of art. Much of the content of the mass media today is popular culture. It has tremendous but short-lived popular appeal. It is also integral to the economics of the mass media. Popular culture, however, needs to be distinguished from folk art.

Originally, 'popular' was a legal and political term, derived from the Latin word *popularis* that meant belonging to the people. However, by the 18th century, the word acquired a negative connotation and came to mean 'courting the favour of the people by undue practices'. During the mid-20th century, many people recoiled in dismay at what popular culture was doing to the cultural fabric of their countries. It concealed the real complexity of art. Culture, made democratic, they feared, had become too easy.

In Indian perspective in 1950s, Dr. B.V. Keskar, Information & Broadcasting Minister, had banned film music in the All India Radio (AIR) to curb the corruption of the taste of the gullible Indian public. However, his efforts to retain the pristine purity of our culture did not succeed. Foreign government run Radio Ceylon and Radio Goa offered to the Indian audience songs from the Indian movies and developed a huge following. Bowing to popular taste and the fear of losing revenue, the AIR authorities promptly withdrew the ban.

A new normal Market

The world will now be projected on the basis of pre-Covid and post-Covid days. Thus, the Indian ecommerce market was expected to rise to US\$ 200 billion by 2026. But there has been a great leap in terms of market and consumer behaviour in the last 4 months, there is an

apparent insinuation that the ecommerce industry will thump to US\$ 200 billion mark much sooner.

According to a survey by NRF, some of the key consumers conduct is as follows,

• 9 in 10 consumers have altered their conventional shopping lifestyle.

• More than 50% of consumers have ordered products online that they would usually buy at the store

• Nearly 6 in 10 consumers say they are anxious to visit stores due to fear psychosis of being infected

While some of these variations are certainly transitory, others will be permanent. This inflection point will be largely created by two key shifts in consumer conduct - the disinclination to intermingle in public spaces and higher susceptibility for digital espousal.

The latest Mckinsey study in China suggests, consumers will prefer online shopping even after the pandemic, especially for groceries and personal care items. This trend will continue as people would still be anxious to visit malls or supermarkets.

An eMarketer survey says nearly 60%-85% of internet users across China and South-east Asia have evaded crowded public places to lessen the menace of Covid. In short, the Covid-19 epidemic and 2020 will mark a tilt towards ecommerce and mobile trade platforms.

Findings

The online survey has been conducted over 51 respondents. The below mentioned pie charts denote the varied range of questions. The findings are as follows:

Fig 1 denotes the age group of the survey. It ranges 20-to-80 years old. It is comprised of 84.3% 20-30 years of age.

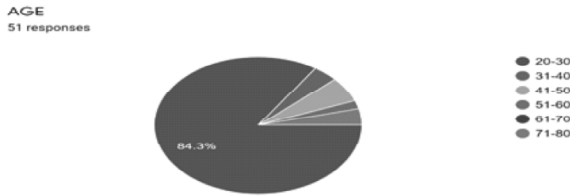


Figure - 1

Fig 2 denotes the gender variation. 84.3 % male and 15.7 % female

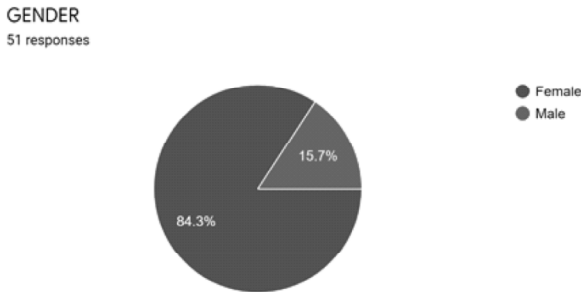


Figure - 2

Fig 3 denotes the professions of the respondents. 78.4% are students and 13.7% are professionals, it also includes retired and housewives too

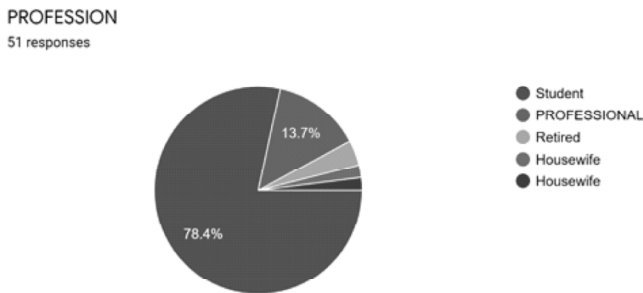


Figure - 3

Fig 4 marks the number of people who watch television out of which 64.7% watch, 21.6 % don't watch and rest watch sometimes

