

Understanding the Print, Web, Television Media Habits and Preferences of Indians: A Uses and Gratification Perspective

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ABSTRACT

A study conducted by cable.co.uk reveals that India has the cheapest internet in the world today. One gigabyte (GB) of mobile data costs only \$0.26 in India (£0.20), which is much lower than the global average of \$8.53. The price war started in mobile internet data segment by the telecom companies of India has the potential to disrupt the media usage preferences and habits of people. According to the Internet and Mobile Association of India, the country is expected to have 700 million smartphone users by 2022. The cheaper mobile data combined with deeper smartphone penetration will have a significant impact not only on the internet usage habits of Indians but also on the print and television media usage preferences. The proposed paper attempts to understand the print, television and web media usage patterns and preferences of Indians, especially in the era of cheaper internet. For the study, data is collected through a questionnaire-based survey using a random sampling method, taking Kerala - India's most literate state, as the study area. The questionnaire is prepared on the framework of uses and gratification theory to understand why and how people different media. The findings of the study enable to throw light on the present media usage habits and to examine the media consumption behavior in India.

Keywords: Media, Internet, Print, TV, Uses & Gratification

Introduction

Over the last decade, with the growth of communication technologies, the World Wide Web has emerged as one of the most popular tools for facilitating a variety of entertainment, communication and information-sharing tasks around the globe. It's growing popularity as a new media has not only changing the media consumption habits of people around the world, also impacting the use of print and TV usage habits. Against this background, the current paper aims to understand the current media usage needs, pattern and preferences of people in India. India is witnessing a massive surge in the number of internet users in recent times. Hence, the current study is conducted on the foundations of uses and gratifications (U & G) theory, which aids in the assessment

of peoples' motivations for media usage, access and to understand their attitude towards a particular medium like print, TV, and web. In this paper, the uses and gratifications theory has been applied to examine media consumption behavior of people from the Indian context.

Literature Review

There are several studies available on understanding the media habits of people. In a study conducted by Althaus and Tewksbury (2000) examined patterns of internet and traditional news media use in a large public university, a networked community where internet use is a part of everyday life. They found that members of this community used the web mainly as a source of entertainment.

Results of their study suggested that people who used the web media as a news source tended to read newspapers but did not view television news. In another study conducted by the Pew research center in 2017 observed that the gap between television and online news consumption is narrowing. As of August 2017, 43% of Americans report often getting news online, a share just 7% points lower than the 50% who often get news on television. The gap the two news platforms was 19 points in early 2016, more than twice as large. About six-in-ten of those ages 18 to 29 (61%) say the primary way they watch television now is with streaming services on the internet (Kristen & Katrina 2017).

The same study also throws light on the fact that the proliferation of internet media has a significant impact on newspaper habits of people in the US. One-in-five U.S. adults say they often get news via social media, which slightly higher than the share who often do so from print newspapers. From 2016-2017 Using TV for news consumption also has been declined from 57% to 49% in the US. The similar trend is identified by (Kim, 2015), where he observed interactive affordances of news media have almost doubled from 24% to 43 % in recent times and it is changing people's media usage and preferences. There has been a breakthrough in mobile technologies as news platforms, due to the rise of smartphones, tablets and social media. It has become common to watch TV news on computers; a considerable number of people have familiarized themselves with watching TV news on a mobile device nowadays. Many studies prove that the growth of the internet is restructuring media usage pattern and preferences of people in western countries.

However, the extant literature is devoid of the representation for emerging countries like India, where one-sixth of the world population lives and internet penetration growing very strong day by day. "In 2000, only 20 million Indians had access to the internet. Ten years later, that number grew to 100 million were online, rising to 462 million 2017, when three Indians were discovering the internet every second" (Agarwal, 2018). Right now, according to cable.co.uk -India has the cheapest internet in the world today. One gigabyte (GB) of mobile data costs only \$0.26 in India (£0.20), which is much lower than the

global average of \$8.53. The price war started a few years back, in mobile internet data segment by the telecom companies of India has the potential to disrupt the media usage preferences and habits of people. In a study conducted by Sanjit (2009), noted that the main reason people use the internet in India is for 'relaxation'. With cheaper internet and deeper smartphone penetration, India's online community is set to reach 700 million by 2020 and web platforms are set to be used for multiple purposes. Many hold the belief that Internet news services would, to a large extent, draw audiences from older media forms like print and TV (Brown, 2000). However, contrary to this some media theorists on another end of the spectrum argue that the introduction of a new medium will not cause major changes in the media landscape (Coffey & Stipp, 1997). In this context, the present study aims to understand the different media usage habits and preferences of Indians. Based on the literature available and the recent developments witnessed in the field of communication technologies in India, the following hypothesis is formed and tested in the study:

H1: Indians prefer to use web media more than print and TV.

