



Social Media Communication Among The Gutti Koya Tribals of Bhadradri, Kothagudem

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Abstract

The 21st century encompasses rapid growth and diffusion of information technologies, also digital as well as social media communication, which democratic governments have adopted across the globe for socio, economic, cultural, and political, and other strands of development. Special initiatives such as Digital India flagship programs have been, envisioned to transform India into a digitally and technically empowered society indirectly too. However, the country's large population still needs to be explored by digital media and bereft of its benefits. The present paper is focused on finding out the usage of social media among the Gutti-Koya tribals of Bhadradri, Kothagudem village specifically in the areas of Gattumalla Hamlet of Telangana. The paper will also focus on the Koya tribe's changing patterns of information communication, the social media applications they use, the purpose of their social media usage and to understand the Koya tribe's communication transformation towards digital media. Based on a mixed methodology approach, the study will rely on primary and secondary data. At the same time, a purposive sampling technique with focused group interviews will be used to gather primary data and the collected data will be analyzed by thematic analysis technique.

Keywords: Social Media platforms, Digital Media, Information Technology, Tribals, Digital India.

Introduction

India is home to a one-third population of indigenous people, who have been residing at the margins and are still untouched by the benefits of modern society. There is a glass divide in any society the one in the forefront, is visible and privileged but the one behind the glass wall is the section of the society that is making its way towards visibility in the society that is the indigenous culture who are hidden by the light of information technology. One aspect of modern society in the present scenario is the pervasive nature of digital media, social networking sites, and internet technology, which have reduced time and distance. The information technology and pervasive nature of internet technology is the core ingredient in making communication barriers irrelevant. As rightly discussed by P. Mohan and H. Mittal (2020) Through Information Technologies the information around could be quickly collected with multiple sources available and could be communicated easily too. Especially the usage of ICT in various stages of Disaster management is been studied based on the different techniques, software, where emergency services could be provided to the people as there's a need through the implementation of disaster management, whereas, the same technology has not been able to penetrate many tribal areas of India [25]. Marshall McLuhan (1964) Modern technology has built communication bridges across the length and breadth of the earth and has made the earth a global village, as taken from the words of his theory.

Since, the tribes are generalized as the Social section within a traditional society that consists of families that are connected through lines of economic, social, blood, or religious ties and also share a common dialect and culture. Based on these factors it's very complicated for the Koya tribals to grow even with regard to their Sustainable development. For the sustainable development of the economy, digital technology has to reach the unreached as per the actions of our Central Government's Digital India Campaign implementation. To evolve the Internet in every corner of the rural and underdeveloped tribal areas, the Central Government has been implementing Digital India all over India since 2021. Even though Tuten and Solomon (2015) defined Social Media as "the online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration, and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities, and organizations enhanced by technological capabilities", it is difficult for the Koya tribals to adapt towards this culture very quickly. Only the media technologies worldwide can interconnect the people around to be a Global Village. To understand these reflections the Researcher has focused on the Koya tribes of Gattumalla Hamlet in Bhadradi, Kothagudem among all the tribals of Telangana State. As rightly stated by P. Jhamb & A. Rehalia (2018) Tribal music could also be converted into electromagnetic waves and post it to the entire world through digital media with the help of Information Technologies these days where they could give the touch of its music to the physical world. This could replace the modern culture through its traditional instrumental platform [24].

The Koya tribals mainly inhabit the hilly areas of the Khammam and Warangal districts. They are sparsely found in the Adilabad and Karimnagar districts of Telangana State, as given by the Census of the Telangana government. The percentage of the Scheduled Tribes Population in Telangana State is 9.3%. The percentage of Scheduled Tribes in Telangana state to the total population in India is 3.1%. The Koya tribe population is the largest population of Telangana State among the Adivasis with 3.81 Lakhs spread across Bhadradi Kothagudem, Jayashanker Bhupalpally, Mulugu, and Mahabubad districts, by the Telangana.gov.in.

