

Internet as a means of diversion among teaching faculty: A uses and gratification perspective

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ABSTRACT: Internet is a mainstream medium of information and communication in today's time and this is true of at least urban spaces in India such as a city like Bangalore. The medium of internet has journeyed from desktop use to mobile phones which has led to greater dependencies on internet and to some level has also led to addiction. In the time of higher internet dependencies, the paper tries to examine the use and gratification of internet among teaching faculty of Bengaluru city. As academic community is regarded as society's opinion leaders, it is necessary to learn about the impact of internet use in various aspects of life – both personal and professional and to understand if internet has transformed their lives. The paper tries to examine internet as a means of diversion that enables teaching faculty to not only seek information that is relevant to academia but as a device used to meet recreation and other social needs. To do so, interview and survey was conducted over 58 research scholars and professors in Bengaluru urban district.

KEYWORDS: uses and gratification, internet dependencies, teaching faculty

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I. MILIEU OF INTERNET AND EDUCATION IN THE PRESENT TIME

Internet has changed the way the modern-day humans connect with the world. The internet shapes how we communicate, network, and work. It's a one stop shop for entertainment and vocation and it's all disruptive in building technology and the services it offers to mankind. As much as it's an easy medium, it's also a medium that has under gone a dynamic change ever since its inception. Eric Schmidt, former Executive Chairman of Google stated, "The Internet is the first thing that humanity has built that humanity does not understand, the largest experiment in Anarchy that we have ever had." With the aim of providing freedom to transport information via digital devices the internet acts as an embodiment of anarchy to most urban audiences who firmly believe that technology is the way forward.

The Internet offers two main benefits which are communication and information (Warren et. al., 1998). On a more comprehensive basis, it can be pointed out that the Internet has some functions, especially in education, and these can be listed as (i) storehouse of information, (ii) communication without boundaries, (iii) online interactive learning, (iv) electronic/online research, (v) innovation in the new world, (vi) improve interest in learning, (vii) global education, and (viii) information catalogues (Park, 2009). The internet has been used in the academic space for almost four decades and

A study at Hebrew University at Jerusalem was conducted amongst faculty members of different disciplines within the university. The study aimed at measuring the level of internet usage amongst the chosen disciplines and to study the perception about internet amongst these faculty members. The chosen departments were sciences and Agriculture, Social Sciences, Humanities and Law. The study revealed that the faculty members of the science departments used more internets as opposed to the social sciences faculty. The internet knowledge was gained by some of training courses attended by the faculty members. Amongst all the internet services it was revealed that e-mail was the most used and it was used to carry on academic related work and to communicate with colleagues about academic related work. (Lazingeretal 1997).

One of the first ever-nationwide qualitative surveys of academic staff use of the Internet among the academics was conducted at the Australian universities. The study employed a stratified sampling method amongst 1054 academics from universities in Australia. The study aimed at finding out the frequency of internet usage amongst the academics, the type of internet sites by the users, the perception held by the academics about the internet amongst academics and to study if the internet was used by academics who lived in isolated universities as opposed to academics living in metropolitan areas. Some of the significant findings of the study revealed that the academics used the web for academic purposes, to communicate with colleagues and to carry out administrative work. (Applebee eta, 2000). There are some factors that are responsible for using computers for academic purpose. Some of them include encouragement; support and opportunities are significant factors to

increase teachers' motivation for improving the level and quality of ICT use in classrooms (Uluyol and Şahin, 2014).