Theoretical Framework

The core studies analyzing media habits and preferences are based on uses and gratification theory. It states that people use different media based on their need and the different gratifications it offers. This theory tries to explain why individuals choose to attend particular media by looking at the gratification they get, which may be related to their cognitive, tension relief, social and personation integration needs. (Katz et al. 1974, Levy & Windhal 1984). The U & G theory is concerned with the way people use media. At the outset, the media research focuses on the influence and effect that the media has on the audience. However, It does not concentrate on the motives behind the media use. The theory has come a long way since its inception in the early 1940s (Ruggiero, 2000). The primary objective of the uses and gratifications theory is to explain and understand the psychological needs which shape peoples' reason for using the media and the reasons which motivate them to engage in certain media use behaviors for gratifications that fulfill the inherent needs

(Rubin, 1994). Other objectives are how individuals use mass communication to gratify their needs and identification of the positive and negative consequences of individual media use (Lin, 1999). The variables for the current study are designed based on this framework.

Research Questions

The general objective of the study is to understand the print, web, TV habits and preferences of Indians.

The study specifically answers the following research questions-

- What are the consumption needs and usage preferences of people using different media -print, TV and web?
- Is web media the most preferred choice of Indians when compared to print and TV?

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study is conducted using primary data. A questionnaire was constructed on a close format basis in which the important statements in the Likert scale was formed based on the media uses and gratification theory. The questionnaire was administered among the general public of Kerala state using random sampling method. Kerala was selected as the study area for its diversity in sampling which includes people from different socio-economic and educational background.

Measurement Instrument

In order to derive an analysis of the data collected, the survey questionnaire comprised of two sections- descriptive and inferential. The descriptive section included demographic information on gender, educational background, employment status and income details. The statements related to different media consumption preferences of people. On the other hand, the inferential section included the different variables prepared based on the media uses and gratification needs. This data was collected on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement- Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree. With this scale; the respondents' different cognitive, effective, personal integrative, social integrative and tension relief needs were identified; corresponding to the objective of the study. The data collected were then statistically analyzed. The descriptive analysis

of demographic distribution was assessed applying frequency and percentage whereas the inferential section was tested using mean & SD. Hypothesis testing was conducted using ANOVA. The data collected was numerically coded using MS Excel for both descriptive and inferential analysis.

Data Analysis

Table: 1 Demographic Details

Gender	No.	Per cent
Female	64	49.61%
Male	65	50.39%
Educational Background		
Above 10th - Below bachelor's degree	22	17.05%
Bachelor's degree	69	53.49%
Master's Degree	34	26.36%
Diploma	1	0.78%
PhD	3	2.33%
Employment Status		
Employed in Govt. Sector	12	9.30%
Employed in Pvt. Sector	44	34.11%
House Maker	7	5.43%
Not Employed	9	6.98%
Self Employed	6	4.65%
Student	51	39.53%
Annual income (in rupees)		
11, 000 - 25, 000	18	13.95%
26, 000 - 40, 000	12	9.30%
41, 000- 60000	11	8.53%
61, 000-75000	3	2.33%
76000-90000	4	3.10%
Above 90000	14	10.85%
Less than 10, 000	65	50.39%
Nil	2	1.55%

As shown in the table 1, the study sample included people from the diversified background. Among the respondents, the number of male and female respondents were almost equal. A majority, 53% of respondents were bachelor's degree holders and 26% were master's degree holders. 17% of the respondents just completed 10th or 12th class study. The sample included people belonging different employment background 39.5% of them were students and 34% were employed in private sector. Some respondents were unemployed (7%), self-employed (4.65%) and homemakers (5%). 50.3% of the respondents were earning less than Rs. 10000. 14% of the respondents belong to the high-income group and earning more than Rs. 76000. Other 35.7% respondents' income was between Rs. 11000-75000.

