IMPACT OF INTERNET AS A MEDIA

Anuradha Chakraborty[1], Dr. Jugesh Aspal[2]
[1]Research Scholar, [2]Supervisor
[1,2]Malwanchal University
Indore, Madhya Pradesh

ABSTRACT

It is the concept and process of communication. Every aspect of it including its channels keeps evolving by the year. Despite the controversies that range on whether the Internet is a mass medium or not, the number of its audience members that keeps increasing geometrically by the day makes it undeniably one. It is a new mass medium and a forceful one too, which has become an integral part of other mass media as well as the media supporting industries- public relations and advertising. Internet is revolutionizing nearly every aspect of life from commerce to education, delivery of medical care to government services, and mass media communication to personal interaction among family and friends. This article provides an analysis of how the Internet has redirected the evolution of the press, examines the opportunities and challenges the redirection presents for both the press and consumers of news and information, and considers some steps being taken to meet the challenges, both in the United States and internationally.

Key words : Media, Newspapers, Television

INTRODUCTION

The International Network commonly abridged to Internet simply means a global network of millions of computer networks. In other words, it is a network of all computer networks worldwide or plainly a network of networks. The Internet allows for instantaneous exchange of information to and from any part of the globe. Through its electronic mail often referred to as email for short, instant messaging or chat facilities, the Internet makes it possible for people to communicate with others both at the interpersonal and mass levels of communication. It also allows its users' access to volumes of information available on the World Wide Web. Data more voluminous than any known encyclopedia can be transferred from one part of the world to the farthest part of the globe at the speed of light. Thus users can download or upload information at a startling speed.

The growing popularity of the Internet and the World Wide Web have since generated an increasing interest in the new communication technologies and its impact on society and social systems. We are facing a new technology that allows decentralization, multimedia and interactive communication in a context of familiarity, ease of use and instant feedback over a global scale. Internationally, this revolution has facilitated the globalization of the economy, business, finance and culture, Today Information and Communication Technology (lCT) constitutes the fastest growing component of the global economy and the Indian ICT spending is expected to grow 14 percent in 2010.

As an outcome of technological developments that enabled computers to exchange data using regular telephone lines, a revolutionary medium of communication has emerged. Computers, connected to the global telecommunication network, have become powerful tools of instantaneous communication around the world. Two distinct functions of this connectivity are: (1) online media-new agents of information and entertainment, that are similar to popular media such as television, radio and print, and (2) computer mediated communication (CMC)-new channels for interactive, two-way communication that rival telephone conversations in their capacity to sustain conferencing and asynchronous communication.

The most influential dimension of this revolution is the worldwide escalation of access to the Internet. It is estimated that the number of Internet hosts increased from one lakh in 1988 to over 36 million in 1998; the number of Internet users rose from 26 million in 1995 to 143 million by mid 1998 and today stands at 1.8 billion. India has been a part of this revolution; 71 million Indians have used the Internet in 2009 registering a year on year growth from 2008 of 19%.

Internet technology has radically changed the nature of communication across the world. Communication has become instant irrespective of distance and far less expensive. This medium has versatile uses and can be used globally as an instrument for distribution of news and information, a medium for collaboration and a means of communication between people irrespective of the geographical division. This medium can provide mailing service, telephony, transfer facility of text, audio, image and video files and many other communication specific functions. The Internet through its technology therefore offers great opportunities in the delivery of basic services like information, education and health to far-flung regions. This contextual phenomenon, that has changed the nature of communication, human relations and public expectations, also represents a considerable challenge to the state in terms of public governance and various services to the society.

A new medium is considered a mass medium and a medium of choice for commercial reasons when there are a certain number of users for the same. The critical mass concept adopted from economists, physicists, and sociologists by researchers states that when ten to twenty percent of the population starts using a medium the critical mass necessary to spread to the rest of the social systems has been gained and in attaining this number the early users provide the necessary leadership. In India for instance the popularity of Blogs rose only when celebrities started creating and maintaining their Blogs. The story was similar with the social networking tool called Twitter.

