



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Journalism and Mass Communication

A STUDY ON ACCESS AND USES OF MEDIA AMONG PEOPLE OF SIKKIM

KEY WORDS: Media Access, Uses, Sikkim, People

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ABSTRACT

Media access is one of the most significant aspects of the media scenario due to the rapidly changing nature of the today's media. Digital inequality as a concept defines the unequal distribution of ICT and the increasing gap in the knowledge that is produced by the information that is spread through internet. But, the lack of access to traditional media such as newspapers and television is studied less due to the accepted fact of everyone having access to it. During the course of data collection for the research, it was noted by the researcher that many people did not want to participate in the survey stating the lack of access to newspaper or lack of interest in newspapers. In order to validate the information received; this research was conducted to understand the access and the use of different media in Sikkim, a total of 150 respondents were asked about their media access and habits. The results show that most people do read newspapers but only occasionally and that people prefer social media and internet more compared to traditional media.

INTRODUCTION

Any study that deals with media and the access to media covers not only the media and its variables but it also covers the society as a whole. As such studies primarily focus on the relationship between the media and the society. Understanding the uses and gratification of the media is a major part of any research that deals with the media and the society. In a democracy public gratification towards the governance takes center stage. Hence, studies focused on media access also deal with the intricacies of governance and development. Denis Mcquail (1997) wrote of who the media is accountable to, where he explains how media has forms of obligations which are either 'assigned, contracted or self imposed/ denied, where they are held accountable through liability' or answerability'.

While he explains the media accountability, he also mentions that media today might not feel obligated to serve the society as a sense of duty due to the fact that it is increasingly becoming market driven. In the book 'Free Markets Free Media? Reflections on the Political Economy of the Press in Asia' Cherian George (2009) explains how the growing number of media organizations in Malaysia led to increased competition and the prevalence of profit driven media content. But amidst all these concerns connected to countries and cities with a rich media culture that is thriving and making their decisions as to which side of the moral compass they want to fall in, we have studies that focus on just the media access, where we learn that many don't even have the basic access.

There is a huge gap between the studies that focus on bigger media markets and the ones that are focused on finding the basic media access. Robert G. Picard (2017) in 'Relations among Media Economics, Content, and Diversity', notes that the primary function of media in democracy would be to help the citizens voice out their opinions and to equip them with the information that helps them reiterate their thoughts. Linda K Fuller (2018) writes that the words 'participation' and 'access' are more associated with the community media, where the media itself is known for providing a voice to the people who make the community. The author also reiterates that media access should be an institutional guarantor and that is why we fight for against the growing hegemony of the media conglomerates. But the main question is there a guarantee to access to media from the institution itself?

This study has taken a look at the media access of public in Sikkim and also its uses in order to understand the gratification

and the relationship that they share with the media. Here media includes all the traditional media and the new media as well. Since, there is a dearth of studies related to media access and media gratification on Sikkim, the research will be drawing conclusions using research conducted elsewhere.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several research works reiterate that media literacy is one of the most important aspects of a democracy such as, D Kellner, J Share (2007), and P Mihailidis, B Thevenin (2013), particularly in terms of participatory democracy. Media literacy is defined as having the knowledge of how to access, understand and interpret the information provided by the media in general terms. Linda K Fuller (2018) explains how media access should be an institutional guarantor and that is why people oppose the media conglomerates and the hegemony that they assert. The author points out how participation and access can be explained better in relation with community media or the participatory/ alternative media than compared with the mainstream media which is more commercialized and is gradually losing touch with the sense of obligation towards public duty.

Dennis Mcquail (1997) also reiterated the same idea where he explained the media accountability with the help of a model that explained the media obligations and the repercussions of not complying with them. He explained how the mainstream media might not feel obligated to serve the society for a moral obligation due to the increase in competition and commercialization in the media. He also concludes by pointing out that Free media does have the potential of being irresponsible and doing what they see as right but also mentions that to suppose that better media leads to a better society will be illusory.

In the context of media literacy, Sonia Livingstone (2004) studied the changing nature of media literacy, where they pointed out that the parameters that defined media literacy before is going through a drastic change as the whole focus is shifted from the traditional media to the new media. Sonia Livingstone and Shenja Van Ver Graaf (2010), explains how the idea of media literacy has to change as the focus itself has shifted from the traditional media to the new media and that the new media has many components that the traditional media did not consist of in the first place.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the media access among Sikkim people

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- To study the uses of media and gratification of it among people

RESEARCH DESIGN:

The present study employed quantitative method to collect primary data. A structured questionnaire was distributed among 150 respondents who were selected by convenient random sampling method. The data was analyzed by using simple mean and drawn conclusions.

DATA ANALYSIS:

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Table 1: Table depicting the demographic details of the respondents of the study.