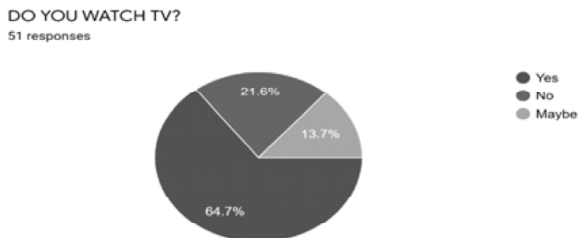


Figure - 4

Fig 5 denotes the kind of programmes people prefer to watch on television. 31.4% said to prefer news; 23.5% information- based programmes; 17.6% reality shows; 11.8% soap operas and rest prefer movies, lifestyle related and travel shows etc.

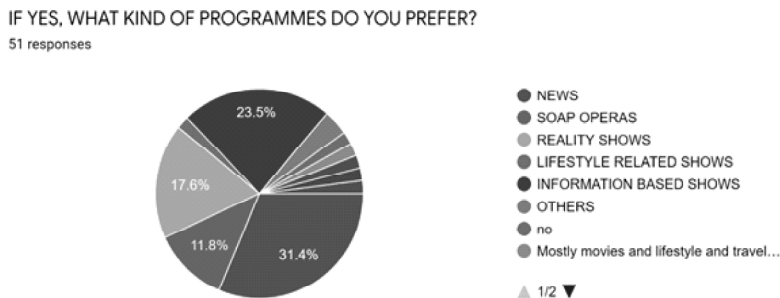


Figure - 5

Fig 6 denotes the other platforms other than television they watch. The OTT platforms they prefer - 37.3% Netflix; 23.5% Amazon Prime; 19.6% Hotstar; 9.8% JIO TV and the rest includes: Hoichoi, MX Player, TVF, Zee 5 etc.

IF NO, IN WHICH OTHER PLATFORM/S DO YOU WATCH?
51 responses

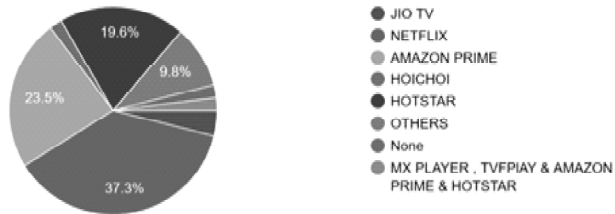


Figure - 6

Fig 7. this chart indicates during this pandemic of COVID-19 how the watching habit expanded to digital platforms. Nearly 72.5% marked yes; 13.7 % marked No and 13.7 % said Maybe/Sometimes

DURING THIS COVID-19 LOCKDOWN, DID YOUR WATCHING HABIT EXPANDED TO DIGITAL PLATFORMS?
51 responses

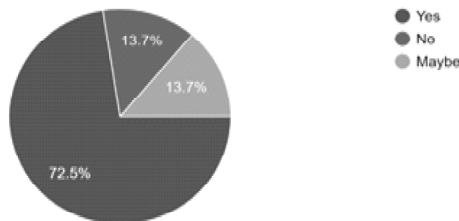


Figure - 7

Fig 8. signifies the respondents' preference on the modes of communication. 66.7% prefer online i.e. through WhatsApp and 21.6% prefer phone call over mobile and others also include forms like Facebook, Twitter, Telegram but a few marked offline and one responded phone call over landline.

DO YOU PREFER ONLINE MODE OF COMMUNICATION OR OFFLINE?

51 responses

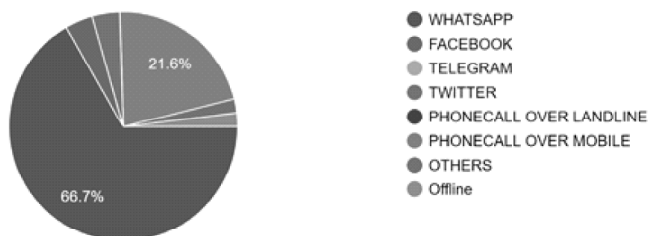


Figure - 8

Fig 9. It marks whether the respondents have watched recently telecasted legendary mythological soap operas of late 1980's and early 1990's 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' by Doordarshan (DD National). According to Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), DD National broke its own record and achieved viewership figure of 1.9 billion as the most-watched channel for two consecutive weeks in the month of April during this lockdown. This survey states nearly 41.2% as Yes and 58.8% No.

