

Fuelling Internet growth and new media content and changing patterns of media consumption: A perspective on internet growth and new media content in India

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Abstract:

The robust growth in the internet infrastructure and accessibility of the internet in India is fuelling the creation of massive new media content and it is also ushering in a major shift in the way the media is consumed and there is a shift in the way the media content is created, distributed and accessed and reacted. The major shift in the patterns of media consumption is also changing the media landscape and there is a new competition for the traditional media organisations to retain their customer base and grow with the scaling of new media platforms. India with its unmatched youthful demography is fuelling the unprecedented penetration and use of internet and the subsequent creation of massive and at times overload of information through these platforms. The interactivity, participation and enabling capacity for the creation and dissemination of content are driving the internet-based new media to emerge as a major force to reckon with in the media landscape of the globe in general and in India in particular. The inherent ability of the video and text based content in the regional languages is also a major driving force in the unprecedented growth of the new media. This research paper analyses and traces the growth of internet in India and the reasons for the information explosion driven by the internet expansion and presents a perspective on the changing media consumption patterns among the media users in the country.

Keywords:

Internet growth, new media content, patterns of media consumption and media landscape

Introduction:

Leveraging the internet-based convergent technology, a massive number of new media platforms are emerging thus changing the media consumption patterns of the media users. The unique features of interactivity, participation, capacity to create content, disseminate and debate and express views have all resulted in the massive growth of the new media and this trend is tremendously impacting the media consumption patterns of the people. Although it is too early to write off the traditional media riding on its authenticity and veracity of the news

content it provides, however there is a serious competition for the share of readership and advertising revenue across the sectors.

For decades and centuries, print media enjoyed the top slot in the share of advertising revenue and started slowly losing the position to the television in terms of advertising revenues. This continued for to three decades and the television enjoyed the major share of the ad revenue from the ad spenders. They are now facing a major challenge from the digital media which started denting into their ad revenues and it is estimated that the digital ad spending is set to overtake the print media in terms of attracting the ad revenue from the ad spenders.

Similarly, the new media content is all over the internet and anybody with a smart phone is able to access the new media content on the move too. The information which used to be in scarce with the traditional gate keeping models and constraints of space and time of the old media is now being delivered in overload and making it difficult to the users to sift through the massive explosion of information.

The new media content is being created in all forms of text, audio, video and graphical presentation modes and it is attracting the attention of the media consumers as it is being delivered in a convergent mode of audio, video and text. The high and unimaginable proliferation of new media content through websites, social media networking sites and video watching and sharing apps have all resulted in the overflow of unverified and unauthenticated information where the responsibility is vague or zero.

With the increase in digital literacy enabled by the availability of smart phones and internet data plans at highly affordable tariff is a major reason for the easy accessibility of the new media content. It is no wonder; the Facebook has the highest number of users, 28 millions, in India and thus trounced the USA where the number of FB users is 190 million (statista-2019) and the India has majorly contributed to the FB in crossing the 2 billion number of user mark and it is also projected to contribute more number of users to the FB in realising its target of next billion (Investopedia-2019).

The report also adds that as only around 20 per cent of the Indian population use the FB platform, the company is having a huge opportunity to add more numbers from India, while pointing out that 73 percentage of population in the United States are on the FB and the global average for the same is 42 per cent (Donna Fuscaldò-2019). Even as the social media platforms are vying for the share in the massively expanding market of India, the new media content of all sorts is also proliferating on the platforms.

The instant social messaging and video sharing app, Whatsapp, has established itself as the number one social media networking app with a user base of 40 crore in its global user base of 1.5 billion monthly active users. Going by the numbers, there is no immediate competitor for the Whatsapp in the Indian market (Manish Singh-2019). However, the content it generates is under tremendous criticism with no accountability for the creation and dissemination of information and news and has also created false panic situations like the one

related to child lifters in rural areas, as a result many innocent strangers were hacked to death or were subjected to severe physical injuries mistaking them for the child lifters.