Since the Koya tribes are the major form of the Adivasi community, it is important for the Researcher to understand and evaluate the technological situation of the Koya tribal community of Ghattumalla hamlet and look at if there is any gap through the magnifying lens. A. Khiat, A. Bahnasse, J. Bakkoury, Md. E. Khaili & F. Louhab (2018) all together analysed saying The 3rd industrial revolution i.e., the Internet of Things has changed the lives of people with home automation, health, recreation, energy, distribution and our environment with smart city or connected transport. And for this to understand Crowdsourcing is really important [26]. Which is why, it's very important for us to understand the approach of Internet Technologies at the Koya tribal community of Ghattumalla hamlet.

Review of Literature

The literature gathered has been considered as the Researchers' secondary data where multiple research papers focused on the tribal's mobile usage, digital media, or social media usage and also about how technology has been adopted by the tribal people in general which supports the Researchers topic and provides detailed insights about the usage of social media.

G. Stephen. U. Pramanathan states the majority of students use Social Networking Sites to communicate through computers and the internet, especially Facebook and YouTube (a few times a day) [5]. Whereas, P. Sanmugeswaran (2016) has analyzed Locally found games, plays, songs, videos, and street plays were the 'Communication tools' which were implemented as the 'Communication strategies' which created awareness among the Malayali tribes to communicate their livelihood problems with water, sanitation, and education. This research study also understood their problems and methods of solving them by participatory research methods. This is been demonstrated as a community problem effectively. But, U. Dutta (2016) has said Communication is the major barrier since there is little technology. Besides, A. S. Miah (2017) research stated Social media is helping people by removing the middlemen in their communication (Perspective of the rural area more than the tribal area). P. Anil Kumar (2019) rightly said that Tribals are illiterate, they don't tend to use mobile phones / or get access to New Media. And again, T. Deblina (2021) argued that for survival, people had adapted social media to sell their crops and adapted to modernization and the rest are waiting to not adapt to modernization.

The Researcher reviewed that the majority of the studies researched are based on the methodology of Secondary data literature or web content more than the primary data, which could provide accurate information regarding the tribal's social media usage.

Aims

The researcher aims to understand social media usage in the Ghattumalla tribal area of Bhadradri, Kothagudem.

Objectives

- ❖ To find out what kind of social media applications the Koya tribals use.
- ❖ To understand the Koya tribals' communication transformation towards the digital medium.

Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature while the primary data is collected through qualitative data collection techniques of field observation, in-depth interviews, and focused group discussions. The gathered data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The research also includes Secondary data. An additional pictorial documentary of the

research content is been made to have a visual presentation of the theoretical research project. The researcher has adopted both the Qualitative and Quantitative approaches to data collection. The purposive sampling method has been used to collect data through in-depth interviews of health workers and focused group discussions with the Koya tribals of the Gattumalla hamlet (village) of Bhadradi, Kothagudem. Secondary data including the literature reviews and books published which are closely related to this topic is also been considered.

The researcher has taken 30 samples based on the demographics of men and women of the age group between 15yrs to 60yrs have been taken. Among them, 15 are men and 15 are women in an equal ratio. Among those 15 women, a total of 8 men knew how to use a smartphone and 7 men don't know how to use a smartphone. Among 15 women only 4 women knew how to use a smartphone and 11 women don't know how to use a smartphone.

As observed in the pictorial documentation presented in the pdf file one could clearly understand the economic conditions and the livelihood of the Gutti Koya tribals. They don't have necessities for their survival too which is been observed through the Koya tribe's shelter, clothing, infrastructure, and culture including their food habits. Since the Ghattumalla hamlet is a road connectivity of 17kms away from Kothagudem town, this is much better when compared to other inside hamlets which don't even have any road transport facilities apart from the walkway path. Hence we could at least observe and conduct the interview among the Koya tribes of Ghattumalla hamlet based on the Hindi, and Telugu languages with interpersonal and group modes of communication. The analysis of all of these observations is been discussed below.

Thematic Analysis

1) Media Accessibility:

It is majorly about word of mouth and the Koya tribals do not have proper access to the media. The researcher meant Print (Newspapers and Magazines), Electronic (Both television and radio broadcasting) are not accessed by the Koya tribals for communication purposes.