RECENTLY DOORDARSHAN TELECASTED 'RAMAYANA' & 'MAHABHARATA', DID YOU WATCH?

51 responses

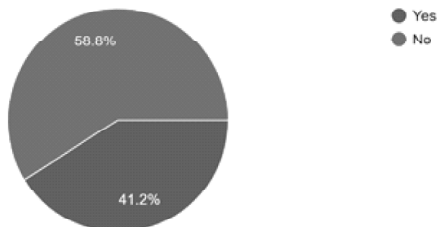


Figure - 9

Fig 10. It signifies whether the respondents miss Doordarshan programmes of 1990's

Nearly 39.2% said yes and 45.1 % said No and 15.7% said maybe

DO YOU MISS DOORDARSHAN PROGRAMMES OF 1990's?
51 responses

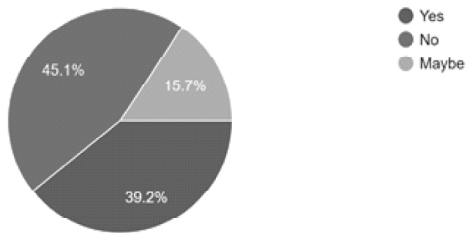


Figure - 10

Fig 11. It marks whether the respondents ever listen to Akashvani/ Vividh Bharati/Yuvabani. 45.1% said Yes; 39.2% said No; 15.7% said Maybe

DID YOU EVER LISTEN TO AKASHVANI / VIVIDH BHARATI / YUVABANI?
51 responses

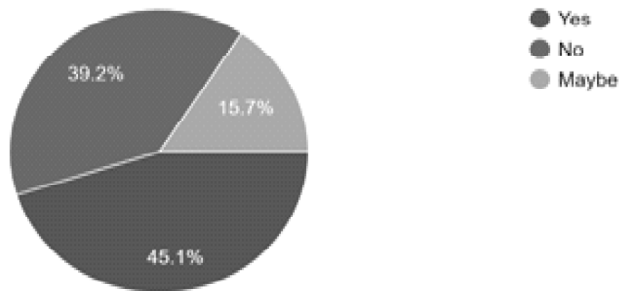


Figure - 11

Fig 12. It signifies whether the respondents use digital apps to listen to music. 96.1% said Yes

DO YOU LISTEN TO MUSIC FROM DIGITAL APPS?

51 responses

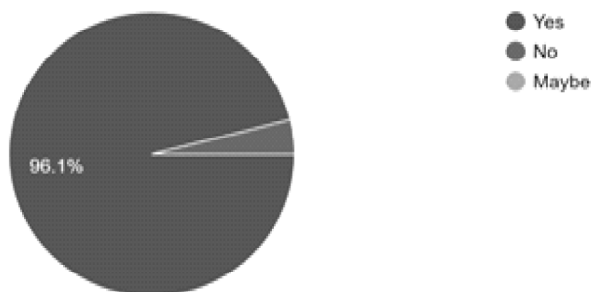


Figure - 12

Fig 13. It marks the kind of music apps respondents prefer. The responses are a mixed bag as 29.4% listens Spotify, 23.5 % Gaana; 21.6 % Amazon Music; 13.7% Google Play Music and 11.8% others etc.

WHICH MUSIC APPS DO YOU PREFER?

51 responses

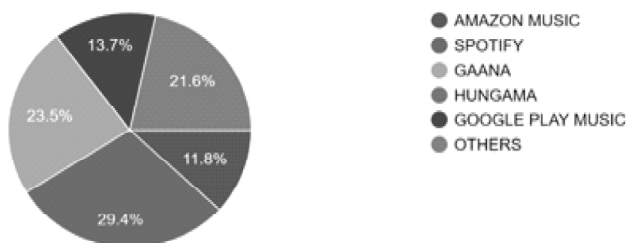


Figure - 13

Fig 14. It signifies whether the respondents prefer to read books or e-books or listen to audio books. 64.7% mark that they prefer to read books; 17.6% listen to audio books and 13.7% read e-books.