Internet growth fuelling new media content:

As the internet infrastructure is growing deeper into the hinterland of India, where the surge in the use of mobile phones is phenomenal, is contributing to the internet use in the country. The number of internet users in the world is 3.9 billion (2018) and it is projected and estimated to reach an unimaginable number of 5.3 billion users by the year 2023. The growing number of mobile users which is estimated at 400 million in the year 2019 (Internet and Mobile Association of India-2019), is fuelling the internet usage in the country. Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Haryana, and metro cities across the country are witnessing the higher penetration of the internet.

The advantage for India is its highly youthful demography; youth are the major users of the internet and social media and new media for the content generation, dissemination and usage. The youth are the one section that adopts and adapts to the new technologies faster and thus contribute for the growth of the new media content and its consumption.

The use of the non-traditional fields like the agriculture and health care and utility services and the service sector is also one of the major enablers of the internet usage thus leveraging its business. The English-medium education foundation for the new millennial generation is also another important factor in boosting the use of internet and the new media content in the country. With the use of internet and internet-based services in a wide variety of fields, internet is turning out to be the most transformative and fast-growing major technology in the country that is bringing out a tectonic shift in the way the media content is consumed and media interactivity is enabled.

The statistics related to the growth of internet explain that there were only 413 million users in the year 2000 AD, while the same jumped to 3.4 billion by the year 2016. The one billion internet user mark was crossed in the year 2015 and is still considered a major milestone in terms of the growing number of internet users in the country.

In the case of India, the internet made its entry in the country in the year 1995 through the establishment of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) and by the year 2015, India had a massive 330 million internet users. Riding on the wave of internet growth and penetration, the Indian e-commerce sector is projected to touch the whopping figure of around 35 billion by the year 2020.

One more major reason for the instantaneous popularity of the internet in the modern world is its ever growing access speed which was only 10 kbps through the dial up mode and it has reached 3.5 mbps by the year 2016 and later the 3G technology and now the 4G technologies have taken the internet industry by the storm and have changed the speeds and accessibility levels forever. The new and proposed 5G technologies are also poised to usher in

unimaginable and profound changes in the field of internet and new media technologies and the new media content promotion across all sectors. It was a long journey from the India's first cyber café in Mumbai in 1996 to the present wi-fi enabled homes in millions in the country. The internet in India and its application for communication has contributed majorly through the launch of hotmail by Sabheer Bhatia and its acquisition by the Microsoft for a record acquisition then in 1997. And by 2017 the urban users constituted 71 per cent in the internet usage and in the early two decades also witnessed that rural areas too have acquired the technologies and started using internet in good numbers.

As a result, India is also witnessing internet as the growth engine for socio-economic growth and educational services and knowledge sharing. The Indian software industry has made a mark of its own at the global level and contributes massively to the country's GDP.

Not lagging behind major newspapers in the country have also started adopting and adapting the new information technology and internet and have started their digital editions and offering news through e-platforms and this trend began in 1996.

The major enablers are high speed broadband, affordability of gadgets and data at the lowest price and their application in different fields, content in regional languages and the low investment models for internet-based new media content generation and dissemination.

The new media is promoted through social media and social networking sites and the dedicated news and views platforms, blogs, vlogs, websites, and platforms like Youtube and twitter. The digital generation and distribution of the new media content has drastically reduced expenses involved and have become easy to update and offer newer content as they happen thus staying relevant for the moment.

Conclusion:

The growth story of the internet in India has been phenomenal and it is bound to throw more challenges in the days to come. The internet-enabled new media is also witnessing massive expansion in different platforms and on wide spectrum of subjects and platforms. The personalised and specialised content is one unique feature and the convergence experience for the new media content user also sets it apart from other traditional media consumption experience.

The interactivity and possibility for the creation of content by any one and to become the distributor and disseminator of that content is also unique feature for the new media which is thriving on the growth trajectory of the internet in the country. There is a major change in the media consumption pattern with the advent of the new media platforms; however the new media platforms have to address the critical issues of credibility, authenticity and accountability for their content.

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