



Age of Digitalization and The Shifting Terrain of Communication and Entertainment: A Review on Utilization and Dependency on Internet

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Abstract

The advent of the digital age has revolutionized the way we communicate and entertain ourselves. The rapid proliferation of Internet technologies has transformed various aspects of our daily lives, creating a profound impact on society, culture, and individual behavior. This review paper aims to explore the utilization and dependency on the Internet in the age of digitalization, with a specific focus on communication and entertainment. The paper begins by examining the evolution of digital communication platforms, highlighting the significant role of social media in rural development, political communication process and involvement in online gaming or virtual reality as a tool for communication and entertainment. The effects of such technological shifts on human behavior, including socialization patterns, privacy concerns, and the blurring of online and offline identities, are critically assessed. The paper investigates the role of Internet access in bridging the digital divide, particularly in developing regions. It analyzes the disparities in Internet access and its implications for socio-economic development, education, and political engagement.

Keywords: Political communication, online gaming, social media, rural development, digital divide, Internet technologies.

Introduction

The emergence of new media technology in India has restructured the way people access, perceive, explore and construe information for development and entertainment. It has made things easier and faster. It has also increased the impact of media in the formation of

perception and making a decision in serious issues, as well as, in spending the spare time as per choice. Under the umbrella of new media technology, social media is playing a significant role in rural development, the political communication process, and involvement in online gaming or virtual reality. It has made interactivity easier and has brought it within reach of a very large number of people. It has become the newest tool for organizations and individuals to reach out to a set of target audiences who interact in the virtual world without any technological, geographical, economic, or political barriers. It has scored over traditional and legacy media in making the voice of the individual count and is considered a disruptive force in today's world.

Media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, disseminating information, and influencing social change. While media has traditionally been associated with urban areas, its impact on rural development cannot be overlooked. Media aims to create awareness about various development initiatives, promote sustainable practices, and advocate for the rights and needs of rural populations.

Hypermedia

Hypermedia, which is commonly known as social media, is equipped with the ability to share, inform, persuade, and connect individuals and communities to form opinions. Hypermedia refers to the means of interaction among people in which they exchange and share information and ideas in virtual space and networks (Ahlqvist et al., 2008). It has allowed interested people to come together and coordinate the social, as well as, political movements. It has also been acting as a tool for active participation in various areas of governance, campaigning, interaction, and activism.

Hypermedia is mainly comprised of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Blog, YouTube, Google Plus, MySpace, etc. It has been acting as an important tool for activists to promote freedom and democracy. Several claims have been made during the last few years about the origin and use of social media for political communication. It has been observed that the political communication strategies used for political campaigns during the elections are technology-driven. Observing the role of new media specifically in the field of politics, it has been concluded that the introduction of social media has reframed political communication.

In this digital age, millions of people are using Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking sites to learn about what is happening in and around the world, as traditional outlets have become increasingly less relevant to the digital generation. Arguing on the same issue, Ceil, C. (2011) pointed out that the traditional media and social media boundaries are blurring in India and it has become difficult for mainstream media organizations to ignore the power of social media.

Nowadays, all the major political parties have their presence on social media. They maintain their political websites and update their political pages regularly. These websites have detailed information about the activities and programs of the parties, which ultimately gave a clear view of the party's ideology, policies, organization, and activities. In a study conducted by the "IRIS Knowledge Foundation", it has been claimed that results in the next General Elections of India could be decided by Facebook users making them the newest vote bank (Jha, 2016).

Online conversation has shaped and reshaped society and inevitably influenced the user's lifestyle, attitude, and behavior. The urban and rural population of India as per the census of 2011, has reported that out of 455 million urban population, 295 million were using the Internet. As per rural and urban population, in rural India out of 918 million people, 186 million were using the Internet. The Internet penetration in urban India in December 2016 was 60.6%, and in December 2017 was 64.84%. In June 2018, the Internet penetration was 483 million, whereas, in 2019 the penetration was 525.3 million. In 2020 the Internet penetration as calculated by March, 31st 2020, reached up to 564.5 million. The report has further detailed that out of 281 million daily Internet users, 62% access the Internet daily in urban areas. Out of 98 million users of rural India, about 53% of the population accesses the Internet daily.

As reported by the newspaper Hindustan Times, dated 14th August 2020, mobile telecom networks have also played an important role in increasing Internet access in India. 3G Internet service was first launched in 2008 and 4G in 2012. Between 2013 and 2019, there was a 68% increase in the number of wireless Internet users (from 220 million to 696 million) compared to an 18% increase in the number of wired Internet users (from 18 million to 22 million). The share of mobile Internet users in total Internet users grew from 92% to nearly 97%. The report further discussed that according to TRAI data, the Delhi telecom circle (which includes parts of the national capital territory outside Delhi as well) had 69 Internet subscribers per 100 people by the end of 2019. This is the highest among the 22 telecom circles in India.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICS

It is evident from past election campaigns that social media has played a significant role in disseminating political information among online social media users. People not only receive the information but ask questions through the online platform to clarify their doubts and as a result, the political leaders answer their queries to attract the attention of the users. This exercise initiates a discussion among them and engages more people towards political communication, as well as, towards political parties.