There have been several criticisms about using Internet and Internet based social networking systems for providing information to the masses in India, though it has been popular in the western countries. The Internet technology is an expensive medium in the Indian context and so it is difficult for common people to use this medium very often. The additional resources of skill, effort and education required by users for adoption. and usage of this new interactive medium are also critical barriers to its spread and usage .In the developing countries the use of Internet is not so popular because most people live at the poverty level or below the poverty level. Hence they cannot afford an access to this medium. The irony however is this that the advantage of this new communication system will never be exploited fully unless the number of users of this medium increases. The email has been considered a medium of mass communication in the west for quite a period of time, but in India Internet access came much later and, even after its arrival only a section of people were able to access it. However, from the year 2000, Internet has gained popularity among the young generation, service providing industries, software industries and others. Today, in metro cities of India, most of the young pupils and other educated individuals are conversant with email and social networking systems. Through these social networking systems like Face book, Orkut, Twitter etc, it is possible to contact friends, colleagues and relatives throughout the world and it is becoming a very popular and powerful medium not only for the general public but also for the political persons. It is interesting to note that some people residing in rural areas where Internet access is available are also developing interest in using Internet facilities.

INTERNET IN HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Improving the health of individuals and communities, strengthening health systems, disease detection and. prevention are crucial to development and poverty reduction in a country. Internet technology has the potential to impact almost every aspect of the health sector. In public health, information management and communication processes are pivotal, and are facilitated or limited by available Internet connectivity. Internet technology applied to the area of health has tremendous potential to

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provide and improve quality healthcare to an increased number of people regardless of geographical divide since it can be used for medical training, information access, patient care and support, remote diagnosis, consulting, emergency, epidemic support as well as in preventive care. Using this tool can reduce the gap between the haves and have-nets in health that is importantly influenced by wider information and communication processes, mediated by Internet technology.

It is necessary to examine how effective the technology has been in actually providing critical cardiac care to patients from impoverished communities, located in remote underdeveloped regions both in terms of geography and medical infrastructure who previously had no direct access to such sophisticated medical intervention.

INTERNET IN AGRICULTURE

The agricultural sector suffers from poor communication infrastructure and weak institutional capacities. There is a growing consensus that knowledge and information are essential for empowering rural communities. Communication is central to this process. However there are many other serious ills plaguing the population of which poverty and illiteracy are the most serious. Various projects undertaken by the Central government or the different state governments or non-government organizations like UNICEF have not been able to eradicate these two problems. Students in most villages go to schools if there is one available for the mid- day meal that is offered. This is a far cry from the level of education and skill that is required to be able to use computers and the Internet effectively. Convergence of technologies can help people share knowledge and information. Information intermediaries like social workers, educators and mass media can help rural communities access relevant information. Internet technology can be used for strengthening research and increasing farmer linkages through better agricultural marketing, disaster mitigation through forecasting, monitoring and early warning systems. Relevance of use of Internet technology in Agriculture lies in it ability to reduce isolation, facilitate dialogue, provide information and skills training and encourage orderly structure in the system.

Internet access is growing rapidly globally. However, the rural community in most countries is out of this growth map and Internet access in these areas is usually very marginal if at all. In a country .like India, where the spread and use of information technology has been phenomenal in urban areas the rural communities are still largely left out. Thus it is necessary to research whether the usage of Internet technology in some parts of rural India has contributed positively to rural development.

INTERNET AND POLITICAL OUTCOME

The relationship between adoption of Internet technology, related investments, their implementation, results and outcome are more about strategically administering the change, creating awareness and involvement than trying to force the technology on the people. The common expectation in scientific and public opinion is that intervention through Internet technology will change power relations in many, if not all domains in society. Some think that centralization will occur, but most think decentralization will take place. The most popular expectation is that it will empower users of all kinds: citizens, consumers, workers, patients, students and audiences. It is also perceived that those in power reach more power in their control of design, investment and implementation of this technology .It is necessary to examine these perceptions and also try and understand how it changes the relations between governments and citizens. Further, the level of three types of access to this technology in the domain under consideration: first, physical access to computers, the Internet and other digital media; secondly, digital skills and finally, use, that is the quantity and quality or kinds of applications also need to be known as that may interfere with the perception of the technology itself.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have provided an overview of opportunities and challenges for news and media in an increasingly digital, mobile, and social media environment and reviewed responses from media and policymakers. Our overall analysis is that we are moving towards a media environment where most people have access to more and more news and information about many issues, in large part enabled by digital media and the products and services of large technology companies, but where many do not necessarily engage with this information and where the media industry that has historically produced most of this news is under significant pressure.

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