DO YOU READ BOOKS OR E-BOOKS OR LISTEN AUDIOBOOKS?
51 responses

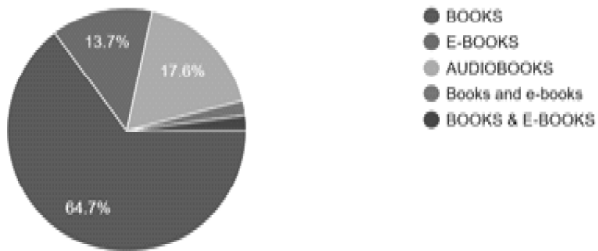


Figure - 14

Fig 15. It denotes whether the respondents prefer the changing pattern of communication. It says 56.9 % Yes; 21.6% No and 21.6% Maybe

DO YOU LIKE THE CHANGING PATTERN OF COMMUNICATION?
51 responses

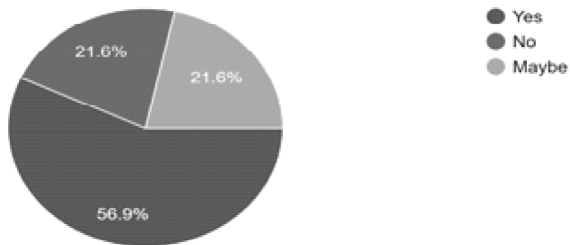


Figure - 15

Suggestions

The respondents have certain suggestions regarding the changing pattern of communication. Some have been included like:

- The world is getting digital day by day during this pandemic, it's time for us to get familiar with the technological advances and remain updated by communicating with the masses digitally.
- The changing pattern of communication has widened the scope by boosting affectivity, precision and efficiency, but has also promoted the lack of accountability which in turn causes biased name-calling, bullying and trolling.
- The changing pattern is drastic and spontaneous yet it is the future and much needed revolution to shape the future.
- The changing pattern of communication indeed have opened up many ways which enables one to think broadly and explore its all possible aspects. But it is also necessary to utilize all the available aspects wisely to get the optimum out of it
- Relationships are happily more intimate than before where the communication gap causing tension, fights, and misunderstandings are absent. Professionally, everything that is being worked upon or a meeting is recorded virtually leaving exposure to minute details available. Hence, it leaves no scope of insecurity, work place discrimination, unhealthy working conditions to occur in sectors like banks, finance, tour, hospitality, industry, etc. Thus, "CHANGE IS CONSTANT" and we are learning every available possibility to cope up with novelty.
- The new pattern which is now very much trendy in all schools and universities like the online mode of communication and studies is quite helpful during this pandemic. Students are not

sitting ideal they are all continuing their studies and online exams through different apps which is really very good, something very interesting and never experienced such feeling. I personally like this mode of communication but sometimes due to network issues I feel bad and I wish this new mode of online study system shouldn't be there.

- To learn new things in life...as it makes you feel young and fresh

There are certain apprehensions too. Like:

- Security system should be improved a lot
- Offline mode is more comfortable and relatable than online mode.
- People must communicate with everyone so that they don't suffer from any kinds of mental problem
- Going digital is good, but not in a way where people forget the joy which face to face physical communication brings.
- In our society the changing pattern of communication is yet confusing and not acceptable because the older generation are not ready to understand and accept it while the younger generation are keen to get westernised as soon as possible
- The change is very much needed with the rise of digital age. But, at the same time we also need to preserve the old methods/habits too. Like even though I prefer watching movies/series online, I would always love to read books than reading e-books.
- The change is good but we should always remember the past.
- I like it but due to this changing pattern everybody is stuck with their phones from children to old-age.
- Everything can be digitalized but the essence can't be digitalised always.

- I prefer the offline mode of communication more than digital communication because you can have human touch.
- Very subjective and biased! Virtual mode/ or no physical intimacy, can never kick-start the evolution of communication, because somewhere, someone is getting misinformed or getting the wrong message, which is leading to all the preposterous keyboard debates. But till situation normalises, I guess, it is the best and only way, so far.
- This pattern lacks the humane connect.
- The change is constant so it is a welcome but it is taking toll on our privacy

Conclusion

Like all technologies, the Internet, does not create effects by itself but has the transforming capability of the entire communication system. That are interactive, multimodal, asynchronous or synchronous, global or local, and from many to many, from people to people, from people to objects, and from objects to objects, ever more depending on the semantic web. How these features affect precise systems of social associations has to be recognized by research, and this is what the author of this article tried to present. This is clearly implied in the brief survey that was conducted by this author. Further, the appreciation of the older mode of communication platforms and equal apprehension about the new pattern of communication had been shared by the respondents.