2) Social Media Accessibility:

Social media is been accessed by less than one-third of people among the Koya tribals. The Koya tribals don't have access to smartphones in the first place, which is why a majority of the people aren't even aware of any kind of social media applications.

3) Social Media Applications:

Less than one-third of the Koya tribals who have smartphones use the social media applications like Whatsapp, YouTube, and Instagram. Whatsapp is been used by all smartphone users to communicate with their loved ones, YouTube is been used by a few to watch films and explore.

Madakkam Ravi, aged 19 male is been using social media applications for 3-5 years. Apart from using it for Communication, Ravi also uses it for self-learning, especially through YouTube based on the languages of English, Telugu, and Hindi. He learns anything through the internet which might fetch him a job further. Eg: Content related to Mechanic interests him more.

Madakkam Soni, 22 years old female, who is a 10th-class graduate has been using WhatsApp to give and take information from the people around her based on their necessities since she is working as a

health worker for the Koya tribals of Bhadradri Kothagudem. She doesn't contribute her help only towards Gattumalla Hamlet, but she does help all the Koya tribes who live around. Apart from communicating as a health worker, Soni also uses Youtube to learn tailoring machines for her survival and learn the Koya tribal's traditional folk songs to understand their culture.

A few Koya tribals also check the News content related to Koya tribes through Google.

4) Communication among the Koya tribals:

Since Koya tribals don't have a lipi version of it, they use social media in Telugu, Hindi, and English language. Let any media comes to their availability to communicate something among themselves they prefer interpersonal communication, and they prefer their traditional folk media communication if they want to communicate with everyone around. Social Media becomes their choice only if the Koya tribals prefer communicating with their faraway peer groups since going to Chhattisgarh to meet their family alone would cost them 400 for one trip or 3 days to go by walk, so video calling has made it easier to fulfill the purpose of their Communication.

Findings and Analysis

- ❖ The Researcher analyzed the changing patterns of communication among the Koya tribal areas from folk media communication to digital media communication only among a few Gutti Koya tribals at Ghattumalla hamlet.
- ❖ The Researcher found out, the Koya tribals majorly use WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube.
- ❖ The Researcher examined the purpose of their social media usage. They majorly use Whatsapp for Communication, Youtube to watch films and learn new things, and Instagram to get information.
- ❖ The Researcher evaluated and understood that they prefer Social Media Communication or Virtual Communication to communicate with their friends who live in Chattisgarh and learn new things despite the language barrier. And they prefer their traditional folk media communication any day over any other digital media communication.

Conclusion

Most of the Koya tribals interviewed aren't even aware of any social media applications. Some people can't even afford a non-touch(button) phone and a smartphone is too luxurious for them. A minority of the people who use smartphones use them for Communication through Whatsapp, to watch films, learn and explore new things through YouTube applications, and also to communicate for providing health services when there is a need, apart from these, there is also a girl who use YouTube for studying since she is Dumb, Online learning has made it easier for her. When the Researcher asked the Koya tribals about their preference of communication between Interpersonal and Virtual Communication, their attitude was skeptical. They prefer interpersonal communication if they think about communicating in person to express their thoughts and they prefer Virtual Communication through Social Media when they think about the facts of talking to a person who stays far away. Since the majority of their co-tribals live in Chattisgarh, social media especially Whatsapp saves their time and energy as they have to travel by walking for 4 days and their Expenses by not paying for traveling purposes. Believing the fact that Gutti Koya's tribal language doesn't have a Lipi version of it, the ones who use social media follow Telugu or Hindi language content on Social

Media. The Researcher also analyzed, the Koya tribals of Ghattumalla prefer Janapadhalu (Folk Communication) any day over any medium of Communication despite the facts analyzed. Even though the Digital India Flagship was implemented in 2021, the Gutti Koya tribals do not have access to the Internet. The rest 2% minority of the Koya tribals use social media through Jio Mobile Network. Through this Research, it is understood that the Gattumalla Koya tribes are untouched by digital media and are completely deprived of its benefits due to the social, cultural, traditional, regional, economic, or even political factors of their underdeveloped societal norms.

Conflict of Interest:

The Authors have no competing financial interests.

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