For instance, the Gujarat Assembly Elections, 2002 had witnessed effective online political communication. The then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi had effectively used social media to connect with online citizens. Besides being active on Twitter and Facebook, Modi also went online for a live chat on Google Plus with netizens. Being online for a live chat, he became the first Indian politician to do so. (Chopra, 2014) Through the social media campaign, he was able to capture the first-time voters, the youth, who certainly were more attuned to digital culture. At the same time, the middle class was also quite active on social media. He also connected with the youth because of his style of political campaigning and his social media skills.

A study published in the newspaper, The Tribune dated 2nd May 2018, has described the popularity of politicians on social networking sites. It has highlighted, „World leader on Facebook“, released by Burson Cohn and Wolfe. The study described the PM of India, Narendra Modi, twice as popular on Facebook as the American President Donald Trump. According to the study, 43.2 million people followed PM Modi on social media platforms especially Facebook, whereas, 23.1 million people followed US President Donald Trump on

Twitter. These figures demonstrate the popularity and heavy presence of politicians on social media platforms to make it more effective for political discourses.

During Delhi Assembly Elections, 2015, the efficacy of social media as a platform to attract voters was also observed. Social media networking sites had played a major role in engaging social media users. To support the concept of the power of hypermedia, news in Hindustan Times with the headline: “AAP ahead of BJP, Cong on social media,” highlighted the utilization of hypermedia in opinion-making and setting the agenda. According to the news, “The statistics available on Facebook pages of all three political parties namely AAP, BJP and Congress, AAP (Aam Aadmi Party) had the highest user engagement rate. In the case of the AAP national Facebook page, 2,318,115 people liked the page. Out of these, 500713 were talking about the party, taking the engagement rate to 21.6%. More than 7,300,000 people liked the BJP’s (Bharatiya Janata Party) page, but only 562,138 talked about it, taking the engagement rate to 7.6%. The Indian National Congress was liked by 3,547,644 people and 55,496 were people talking about it. The engagement rate in this case was 7.2%. According to AAP members who were managing the Facebook page, they had managed to achieve the target of winning the elections without advertising”. (Hindustan Times, 30th Jan.2015).

The power of new media platforms has been also examined during the Delhi Assembly Elections, 2020. AAP once again utilized social media platforms to win the battle of elections. The party used a different online strategy to gain the attention of the voters. The Aam Aadmi Party hired professionals for online advertisements and focused on age-specific videos, which means different videos for senior citizens and youngsters. Whereas, the opposition political party, BJP focused more on apps and social networking sites for the dissemination of content. In an interview with the newspaper The Hindu, the social media and information technology head of AAP, Ankit Lal said, “ We did Google and YouTube advertisements for the first time and it gave us visibility that was extraordinary for us” (Anand, J., and Babu M. Nikhil, 23rd Feb. 2020).

AAP marked its heavy presence on social media with five million followers on Twitter and four million people followed AAP’s Facebook page. As a result of this utilization, AAP won 62 seats with 53.6% vote share, whereas, BJP won only 8 seats i.e. 38.5% vote share. (The Hindu, 23rd Feb., 2020).

Hence, these innovations in communication and media have transformed the way India communicates. The book, “*Media Shifting Terrain*”, 2019 by Pamela Philipose, has also described the transformation of media mainly from 2011 to 2015. Starting with the ‘*India Against Corruption*’ mobilization in 2011 and the public protest against the gang rape of Jyoti Pandey in 2012 to the Delhi Assembly Elections of 2013 and 2015 along with the General Elections of India in 2014, the author has elaborated the usage of social media by the leading politicians and their presence on the social networking sites. As per the usage of social media in the Indian context, PM Narendra Modi joined Twitter in 2009 and set up his website in February 2005. But in 2002 he made maximum use of Facebook and Google Plus for online communication. His political party, the BJP was the first Indian political party to understand the power of social media in 1995. In contrast to this, the Indian National Congress (INC) set up its official website ten years later in 2005. Not only this, Rahul Gandhi joined Twitter in 2015. Whereas, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had a strong presence on social media and

came into existence in 2012. Despite being new in the field of politics, AAP was more active on social media in comparison to Congress (Chaturvedi, 2016).