This pandemic has forced us to indulge in certain consumer behaviour for our everyday survival. The post-COVID seems some practices will be hard to do away with like the article mentions about the usage of online shopping methods or video conferencing methods

or choice of entertainment platforms etc. Thus, the choice of our communication modes, be it for work, entertainment or daily needs we just can't ignore the fact that these trends are here to stay for the decades to come whether we like it or not. It is an obvious fact that if conventional modes will be taken over by the new variants there is bound to alter in media culture. But even compared to a baseline of ongoing cultural change, it is fair to say that a striking cultural transformation has been stirring in recent decades throughout the world with the rise of the Internet and global cultural flows. Many of the gravest questions for the sociological study of culture in decades to come will likely be concerned with the consequences of the Internet and other new forms of interconnectivity that social media in all its forms has commenced to deliver. We shouldn't make the fault, though, of presumptuous that the rising eminence of the Internet in society means that all of our key cultural queries will be online ones. The diligence of offline forms of social life—street life, public performances, print media, poorer communities that lack easy access to the basic technology, and more—in an online world will be an ever more imperative focal point of research and public policy. Will the digital divide get wider or narrower in years to come, and what will be the implications for cultural production, communications, and democracy? In 1968, Marshall McLuhan observed how completely new media work us over. In *War and Peace in the Global Village* he wrote, "Every new technological innovation is a literal amputation of ourselves in order that it may be amplified and manipulated for social power and action."

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Redefining Relationship during COVID-19 and Social Media

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Abstract

Social media has influenced our society in innumerable ways. The information that it provides in a lightning speed though sometimes not verified but it helps people in forming opinions and making judgments on various pertinent issues of public interest. Besides, it keeps the citizens updated, reorganized and informed about all the happenings in their surroundings and in the globe. This paper aims at identifying the various impacts of social media on the changing relationship pattern in the society. Broadly speaking, social media is an application tool that permits individuals not only to share photos and videos with one another or in a group but also communicates and exchanges information within a fraction of seconds. Social media is not confined its horizon within massively used WhatsApp and Facebook rather it has wider

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range of systems like wikis, micro and normal blogs, online community platforms and social networks and virtual worlds. It is versatile as it can be integrated into larger multi-purpose platforms. Outside the framework of traditional organizations, it can also support interaction and sharing. The pandemic has taught many lessons, on one hand it has put our health in great danger, while on the other hand, it has created many opportunities to improve our health. It has cleaned many things, the dislikes, resentment, frustration among near and dear ones by bringing people closer to their loved ones and restructuring these relationships. People who were staying alone at the farthest distance from parents and nearby are now forced to return home, which has re-strengthened their relationship. So, this pandemic has created a social opportunity and has also raised our level of social and emotional consciousness.

The major objectives of the study are to examine the impact of social media on the pattern of relationships established among people, to study the nature of use of social media during the pandemic and to analyze both positive and negative impacts of social media on its users. Simple random sampling method has been used in this study. The areas of this study include Gram Panchayat under Cuttack city and Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, Odisha. Among the total number of 60 samples selected for this study, 30 samples were selected from Gram Panchayat having age group of 30-40 and 30 numbers of students from Ravenshaw University where 15 samples were selected from both under-graduate and post-graduate levels.

The finding of the study highlights that social media has vast potentialities and wider scope for strengthening relationships. It is also examined that the excessive use of social media is breaking the chain of relationship. The proper understanding and appropriate use of social media has become the need of the hour especially during this pandemic situation. The media literacy among the users will certainly help to control the ill effects of social media.

Keywords: Social Media, relationships, youth, loneliness

Introduction

The World Health Organization has declared the recent outburst of COVID-19, the novel Corona virus as a public health emergency. Millions of people across globe have been badly affected by this disease. Till such time, though the experiment on vaccine is in process, social distancing happens to be the only method through which crowd interaction can be minimized. The lives of people have been turned upside down with profound economic, social, family, work, and school shifts and disruptions by this pandemic. One such disruption is social distancing, which imposes restrictions on social gatherings and in-person contact in an effort to halt spread of the corona virus.

Social media has offered maximum opportunity and provided a shy of relief during these challenging times by helping people to stay connected with one another even when being physically isolated. It can provide an antidote to social distancing by allowing people to stay in touch with their friends and communities, engage in online conversations, participate in collective coping and processing of stressful life disruptions, and stay up-to-date on news and current events. In this sense, social media plays an important social compensatory function by substituting physical touch with an online presence. Social contacts which are forced to remain beyond the physical boundaries of our internment have also been broadened by the social media.