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| Male | 65 | 43.3% |
| Female | 85 | 56.6% |
| Age | | |
| 18yrs – 25yrs | 46 | 30.6% |
| 26yrs – 35yrs | 54 | 36% |
| 36yrs – 45yrs | 28 | 18.6% |
| 46yrs and above | 22 | 14.6% |
| Education | | |
| PUC | 46 | 30.6% |
| Degree | 61 | 40.6% |
| Masters and above | 43 | 28.6% |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

GENDER:

In this study out of 150 respondents 85 were 'female' and remaining 65 were 'male'. It is evident through the data that 56.6% and the majority of the respondents were female.

AGE GROUP:

Out of the four age groups specified for the study, 54 of '26- 35 years' of age, making them the majority respondents with 36% of the total respondents. 46 out of 150 respondents were of the age group '18-25', making them the second major group of respondents at 30.6% of 100%. 28 out of 150 were of the age group '36-45' years of age at 18.6% of the total respondents. 22 out of 150 were of the age '46 years and above' at 14.6% making them the minority in the total respondents of the study.

EDUCATION:

Out of three specified options it was noted that 61 out of 150 respondents were having a 'graduation degree', making them the majority of the respondents at 40.6% of the total number of respondents. 46 out of 150 respondents had a 'PUC' degree, making them the second major group of respondents in the study at 30.6% of the total respondents. Out of 150, 43 respondents had a 'masters degree' and above making up for 28.6% of the total respondents in the study.

MAJOR FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHY:-

- 56.6% and the majority of the respondents were female in the study.
- 54 of 26- 35 years of age, making them the majority respondents with 36% of the total respondents
- 61 out of 150 respondents were having a graduation degree, making them the majority of the respondents at 40.6%

TRADITIONAL MEDIA ACCESS:

- 62 out of 150 respondents chose 'Occasionally' as their response to reading a newspaper, making up for 41.3% of the total respondents in the study.
- Out of 150 respondents 92 said they 'never' accessed radio ,making them the majority at 61.3% of the total number of respondents.

- Out of 150 respondents 97 said they watch television 'regularly', making them the majority at 64.6% of the total number of respondents.
- Out of 150 respondents 76 said they visit cinema 'regularly', making them the majority at 50.6% of the total number of the respondents.

NEW MEDIA ACCESS:

- Out of 150 respondents 102 said they access internet 'frequently', that's is 68% of the total number of respondents making them the majority.
- Out of the 150 respondents 118 of them said they use mobile 'regularly', that is 78.6% of the total number of the respondents making them the majority.
- Out of 150 respondents 107 said they access to social media 'frequently', that is 71.3% of the total number of the respondents making them the majority.

TIME SPENT ON TRADITIONAL MEDIA:

- Out of 140 respondents who read newspapers, 99 said they spend 'less than 10minutes' of their time in reading the newspapers, that is 70.7% making them the majority.
- Out of 58 respondents who listen to radio, 34 said they spend '15-30minutes' listening to the radio, that is 58.6% making them the majority.
- Out of 150 respondents who watch television, 86 said they spend '1-2 hours' watching television, that is 57.3% making them the majority.
- Out of 150 respondents who visit cinema, 87 said they spend 'more than 3 hours' in cinema, making them the majority by 58%.

TIME SPENT ON NEW MEDIA:

- Out of 150 respondents 98 said they spend 'more than 3 hours' accessing internet, making them the majority by 65.3%.
- Out of 150 respondents 112 said they spend 'more than 3 hours' on their mobile, making them the majority by 74.6%.
- Out of 150 respondents 94 said they spend 'more than 3 hours' on social media, making them the majority by 62.6%.

PURPOSE OF USING TRADITIONAL MEDIA:

- It is noted that 80 respondents said they use traditional media to get 'information', that is 53.3%.

PURPOSE OF USING NEW MEDIA:

- It is noted that 138 respondents said they use new media for 'entertainment' purpose, that is 92%.

CONCLUSION:-

In the study conducted to study the media access and use of the people in Sikkim, it was noted that a majority of the respondents do not listen to radio , it can be speculated that the respondents either do not have access to the media or they do not prefer radio over other mediums.

Even if it is noted that majority of the respondents said they read newspapers only occasionally , the majority of the respondents is noted to have access to newspapers. Here 99 out of 150 respondents is seen to have chosen occasionally as their response to the frequency of reading a newspaper. This goes on to prove the point that majority of respondents even if they do not indulge on reading the newspaper every day, they do have access to newspaper.

But it is also quite evident that majority of respondents prefer new media over traditional media, the frequency of use and the time spent on new media, social media is comparatively much higher than that spent on radio, TV and newspaper collectively. It is also noted that the number of hours spent on internet was mostly connected to entertainment than any other purpose. It is seen that most respondents use traditional

media for information.

In traditional media a very large number of respondents said they do not access radio but a majority of respondents said they watch movies frequently and also spend at least two hours watching TV every day.

The data presented has been collected for the purpose of a PhD degree and hence, is a part of an ongoing research work. The conclusion presented is very limited to the information collected in relation to the research work connected to media and Sikkim.

Here we only observe the access and the basic purpose of access to the same media only.

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