Table 2: Time Spent on TV & Web every week

	> 5 hours	5-10 hours	11-15 hours	16-20 hours	20 hours >
TV	60.47%	28.68%	6.98%	2.33%	1.55%
Web	38.76%	26.36%	15.50%	9.30%	10.08%

Table 3: Time spent on print media every week

	> 2 hours	3-5 hours	6-10 hours	11-15 hours	15 hours >
Print	70.5%	14%	12.4%	2.3%	0.8%

Table 2 & 3 shows that when the time spent on different media re studied it is evident that around 71% of the people spend less than 2 hours on print media, reading newspapers and magazines. Only 0.8% spent more than 15 hours. However, the study shows people spend more time watching TV when compared with print media usage. 61% of the people said they watch TV for less than 5 hours. 29% spend 5-10 hours, 7% spend on 11-15 hours and around 2% spend more than 20 hours in watching TV. On the internet, people are spending much more than print and TV. It can be noted from table 2 that around 10% of the people spend more than 20 hours using the internet, which is not seen in the case of other media platforms.

Media Usage Needs and Preference

Table 4: Respondents' preferred content in Print media

Newspaper Preference	Mean	SD
Crime News	3.12	1.08
Local News	3.53	1.35
Political News	2.79	1.22
Literature	2.73	1.12
Sports News	3.11	1.31
Classifieds	2.47	1.01
International News	3.3	1.2
Business News	2.91	1.14
Religious Content	2.64	1.07
Film News/Articles	3.55	1.26
Ads	3.03	1.14

The above shows the peoples preference of different print media content. The data collected using the Likert scale (5-1) using Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never. The weighted mean is calculated to understand their preference level. Above table reveals that

in Kerala readers highly prefer to read Film News, Articles (3.55), local news (3.53), Crime news (3.12), International news (3.3) in print media. The average respondents show less interest in classifieds (2.47) and literature (2.73) published in newspaper and magazines.

Table 5: Print media usage needs

Needs	Variable	Mean
PCN1	News/Information	3.71
PCN2	Knowledge	3.73
PAN1	Happiness	2.96
PAN 2	Motivation	3.06
PPIN1	Credible information	3.13
PPIN2	Social status	3.44
PTRN1	Relaxation	3.1
PTRN2	Break from routine work	2.8

People in Kerala, India prefer to read newspaper and magazines mainly to satisfy their cognitive needs - to get news or information (3.71) and to improve their knowledge (3.73). Print media usage also seen as a symbol of social status (3.44) and they trust this media as a credible source of information (3.13). People did not endorse the view that they prefer to read for happiness (2.96), and to take a break from routine work (2.8). Overall, the print media is preferred by people mainly for satisfying cognitive needs than the other purposes.

Table 6: TV usage needs

Needs	Variable	Mean
ECN1	News/Information	3.33
ECN2	Education and Learning	3.38
EAN1	Entertainment	3.38
EAN 2	Pleasure and Happiness	3.64
EPIN1	Inspiration and Motivation	3.27
ESIN1	Spend family time	3.24
ESIN2	Socialize	3.23
ETRN1	Work tension relief	3.68

When compared to print media, according to the data shown in the above table, Keralites prefer to use TV mainly as a source of tension relief (3.68), pleasure and happiness (3.64) and entertainment (3.38). Besides, an average agreement to the statements that TV is used as a source to satisfy their cognitive needs- to get information was 3.33 and to improve education & learning was 3.38.

Table 7: Web Media Usage Needs

Needs	Variable	Mean
WCN1	News/ Information	3.75
WCN2	Express Opinion	2.68
WAN1	Entertainment	3.48
WPIN1	Showcase talent/achievements	2.45
WPIN2	Self-Branding	2.66
WSIN1	Making new friends	2.89
WSIN2	Strengthen Relationship	3.41
WTRN1	To pass time	3.37

The above table reveals that web media has been used for much more diversified purposes when compared to print and TV media. People use web media platforms widely for the consumption of news and information (3.75) and for entertainment purpose (3.48). The study also reveals many people agreed to the statement that they use web platforms mainly to pass their free time (3.37). With the emergence of new technologies, web media is helping people to satisfy social integration needs. With an average of 2.89 people said- they use it for making new friends and for strengthening their relations with existing friends and family. Self-branding (2.66) and showcasing the talent/ achievements (2.45) is another use of web media which is revealed in the study.