The availability and use of technology have facilitated our regular and frequent interactions in the modern world. It is also experienced that, there are majority activities people in general undertake on the daily basis by heavily depending on social interactions. There is a reflection of deep entrenchment of social media systems in many relationships that we maintain every day in this fast-increasing digital world. People even staying at a far distance from each other and are now able to feel their presence by taking the advantages of features available in the social media such as shared photographs and videos of

the recent and yesteryear's activities. So, the media has the potentiality to transmit information on activities to millions of people within a fraction of seconds. Similarly, it can also ruin the image of people by spreading false information what is considered as rumors, the disinformation. As there is no check gates and control over the flow of information in this platform, credibility has become a big issue for many. The added features of this platform also enable people to manipulate everything for their self-interest. Despite several loopholes, the platform sometimes seems to be very useful for many. An activity of lesser dimension be it photographs, videos, any written or verbal communication once published in this platform catches the fire immediately and records reactions in lightning speed. The spirit and motives to pass on to rest of the world sometimes creates trouble for the society while the same information on the other hand proves to be a blessing for the greater interest of the people.

Background of the study

The social media, especially during this crisis situation brings an ever-unsolved debate to the limelight on whether it releases reinforcing or displacing impact on online personal relationship. Several studies recognize that, the use of social media has a reinforcing impact rather reducing the interpersonal contact. The pandemic has given emphasis on social compensatory role of social media. So, it is not the social media which is responsible for reducing the personal connections rather the external factors. In order to stay in touch and get connected with rest of the world, online communication has provided ample opportunities. Despite several restrictions imposed on social interactions during this crisis, social media no doubt has enabled us to experience normal life. Though people now-a-days prefer to stay active on this platform round the clock, it is not to be considered that, the effects of social media are always unambiguously positive. The narcotic effect of frequent use of social media gives rise to anxiety, mental stress

and fear. Lack of stringent rules and regulations, provision for manufacturing of unstoppable message contents, no space constraints arrest attentions of people to stay for a longer duration on this platform. The positive as well as negative effects of social media is called as “social media see-saw” impact.

Life has become restless as every day we face many a chaotic situation, elbowing each other and falling over other. The darker side of the life such as disease and death impel and compel people to realize and value the relationships. This pandemic has generated one compelling force on men and women in taking a step back to value and reflect on importance of life. Health, family and livelihood have become the priority than the turmoil and turbulence of day-to-day problems. It is observed that, people because of availing more free time during the lock down and shut down started using social media uninterruptedly and massively. This resulted in establishing contacts with family members, friends and peer groups and the bonding which was something different prior to the COVID-19. People started establishing advanced personal interactions blessed with the convergence of social media and social distancing.

Methodology

The study has been conducted online and the samples for the study consist of both male and female of age group (30-40) and students of age group (16-19) of Ravenshaw University, Cuttack . There are 60 respondents actively participated in this study through online mode. The study proposes to use the simple random sampling method. Participants in responding to the online questionnaire registered their responses. Besides, telephonic interviews were conducted to obtain relevant information on the subject of the present research. Open coding techniques have been used in this study for analyzing the data obtained from questionnaires. The technique involves the process of comparing, breaking down, examining, conceptualizing and categorizing

data. Here, patterns are discovered and conclusions are drawn with the classification and categorization of data.

Findings of the study

The impact of social media on relationship patterns are investigated properly under this study. It also studied the extent to which social media has been used by respondents during this pandemic. Besides, efforts are also made to study both the positive and negative impacts of social media. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) has been used for the coding and analyzing the data into quantitative summary reports.

Social media and Relationship development

This is for the first time in the history that people, government as well as media have ever experienced in dealing with the pandemic. Everything has come to a halt, but the presence of social media has helped us to be inter connected and has provided a shy of relief from boredom. Social media being different from the traditional face-to—face communication, has become part of our everyday life. New interpersonal interaction methods are now supported by many social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The consumers' motive for the use of specific media and satisfaction received from their use has been emphasized by the uses and gratification theory.

The uses and gratifications theory focuses on consumers' motives for using specific types of media and the satisfaction they receive from their uses. The study says that, people in order to satisfy their needs, make their own decisions on which media to engage with. A respondent of 57% state that, people who are staying at a far distance and the frequent communication is not possible, social media in this context offer an easy way to keep in touch and maintain relationships with them.

