

Use of Electronic Media among Rural Students: A Case Study

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Abstract

The revolution of communication in India over the last decade is astonishing. New communication technologies, i.e. the 'Electronic Media' (EM), such as satellites, radio (FM), television, cell phone (mobile), computers, laptops and palmtops with internet are bringing noticeable changes leading to a huge impact on socio-cultural understandings and achieving success in its popularity among the youth of urban as well as rural area. Data for the study is collected from Kanavi Karuvina (KK) Koppa village of Belgaum district, Karnataka state. 165 respondents were selected by random sampling belonging to the age of 17 to 23 years, studying in Pre-University Course, Bachelor's and Master's Course. The paper relies information and statistics from primary and secondary sources. The paper reveals in the rise of cell phone activities. Particularly, the generation 'Y' is mobile savvy. This empirical research clearly stated that at present day situation the respondents- the youths are active and vibrant participators in using EM for their development.

Introduction

The communication revolution in the developing world of the 'New Millennium' is witnessing an astonishing "Information Explosion". Ever heard of the saying, "The times have changed"? Well it is not only time that has been changing but also technology in 'Electronic Media' (EM) as well. Technology has been growing at a rapid rate to accommodate the needs and desires of people in obtaining a simpler and more efficient lifestyle. One of the greatest technologies to hit the 21st century is the cell phone. Sony Ericsson's advertisement for their cell phone: "Making Life Simpler" says it all. At present, India is also moving from an agrarian-based economy to service-based an "information society". Consequently, the youth of India has turned tech-savvy with new Electronic Media channels viz., radio (FM), satellites, television (TV) channels, cellular phone (mobile), computers(laptops and palmtops) with mobile internet. This has proved to be a powerful force in the social transformation of urban as well as rural youth of the country. Research on the questions of positive and negative influences on rural youth is uneven. Analysts have amassed a vast amount of solid information on older technologies such as television and movies, but studies on newer technologies are far fewer in number and more speculative in their findings. Hence, the need for this study is taken.

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Review of Literature

Rajeswari Ramachandran, K Jaggarajamma, M Muniyandi and Rani Balasubramanian, in their article "*Identifying Effective Communication Channels In A Rural Community: A Field Report From South India*"- 2006, stated that, the most important channels that are being commonly used to get day to day information are mass media /television, wall posters, meetings at panchayat office and through dandora (beat of drums). These channels can be utilised for spreading any health messages effectively and educating the rural community.

According to Suzanne Martin, Ph.D., '*Youth and Education Researcher at Harris Interactive*', (2007) "Rural teens utilise different modes of communication in different social contexts". Aoki & Downes, (2003) investigated cell phone usage among American college students from a behavioral and psychological perspective. Their objectives were to (a) find out why college students acquired a cell phone and (b) to determine the relationship between cell phone usage behavior and intrinsic motivations about usage. Their results from focus groups indicated that there were nine motivational themes for which college students acquired a cell phone. These were – personal safety, financial incentive, information access, social interaction, parental contacts, time management/co-ordination, dependency, image and privacy management.

McLuhan (1996) said that, the electronic media are creating a global village, people throughout the world see major news event unfold and hence participate in them together. Habermas (1989) who is linked with the Frankfurt school of social thought, made an extensive study on media and they called it the "Culture Industry", meaning the entertainment industries of film, T.V, popular music, radio etc. Schramm (1964) has studied three important functions of the media in a traditional society: to act as a watch-dog, as an aid to decision-making and as a teacher.

Objectives of the Study

The present study attempts to throw light upon the use of electronic media in Kanavi Karuvina (KK) Koppa village of Belgaum district of Karnataka state. Based on this premise, the following objectives have been formulated:

- To study socio-economic background of rural youth.
- To know the popular and widely used communication media in rural areas.
- To find out the influence of EM on the traditional rural culture of youth.
- To evaluate the development of rural youths through EM.

Hypothesis: '*Cell Phone is the most used EM, thinning rural traditional culture*'

Research Design and Methodology

The entire primary research study was undertaken in Kanavi Karuvina (KK) Koppa, a small village in Belgaum district, Karnataka state, located about 18 kilometers from Belgaum city. According to 2001 Census of India, it has a population of 6,240 of which 3,178 are males and 3,062 females. It has one Government Primary School, one Government Secondary High School, one Government Pre-University College and one Government First Grade (Degree) College to its credit.

Sampling Technique

A random convenience sample was chosen comprising of 165 respondents or rural youths (117 boys and 48 girls between the ages of 17 and 23 years) pursuing studies at the Pre-University, Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree level was chosen for the interview or primary survey.

Data Collection

The interview method was the basis for the primary data collection. Individual responses thus obtained were then compiled, processed and analysed to arrive at the opinions on various issues. The instrument for this data collection was a 'Structured Questionnaire', designed to elicit socio-economic data, usage of EM, attitude towards EM and the related social issues. This questionnaire had a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions. The open-ended questions, which gave an added 'qualitative feel' to the instrument, provided the logic or rationale for the behavioral patterns, attitudes and social insights. In addition to the primary research, secondary data was collected from standard publications (research and general journals) as well as updated worldwide web references.

Socioeconomic Background of the Respondents

The overwhelming majority (70.91 percent) of the respondents is boys and 29.09 percent are girls. Of the total respondents, 36.98 percent are of 17 years of age; 31.51 percent of them are of 18 years of age; 15.15 percent of the respondents are of 20 years of age; 12.12 percent of them are of 21 years of age and less of 04.24 percent of the respondents are of 22 years of age. From this fact it shows that, majority of them are pursuing PUC.