II. INTERNET AS A MEDIUM OF DIVERSION – A USES AND GRATIFICATION PERSPECTIVE

The uses gratification theory emerged in 1970s as important studies were conducted to study the utility perspective of the media users. Prior to this most of the theories proposed was source- dominated focusing on the media itself rather than the audience. Uses and gratification theory brought in a paradigm shift source-dominated to active –audience centred theory. The theory was proposed by Herta Herzog though the theorist did not coin the term. Herta Herzog examined the soap opera listeners for which she studied the listenership behaviour of a popular quiz show for which she interviewed one hundred listeners and this study was eventually brought as a work titled “Motivations and media gratifications”. The study revealed that the motive of listening was that the show served as an emotional release, the show also brought the listeners some level of enjoyment as the daytime shows provided some advice gratification leading to achieving gratification. Herta Herzog thoroughly used qualitative technique to study media gratification.

Many theories that followed the media study revolved around studying the purposes behind using the media. Mendelsohn(1964) like Herta Herzog also studied the influence of radio on audience around Some of the motives for listening to radio were identified – filling the void, relieving boredom, to alter mood, seek information so on and so forth. Foulkes and Gurevitch(1974)proposed that media was largely used as medium to find escape from realities. People in the society use media to connect and disconnect with themselves and others through instrumental, affective or integrative relations. Jay G. Blumler (1979) proposed three reasons that the media users seek to derive gratification – normative influence, subjective reaction of the individual to the social situation, socially distributed life changes. Blumler also went on to cognitive motivation facilitated information gain and the audience achieve diversion through media forms that are packaged in entertainment formats. These programmes are also sought by the audience as they served as a paramount source of social portrayals of society. There was a new postulate that there was a rise in scholars' thatsupportedapassiveaudiencenotion. This notion supports the idea of the escapist model of media use when concerned with television (Stone&Stone, 1990). The supporters of the escapist model believed that media is used primarily as a means of escape and to pass time. This was studied at the backdrop of television viewership that television was mostly a leisurely medium and was used by audience to escape from realities (Barwise, Ehrenberg, &Goodhardt, 1982; Kubey, 1986). Other theorists also agreed that and that television shows are chiefly consistent in gratifying a time-filling behavior (McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972).Jamesetal(1995) suggested Internet forums expectations of both mass and interpersonal communication. Hence, if the Internet is a new dominion of human activity, it is also a new dominion for U&G researchers. The uses and gratification perspective lend itself to several media impact studies on its audience. With internet becoming one of the essential needs to the modern-day man. There is a growing need to study the impact of internet on its audience.

III. FOCUS OF THE STUDY

Teaching faculty is seen as opinion leaders and change agents in society. The construct of “opinion leaders” is a potentially useful lens for examining how the teaching community 's usage of internet. The study focuses on understanding the frequency of internet by the academic community. The paper also examines the various websites used by the college faculty both for academic reasons and as escapist medium based theoretical framework of uses and gratification theory.

IV. METHODOLOGY

In the present study, the researcher used Ex-post-facto research design. This design was considered appropriate because the phenomenon had already occurred. The present study approached the problem through a systematic survey method which is very popular in field of communication, journalism, and other social sciences. The current paper employs quantitative and qualitative methods. As part of the quantitative analysis a survey was carried out to find out the usage of internet among teaching faculty in Bangalore. A questionnaire was employed to collect the data from college professors as part of quantitative method. The questionnaire was carried out in 10 colleges in Bangalore city. A focus group interview was carried out as part of qualitative study. For the purpose of the study, colleges in Bangalore were divided into 5 major zones: Bengaluru North, Bengaluru South, Bengaluru Central, Bengaluru East and Bengaluru West. From each of these zones two college were chosen for carrying administering the questionnaire and focus group interview. The colleges that were chosen for the study is mentioned in the below table:

For the survey and focus group interview, college teaching professors from all ranks but excluding part time or adjunct faculty members. Only full-time faculty members were part of the study conducted. The respondents included professors from the stream of arts, science and commerce all carefully selected using

stratified sampling method for the three streams and proportionally considering the gender, streams and type of institutions. Five colleges and universities were selected for the survey. The questionnaire comprised of 34 item internet gratification-based statements. Each of these statements was a five-point Likert scale measurement. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, the first sections consisting of basic demographic questions and the second part consisted of internet usage and gratification statements. For collecting data using questionnaire, Google Sheets as well as hardcopy of the questionnaire were used. As part of the focus group interview, professors were spoken to and the interviews were transcribed to analyse the responses.