Communication and Entertainment

Communication and entertainment have undergone significant transformations in the age of digitalization, driven by the widespread adoption of Internet technologies. A comprehensive examination of the literature reveals several key themes and trends shaping these domains. This review synthesizes the findings from diverse sources to highlight the evolving landscape of communication and entertainment in the digital era.

Numerous studies have explored the impact of social media on interpersonal communication. Scholars have examined how platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram shape self-presentation, identity construction, and social relationships (Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C, 2007). The role of social media in fostering political participation and activism has also been studied extensively, revealing its potential to mobilize and engage individuals in collective action (Bennett, 2012)

Research on messaging applications, such as WhatsApp and Telegram, has focused on their influence on interpersonal communication patterns. Studies have analyzed the shift towards instant messaging as a primary mode of communication, its effects on language use, and the blurring of personal and professional boundaries in online conversations (Miller, C. R., & Shepherd, D. 2004).

The popularity of user-generated content platforms, such as YouTube and TikTok, has been a subject of interest. Scholars have explored the motivations behind content creation, the impact of online influencers, and the democratization of media production and distribution. Additionally, studies on online gaming have investigated its social, psychological, and educational implications (Ferguson, C. J., 2015).

The effects of Internet usage on mental health have been a recurring topic in the literature. Researchers have delved into the link between excessive Internet use, digital addiction, and psychological well-being, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between online and offline activities (Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D., 2011).

In the realm of entertainment, the Internet has disrupted traditional media consumption models. Streaming services, user-generated content platforms, and online gaming have become dominant forms of entertainment, posing challenges to traditional broadcast and cable networks. This review analyzes the impact of digitalization on content creation, distribution, and consumption, with a focus on the changing preferences of digital-native generations.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE GAMING

Social media and online gaming have become integral parts of the digital landscape, influencing the way people interact, communicate, and entertain themselves. Extensive research has explored various aspects of these phenomena, shedding light on their impacts on individuals and society. This review synthesizes key findings from the literature, focusing on social media's role in communication and online gaming's influence on behavior and well-being.

Studies investigating social media's impact on communication have uncovered the ways in which platforms shape interpersonal relationships and self-presentation. Research has shown that social media use is associated with increased social capital and maintaining connections

with distant friends and family (Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C., 2007). However, concerns have been raised about the potential negative effects of social media on face-to-face communication and social skills, especially among adolescents (Vannucci, A., & McCauley Ohannessian, C., 2019).

A significant body of research has explored the relationship between social media use and mental health. Studies have reported associations between excessive social media consumption and feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. The phenomenon of social media addiction and its effects on well-being have also been investigated, highlighting the need for digital mindfulness and moderation (Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D., 2017).

Online gaming research has examined the behavioral aspects of gaming, such as in-game aggression, cooperation, and problem-solving. Studies have demonstrated that video games can influence players' attitudes and behaviors, both positively and negatively (Anderson, C. A., & Dill, K. E., 2000). Cooperative gaming experiences have been associated with improved social skills and teamwork, while excessive gaming or exposure to violent content has been linked to aggressive tendencies and desensitization to violence (Gentile, D. A., Coyne, S., & Walsh, D. A., 2011).

Scholars have explored the cognitive effects of online gaming, particularly in relation to attention, memory, and problem-solving. Research has indicated that certain video games, especially those requiring strategic thinking and complex decision-making, can enhance cognitive abilities and spatial skills (Green, C. S., & Bavelier, D., 2012). The concept of online gaming communities has been a subject of interest for researchers. Investigations have explored how these virtual communities provide social support, social identity, and a sense of belonging for gamers (Cole, H., & Griffiths, M. D. (2007).

In recent years, the concept of gamification has gained traction in educational contexts. Research has explored how gamified learning environments can enhance motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes for students (Deterding, S., Dixon, D., Khaled, R., & Nacke, L. (2011).

Social media and online gaming underscores the pervasive influence of these digital phenomena on communication, behavior, and well-being. While social media offers new opportunities for social connectivity, it also raises concerns about mental health and interpersonal communication. Similarly, online gaming provides enjoyable and educational experiences but demands careful consideration of potential negative effects, particularly when excessive gaming becomes problematic.

Digital Divide and Rural Development

The digital divide, characterized by disparities in access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), has emerged as a significant challenge in the context of rural development. Extensive research has explored the impact of this divide on socioeconomic development, education, healthcare, and political engagement in rural areas. This review synthesizes key findings from the literature, highlighting the implications of the digital divide on rural development.

Numerous studies have examined the state of ICT access and infrastructure in rural regions. Research has revealed substantial disparities in Internet connectivity, with rural areas often facing limited broadband coverage and inadequate telecommunication infrastructure (Robles,

G., & Lewis, A., 2017). These barriers to access hinder the adoption of ICTs and limit rural communities' participation in the digital economy.