A majority of 97.58 percent of the respondents is Hindus and 02.42 percent of them are Muslim. Moreover, there is a high representation of Lingayat community who constitute 53.96 percent, Scheduled Tribe 15.75 percent, Scheduled Caste 12.72 percent, Kshatriyas and Daivajnya Brahmins comprise 09.09 percent respectively and Kurbar and Maratha castes constitute 08.48 percent. Thus, Lingayats dominate. The most common unit of family of the respondents is joint family with 96.37 percent, followed by nuclear family with only 03.63 percent. The higher dominance of joint families could be because of the rural study area and social migration of the youngsters being less, as Govt. PUC and Govt. Degree College is located in the village itself.

The occupational background of the respondent's father elucidates the fact that majority of 87.28 percent of them are farmers, 06.06 percent of them are teachers and 06.66 percent of the respondents are in business. Of the total respondents majority of 68.49 percent of them are pursuing PUC, 27.27 percent of them are pursuing their graduation and only 04.24 percent are pursuing their Post- Graduation. Further, 95.76 percent of them opined they are pursuing their education in Kannada medium and only 04.24 percent of them in English medium.

Generation 'Y' – Mobile Savvy

The paper reveals increase of cell phone activities. About 83.63 percent of the total respondents claim the 'Cell Phone' (mobile) is the electronic device they use the most. Only 09.09 percent said the second most widely used device is their 'Desktop PC' (personal computer). Particularly, the Generation 'Y' is mobile savvy, as majority of 90.90 percent of them access and regularly sending or receiving SMS/ text messages, thus, their frequency of use of texting has now overtaken the frequency of every other common form of interaction with their friends. Surfing the internet through cell phones was very less, as only 33.33 percent of them accessed internet in their mobile devices and 12.72 percent of them accessed internet through cyber cafés in the Belgaum city.

Majority of 83.63 percent of the total respondents own Television sets with dish cable. Out of the total girl respondents, 68.75 percent of them are engaged in household activities and 83.63 percent

of them engaged in chatting in messages through mobile phones. Thus, many of the respondents are not able to spend much time in watching television programs, as only 38.18 percent of the total respondents have a habit of watching music channels like U2 (Udaya Music), ZOOM and MTV. 56.96 percent of the respondent's preferred to watch Kannada language channels like E-TV, Udaya, Suvarna and Zee Kannada. Whereas only 28.48 percent of them like to watch Star TV, Sony TV, Zee Cinema and Star Gold and a small percent of 33.33 percent of them watch sports channels. Further, 39.39 percent of the total respondents were aware of the current affair news by watching news channels like: TV 9 and Udaya News (Kannada language respectively), DD News and Star News.

Of the total respondents 93.33 percent of them opined that the mobile phone is considered the most important media of communication. Majority of 87.27 percent of them agreed that, today in this technological world, as a product of globalisation, mobile phones were used as mode of continuity in the folk musical culture, through its ring and caller tones. Majority of 67.27 percent of the respondents believed that the communication media (TV and Internet) helped them in gaining various types of information and knowledge.

The study further revealed, 40.00 percent of the total respondents said that, they typed English spellings wrong in their cell phones while texting messages. And 63.63 percent of them agreed that, they used short words in their text messages, for instance: 'u' for 'You'; 'n' for 'And'; '4' for 'For'; 'vl' for 'Will'; 'c' for 'See'; and so on. Further 36.96 percent of the respondents revealed that, they are trying to type correct spellings in English by keeping 'T9 Dictionary On' in their cell phones. Interestingly, 35.75 percent of the respondents affirmed that, they used their cell phone audio storage capability of the device to record lectures. And 60.60 percent of the respondents said that they used cell phone as a scientific calculator. Only 29.69 percent of the total respondents have computer knowledge and 29.09 percent of them have joined computer basic class. Whereas, F.M. band radio is accessed by less of 10.30 percent of the respondents.

As an important agent of rural development services, majority of 61.21 percent of the respondents opined that electronic media (72.72 percent said TV) has found wide inroads into their rural life-styles and is the most potential condition for rural development in modern days. This empirical research clearly states that at present day situation the respondents- the youths are active and vibrant participators in using EM for development. On the basis of the above facts, the hypothesis: '*Cell Phone is the most used EM*' is proved and '*EM thinning rural traditional culture*' is proved to some extent.

Thus, these electronic media are ubiquitous. They have become a phenomenon and the adolescents find it to be a necessity in one's life. This type of youth mentality can lead to positive as well as negative effects on their culture. As, some scholars believe that electronic media is helping rural youth become better educated, more socially connected, and better informed than any previous generation. Others fear that it is a hazard for vulnerable youth exposing them to advertising, violent or pornographic images, and encounters with strangers.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that the trend of using EM is very common in all the age groups and especially the youth who devote much of their time and skills engaged in it thereby opening up channels of change. The respondents, who are in their teens now, show a high potential for the use of EM and so the market will be expected to be upbeat. Whether it is consuming media across digital and traditional channels, or engaging with companies across channels, this trend will continue to skyrocket, especially as newer, younger consumers join the mix. Undoubtedly, the expansion of EM in this study area (KK Koppa Village) has been able to portray the change in the socio-cultural life of the apathetic and philosophical rural citizenry.

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