Area of colleges selected for the study	Names of colleges	Total number respondents
Bangalore North	Presidency University	28
	Ramaiah University	
Bangalore South	NMKRV College	32
	Dayanada Sagar University	
Bangalore Central	Mount Carmel College	26
	St. Josephs Colleges of Arts, Science and Commerce	
Bangalore West	Maharani Lakshmi Ammani College for Women	28
	KLE Educational Society	
Bangalore East	Garden City University	30
	CMR university	
Total number of respondents		144

Table 1: Teaching Faculty data from different colleges in Bangalore city

Analysis and Findings

The current paper found that there was a varying degree of usage of internet for entertainment/ escape versus academic reasons. The present study used the following two constructs of diversion and social escapism to measure the various uses of internet by college teaching faculty.

Constructs of gratification measures	Descriptions
Diversion: "Relaxing and passing time with entertainment materials" (Payne et al. 2003: 117)	To pass time when bored
	For entertainment or to relax
Social escapism: "A relaxant to relieve day-to-day stress, and to overcome loneliness" (Korgaonkar & Wolin 1999: 56)	To escape to fantasy world
	To lose track of time and to forget about the surroundings

Table 2: Constructs of gratification measures to study usage of internet

The study revealed that internet was used both as a means of social diversion and for academic reasons. However, when the time spent on internet was compared for the two of the activities, it was found that the respondents spent more time on internet to escape from realities. A chi-square test was used to compare between two variables such as gender, stream and type of institution. Some of the results of the study are listed below:

1. 96.4% teaching faculty use internet every day.
2. Out of the 96.4% college faculty, 91.5% male college professors use internet every day and 95.2% female college professors use internet every day.
3. 84.7% of college faculty from Arts streams use internet every day while 86.2% and 78.9% teaching faculty from Science and Commerce department use internet every day.
4. 97.5% of faculty at universities use internet for academic purpose while 94.7% of faculty at colleges use internet for academic purpose.

There is a significant difference between time spent on internet for academic purpose and diversion or social escapism. The respondents spent significant time on the internet for entertainment, distraction, and social escapism. The largest age group of the respondents of the current study belong between the ages of 31- 45. It was found that the respondents largely depended on internet for gratifying their needs that falls under the category of information seeking and social escape. The below paragraphs are some of the experts of the focus group interview with the teaching faculty.

A faculty member age 32 at the Dayanada Sagar University said:

I use mobile phone to use internet and mostly spend most of my time on Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram. Only when there is a need to look up academic material, I use internet from my desktop.

A faculty member age 44 at NMKRV College stated:

I use internet on college desktop for academic reasons, I have made a conscious effort to spend less time on social media apps and use internet mindfully.

A faculty member age 37 at Mount Carmel College stated:

My internet usage is mainly for news and entertainment. Since I track my internet usage on my phone, I can say that I spend close to three hours on social media apps such as Whatsapp and Facebook. I also use mobile internet to catch up with news and keep myself entertained. I cannot go without internet for a day for sure.

A faculty member age 41 at Christ University stated:

I usually use internet to carry out college work such as updating attendance, check emails and read news. I use mobile internet to access social media apps and my most used social media app is Instagram. I like to check stories and posts from my friends and acquaintances.

V. CONCLUSION

The current study reveals that most teaching faculty use internet daily and is highly dependent on it to satisfy various needs ranging from interpersonal utility, surveillance of information, means of social escape, diversion and many more. The study clearly indicates that regardless of the motives behind using internet, the community of professors are largely dependent on the internet to carry on their daily activities. The studied also reveals that professors are active on social media platforms and spend significant amount of time on websites for diversion.

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