Researchers have investigated the factors influencing digital inclusion in rural areas, emphasizing the importance of education, income levels, and digital literacy in shaping individuals' ICT adoption (van Deursen, A. & van Dijk, J., 2015). Studies have also highlighted the role of community-based initiatives, digital training programs, and government policies in promoting digital participation among rural populations.

The digital divide has profound implications for education in rural areas. Studies have shown that limited access to ICTs affects students' learning opportunities and restricts their exposure to digital learning resources (Warschauer, M., 2003). Moreover, disparities in digital skills hinder rural residents' ability to compete in the job market, exacerbating the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment.

Access to digital healthcare services, particularly telemedicine, has been a subject of interest in rural development research. Studies have highlighted the potential of ICTs in improving healthcare delivery, enabling remote consultations, and enhancing medical outreach in underserved rural areas (Wootton, R., 2012). However, challenges related to infrastructure, digital literacy, and affordability remain critical barriers to realizing the full potential of telemedicine.

The digital divide can impact political engagement and citizen participation in rural areas. Research has explored the role of ICTs in facilitating e-governance initiatives, empowering rural communities to voice their concerns, and enhancing government service delivery (Gaurav, K., & Kumar, P., 2019). However, concerns about the exclusion of digitally marginalized populations persist.

The literature has emphasized the connection between the digital divide and social inequality. Studies have shown that the lack of ICT access in rural areas perpetuates existing disparities, limiting opportunities for economic advancement and social inclusion (Vats, K., & Sharma, N., 2016). Bridging the digital divide is seen as a crucial step toward achieving more equitable rural development.

In conclusion, the digital divide poses significant challenges to rural development, hindering socio-economic progress, education, healthcare, and political engagement in rural areas. Addressing these disparities requires comprehensive strategies that focus on improving ICT access, enhancing digital literacy, and fostering community-based initiatives to promote digital inclusion in rural regions.

Investigations into the digital divide have emphasized the disparities in Internet access across regions and demographics. Scholars have examined the consequences of limited Internet connectivity on education, socio-economic opportunities, and political engagement, advocating for efforts to bridge this divide (Warschauer, M., 2003).

Conclusion

The widespread adoption of Internet technologies has revolutionized how individuals interact, communicate, and entertain themselves in unprecedented ways. In the realm of entertainment, digitalization has disrupted traditional media consumption patterns. Streaming services, user-generated content platforms, and online gaming have emerged as dominant forms of entertainment, providing unparalleled access to diverse content and interactive experiences. This democratization of content creation and distribution has empowered

individuals to become content creators, influencers, and active participants in the media landscape. Nevertheless, the proliferation of digital entertainment has raised questions about its impact on attention spans, social behaviors, and the potential for addiction.

The age of digitalization has not been without challenges. The rapid pace of technological advancements has created a digital divide, with certain demographics and regions facing limited access to the Internet and its opportunities. Bridging this divide and ensuring equitable access to digital resources and education is crucial for promoting inclusive growth and empowering marginalized communities.

The age of digitalization has reshaped the way we communicate and entertain ourselves. It has opened up new possibilities for connection, creativity, and expression while presenting complex challenges related to privacy, mental health, and digital equity. As we embrace the transformative potential of technology, it becomes imperative to foster responsible digital citizenship, leverage digital tools for positive societal outcomes, and address the ethical and social implications of the digital age. By doing so, we can navigate the shifting terrain of communication and entertainment in a way that enriches human experiences and fosters a more connected and inclusive global community.

A democracy survives with the truth and truth depends upon the facts. Hence, one has to be a fact-checker and those who rely on hypermedia platforms for information should be aware of the fact-checking websites that gave the actual picture of the story. With the help of these fact-checking websites, one can differentiate between the real and the virtual world.

Moreover, when the political parties and the candidates directly connect with potential voters through social media, it gives them the option to “like” the posts, “share” and “comment” on the messages and pictures in an interactive manner, hence it has created an element of personalization. However, the role of this phenomenon has increased political engagement and electoral participation. This has not only helped people to communicate, but has also helped them to exchange information, ideas, and thoughts about the changes that took place in the political landscape.

The review also delves into the implications of increased Internet usage and dependence on mental health and well-being. The phenomenon of digital addiction is explored, examining how continuous connectivity and exposure to social media contribute to anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Conversely, the Internet has also provided opportunities for virtual communities and support networks, which can have positive effects on mental health.

In conclusion, the age of digitalization has ushered in a transformative era of communication and entertainment, revolutionizing how individuals interact and consume media. While the Internet offers numerous benefits, it also presents challenges related to privacy, mental health, and social equity. This review underscores the need for a balanced approach to the utilization of the Internet, leveraging its potential while addressing its potential downsides, to ensure a sustainable and inclusive digital future.

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