Table 8: Results of ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	60.666667	2	30.333333	22.55196	5.49E-10	3.01922516
Within Groups	516.49612	384	1.34504199			
Total	577.1628	386				

Table 7 shows that the F-value 22.55 in the ANOVA results is much higher than F-critical for the given set of data. It implies that the average media preference of Indians is not similar. Moreover, it can be noticed the P-value in the ANOVA table is 5.4×10^{-10} which is much smaller than the significant level of 0.05, which reveals strong evidence against the null hypothesis. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected, and hence the alternative

hypothesis 'Indians prefer to use web media more than print and TV' is accepted.

Discussion

The current study reveals that Indians are dependent on multiple media platforms for gratifying their needs. When usage habits and media preferences of print, TV and web media are compared. Out of 129 respondents 2 respondents do not use internet. 127 respondents use all three media platforms. It is evident from the study that 71% of the people spend less than 2 hours on print media, reading newspapers and magazines. Only 0.8% spent more than 15 hours. However, the study demonstrates that people spend more time watching TV as compared to print media usage. 61% of the people said they watch TV for less than 5 hours, 29% spent 5-10 hours, 7% spent 11-15 hours, and around 2% spent more than 20 hours watching TV. Evidently, people prefer to spend more time on watching TV than reading newspaper. Further, the study exhibits that 39% of the respondents spend less than 5 hours on web media. However, 9% of the people spend around 16-20 hours, and 10% spend more than 20 hours on web media. The results of the hypothesis testing conducted using ANOVA in the study reveals that people prefer to use web media more than print and TV in India. Respondent agreed they use print media with an average of 3.35, TV with an average of 3.52 and the internet with an average of 4.26, which is the highest among three media platforms.

The study reveals that people prefer multiple news media for gratifying cognitive needs such as getting news and information and these findings are consistent with previous researches (Ahlers 2006; Diddi & LaRose 2006). The respondents rely on print media for news consumption with an average of 3.71 and on TV with an average of 3.33. They also use the internet as a source news with an average of 3.75. Using print media, people use local news (Mean 3.53), followed by film news (Mean 3.55) and crime news (Mean 3.12). Both, from print and TV media, people prefer to access content related film with high the mean of 3.55 and 3.6 respectively. People are dependent on TV for comedy programs, music programs and news as well. TV is used for diversion or tension relief. People watch to escape from the daily routine or to be entertained. (Anna etc. al. 2010). The current

study clearly indicates this point. In the survey, with the highest mean of 3.68, respondents agreed that they watch TV to escape from routine work life and people also watch TV for because it gives happiness (Mean 3.64) and it entertains them (Mean 3.38). Some use it for satisfying cognitive need such as education and learning (Mean 3.8). When compared the findings of the current study on the usage of web media it is clear that results are similar to the findings of Althaus & Tewksbury (2000). He proved - people use world wide web as primarily for entertainment and secondarily for news and also for passing their free time. But, the current study slightly differs-here, in India, with the highest mean of 3.75, primary use of the internet is for 'news' and secondarily for 'entertainment' (Mean 3.48). The study, in general, reveals that the web media is emerging as the most favorite media platforms for Indians today.

Limitation and Scope for future research

This study does not come without limitations. It was done using small sample size and focusing only one state Kerala. Even though the study gives insights into current media habits of Indians, the results may not be generalized as India is a very vast country, which consists of people from a very diversified socio-economic background. Hence, the study can be further extended by taking a sample from all states of India. The current data used in the study is collected in May 2018- September 2018, a few months after the introduction of cheaper mobile data in India. This study simply shows the media usage habits of people currently. It did not aim to focus on whether the media habits and preferences have been changed because of this. Future studies can investigate if there is any correlation between the surge in web media usage and the introduction of cheaper internet data in India.

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