The development of new behavior pattern often driven by the desire for gratifications on social media leads to attain the gratifications.

Gratification is received by both the person, one who has originally posted and the other who reacts on it like a 'favorite' on Twitter and a 'like' for a Facebook post. According to the present study, a total number of 59% of respondents when asked to value the 'likes' of Facebook posts, opined that these likes are reactionary in nature rather than conscious and all the participants devalued the Facebook 'likes'. For an example, if someone is posting information about the death of a person, he instantly receives thousands of likes on his post. Similarly, a total number of 63% respondents opine that, the 'favorites' on Twitter broadly speaks about content not as a social capital. 72% respondents said that, they often receive some positive results by using social media like strengthening relationships and formation of new relationships, receiving corroboration for their personal achievement and enhancing knowledge in sharing valuable and inspirational contents within a network.

57% respondents agree that, quite often they experience a decreased emotional well-being. The excessive use of social media generates huge response to certain negative emotions like loneliness, depression, anxiety, anger, frustration, and social comparison. It is also observed that, people waste most of their productive time by staying active on this platform. Sometimes, it also gives rise to the isolation. 47% respondents view that, social media by increasing potential for distrust, emotional detachment, isolation, dissatisfaction, sometimes ending of relationships decreases the relationship quality. The overuse of social media has increased the addictive behaviors.

Loneliness, social connections

Isolation breeds retardation. Physical distancing during the recent pandemic has become the only method to have a clutch over the spread of Corona virus. There is a negative impact on the emotions, health and well-being of people caused by social isolation and loneliness. We are being told to socially distance with Covid-19. The risk factors associated with the social distancing is that it gives rise to severe problems

associated with loneliness. The sense of self and wellbeing get undermined in the loneliness zone. The lack of contact between a person and society is called as social isolation whereas the gap between actual social connections and the perception about the quality of those interactions is referred as loneliness.

The present study shows that the establishment of strong bonding between two people and the release of brain chemicals, the endorphins which make people happy becomes possible by some activities like laughing, making music and singing. 52% respondents view that, through various online means, many of these activities can be undertaken together despite all the restrictions imposed during COVID-19. Though there is a stringent rule for the social distancing, but remaining separate many elements of sports like competition, exercises etc. can be done collectively. The technology has provided a wider scope as well as space to let people experience the 'together-alone' feelings, as in the case of work from home strategy, where people complete their own tasks online but remain in proximity virtually with one another. A social interaction experience is different to this together-alone experience but the later may be essential to human experience.

59% respondents opine that, the current crisis has brought an opportunity as there is an increasing trend in the creation of new connections, though people are physically separated from each other. People seem to have reserved individual space for themselves in the social distance bubbles, in which minimum use of words and a simple gesture have become the means to maintain the relationship. So, to maintain the old and newly formed connections it needs to be nurtured.

Online, Off line Relationships and Social Media

Majority of respondents opined that, the several limitations in the offline relationships are now overcome by the social media which has further enabled new relationships. This online relationship is a substitute for

the offline relationships and it can complement and reinforce offline relationships but it cannot eliminate the offline relationships completely. Working with people beyond boundaries, meeting or befriending is now possible through the use of social media. A respondent of 58% state that, people living in geographically isolated communities can develop learning, collaborative, and social relationships outside their area through online communication. The study says that youths only interact through features of social media systems such as pokes, tweets, and texts rather developing valuable communication and social skills. Sometimes it is observed that, in an online social group, people though manage to show others about their activeness and availability but in reality, they are not. Ignoring one another has become an easy task in this platform. The very feature of this media allows one to register his or her own comments and reactions in written, verbal and sign languages, but sometimes these feedback are not actual as if someone in close connection receives information from the source but without proper understanding and the motive of not to dishearten the source, register comments immediately. It is concluded that where online relationships are enabled by the social media at the same time, offline relationships can also be damaged by this social media.

The Social Opportunity

57% respondents state that, in order to fulfill the tasks, the emotional support of family, friends and co-workers have been ensured during this crisis period. Corona has given a new age of social interaction and motivation for healthy living by creating more leisure time and provision for experimenting as well as using social media in a great volume. 64% respondents said that, they are keeping contact with family via text messages, group chats, or video chat and by using different avenues of communication is keeping the relationship feeling fresh. Searching for new things, efforts to go for what to do next distinguishes humankind from others. Social media has provided virtual connectedness. This media

has made us forget the feeling of nearness in a relationship. Basing on the pre-existing closeness and communication patterns, this media can either repair or damage relations.

Youths and social media

The socialization of adolescents and the mode of interaction with one another have been rapidly transformed by social media. Social media has both positive and negative impact on youth. They are spending maximum time on social media during this crisis situation. The opening of information floodgates has allowed the youth to consume all sorts of information flowing from several directions on this Corona disease without any restrictions. Some information is overloaded, under represented, rumor based and false in nature. So, the youth are required to be educated about proper use of social media so that they can have a better understanding on the media and the content they are consuming. Respondents when asked about whether use of social media is beneficial for them or not, 67% students under the study area opine that, social media has enhanced their ability to express and explore themselves. It has also facilitated for the better access to various resources, increased and strengthened social connection during this COVID-19 pandemic. Despite positive experiences gained by the youth, many negative effects of this social media have also been registered by them. Many respondents view that, the information manufacturer is not to be blamed alone for spreading of false information about corona virus, but the negative effect of the social media especially on mood and anxiety of people sometimes drive them to spread such type of fake information.

The social and emotional challenges of physical distancing are now being experienced by every individual irrespective of their age. People especially the youth are seen to be badly affected by this as there is an unexpected and stretched disturbance found in the social lives of the youth. The widespread use of social media has offered many fascinating

tools in the hands of the youth to develop and manage relationships but it has also provided a space where the youth prefer more to remain at a physical distance. There is an increasing passion among the youths in this digitized age to receive social rewards by becoming popular among all. The peer socializing has come to a halt with the closed educational institutions and terminated extracurricular activities. The social media site like YouTube has gained its popularity among the youth as they are posting their own videos and also commenting on the contents they consume on this platform. 62% respondents state that, for posting photos, sending messages and video chatting with friends they prefer to use Snapchat and Instagram. The browsing, streaming, posting as well as sharing of the content by the youth prove the potentiality of social media. Interactions in social media platform in comparison to the face-to-face conversations tend to be more public. One of the added advantages of the social media is that it allows one to interact with many people at once. The effect and impact of social media can be measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. The quantitative measurements are in terms of number of likes, followers, views and shares. Tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures are a few interpersonal cues without which the youth may feel embolden by the distance of a screen. The scrolling through Instagram posts is qualitatively different from a direct video hangout or messaging. Social media has positive effect on the mental health of youths when used to facilitate direct social interactions with friends. Identity exploration, creative expression, establishment of social connections and access to COVID-19 information by the youth are offered by the social media. Similarly, the resources for understanding and coping with COVID-19 and a critical lifeline to a supportive community are being offered by social media for the youth specifically who are staying in an unsafe and unhealthy environment.

People in order to access news and health information during the pandemic are using social media in a great volume. The dissemination of

and access to accurate information are now enhanced by the readily available steady and short streams of information on maximum social media sites. A COVID-19 Information Center for promoting health information is now available on the top of the screen of Facebook-owned apps. Similarly, several tips on prevention mechanism for the spread of the disease and answers to common queries are also provided by some social media applications. Besides, for promoting the access to accurate and reliable information e.g. of World Health Organization, the hashtag feature of social media application seems to be very useful.

Conclusion

Citizens across the globe have been badly affected by the COVID-19 and sharing same threads of anxiety. This pandemic is not a mistake by people belong to any geographic area, rather it is the need of the hour we must extend our compassion, kindness and support for others. Practical steps can be taken to prepare and execute plans and protect our relatives and ourselves by seeking information only from trusted sources. The positive and hopeful stories of people who have experienced COVID-19 is required to be captured, recorded and replicated by social media. The false messages and reports damage the overall mental strength by giving birth to depression and feeling of loneliness, which needs to be properly taken care by not only by social media but also by mainstream media. This pandemic though has created many problems in the society; it has also cleaned many things like our anger, frustration, and dislike for others which has helped us to understand, give value, maintain and strengthen social relationships. Nothing seems to be important during this pandemic except our preparedness for loneliness and collective initiative for public health. The virtual connections, online communication can mitigate the adverse side effect of unavoidable social distancing during the present crisis. It is worth to mention here that, the desperate need for social compensation and sense of normalcy to our lives can be provided by the social media.

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