

An executive summary of the final report of work done on the Minor Research Project of **Dr Melwyn S Pinto**, entitled “**Students’ Uses and Gratifications of Newspaper, Television and the Internet: A Comparative Study**” sanctioned by UGC, vide sanction letter No. 1434-MRP/14-15/KAMA002/UGC-SWRO dated 4-2-15

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The present study titled Students’ Uses and Gratifications of Newspaper, Television and the Internet: A Comparative Study had the following objectives:

The general objective was to assess the uses and gratifications of three media – newspapers, television and the Internet– among students.

Specific objectives were:

I) To assess the regularity of usage of newspapers, television and the Internet among students.

II) To assess the affinity of newspapers, television and the Internet among students belonging to three important socio-demographic variables: gender, place of study and subject of study.

III) To examine students’ preferences in attending to various subject-matter categories of content in newspapers, television and the Internet belonging to three important socio-demographic variables: gender, place of study and subject of study.

IV) To determine the gratifications students obtain from newspaper, television, and the Internet.

The **methodology** employed after an extensive review of literature was as follows:

The study based on a survey was conducted among students pursuing graduate and post graduate programmes. The students’ sample was drawn from colleges in the Urban area of Dakshina Kannada (Mangalore city) and from the colleges located in rural area of Dakshina Kannada.

The sampling procedure employed in the present study was stratified random sampling as the study involved several sub groups such as graduate and post graduate students. Also, since the research sought to find out the difference of the uses and gratification between the urban and the rural students, the samples was further stratified geographically as urban and rural. So the survey was conducted based on the stratified random sampling for three major variables namely, gender, place (urban or rural) and subject (science, commerce, and arts). A total of 1000 questionnaires were distributed among students – 500 each in rural and urban colleges. After discarding the incomplete 61 questionnaires, the final sample size was 939.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Some of the major findings are listed below:

Regularity of Media Use

The present study revealed that among the three media – newspapers, television and the Internet – students spend relatively less time reading newspapers in comparison to watching television, and accessing the Internet (a mean of 5.95 days per week as against 6.28 and 6.60 respectively for television and the Internet). Rural students spend more days reading newspaper per week (6.30) than the urban students who spend just 5.56 days per week on newspapers. Interestingly, rural students outstrip the urban students in the usage of the Internet as well as they browse the net on 6.88 days in comparison to their urban counterparts who browse on an average 6.29 days per week. Television viewing rate on a weekly basis is almost equal in both urban (6.38 days) and rural (6.18 days) centres.

With regard to gender variable, the statistics showed that male students were more regular than females in reading newspapers while females were more regular in watching television than male students. Even with regard to the Internet, it was males who were more regular than females with a mean score of 7.12 and 6.15 per week respectively.

Subject Matter

An investigation into what content students prefer the most in media can throw light in shaping individual medium in the Internet age. In the present study, a Spearman rank-order correlation was done to assess the subject-matter that students prefer in the three media – newspaper, television and the Internet. The four dominant content categories that students prefer are the same across three media, though their rank order varies slightly. (Correlation between newspapers and the Internet was .954, television and the Internet was .948, while correlation between newspaper and television was .939 significant at 0.05). The four content categories are: education, entertainment, sports and politics. It is interesting to see that crime which gets considerable amount of space and time in the media of the day is not a significant preference for students. The four content categories that students prefer could definitely be a pointer media managers can take home to shape their medium/media accordingly when they target students and youths.

Affinity

Affinity is an indicator as to the importance people attach to a mass medium. In the present study, it is clear that students in general have moderate affinity towards all the three media, namely, newspaper, television and the Internet. In other words, their usage of

these media in general is comparatively moderate and not very heavy. One plausible reason for the moderate affinity of media in the present study is the relatively moderate amount of time that students spend on each medium. In other words, the longer the use of a medium, the greater is the affinity.

Correlating students' affinity towards newspaper, television and the Internet with three independent socio-demographic variables - gender, place of study and subject of study - was done in the present study so as to find out specific details of the importance of a medium. With regard to this, it has to be noted that in terms of socio-demographic variables, rural students showed greater affinity towards newspaper than urban students (Mean difference .802, t -4.005-5.175; Sig at .000). With regard to television and the Internet, affinity was not very significant as regards the place of study. Gender had no bearing in any medium to the affinity. As regards the subject of study, commerce students showed greater affinity towards newspaper than arts and science students (Mean square 98.434; F 8.018; Sig at .000). In fact, commerce students showed greater affinity to the Internet as well than the arts and science students (Mean square 56.148; F 4.510; Sig at .011).

Uses and Gratifications

The primary objective of this study was to assess students' uses and gratifications of newspaper, television and the Internet. Factor analysis was employed to that effect. What emerged primarily from this analysis is that despite similar traits of each of these three media in terms of satisfying audiences' needs, they were distinctly different in many ways. While newspaper and the Internet brought forth three each gratifications, four gratifications emerged with regard to television.

The three factors that came up for the uses and gratifications of newspaper were: 'Entertainment and pass time', 'Education and current affairs knowledge', and 'Habit'.

'Education and current affairs knowledge' gratification loaded as many as ten items: Forget problems/tension (M 2.93; SD 1.099); Overcome loneliness (M 2.95; SD 1.022); Escape (2.98; 1.056); Pass time (3.01; 1.089); Entertainment (3.24; 1.048); Procure goods and services (2.88; 1.112); Nothing better to do (2.89; 1.092); Fun (3.17; 1.097); Financial benefits (3.39; 1.055); and Interaction (2.99; 1.107). The second motive 'Education and current affairs knowledge' had four items: World update (4.21; 0.720); Gain knowledge (4.16; 0.818); Current events (4.12; 0.778); Education (4.16; 0.803). The third gratification 'Habit' loaded just two items: Daily routine (3.5; 1.027); Habit (3.5; 0.986).

For television, the first gratification 'Education and current affairs knowledge' had four items loaded: World update (3.99; .794); Current events (3.93; .808); Gain knowledge (3.78;

.864); Education (3.80; .889). The second gratification 'Escape' loaded five items: Forget problems/tension (3.46; 1.021); Escape (3.43; 1.035); Overcome loneliness (3.16; 1.046); Procure goods and services (3.04; 1.070); Financial benefits (3.26; 1.022). The third gratification 'Entertainment and pass time gratification' brought forth four items: Fun (3.80; .898); Pass time (3.79; .911); Entertainment (3.90; .875); When nothing better to do (3.32; 1.042). The fourth gratification 'Habit' brought forth three items: Habit (3.29; 1.059); Daily routine (3.24; 1.078); Interaction (2.94; 1.108).

The Internet, like newspaper, had just three factors: Entertainment and pass time, education and current affairs knowledge, and procure goods and services.

Students interviewed in the present study read newspapers for entertainment and pass time gratification, as that emerged as the first factor. Though newspaper is generally seen as a medium for surveillance, news and information seeking, the entertainment value of the newspaper is not to be negated. The increased use of colour and graphics, not to forget more pictures and dramatic style of presentation of content are all indication of a trend of increasing the entertainment value of the newspaper.

Though education and current affairs knowledge factor emerged as the second factor for newspaper, the four items had very high mean value between 4.21 and 4.12. Even with the advent of the Internet and new media, newspaper has not lost its sheen in helping people to update themselves and get information. However, the present study also denotes the related education element in the same factor. This is expected as for students current affairs and updates are very much part of their process of education. In fact, in the limited time they have to scan through newspapers, they would be interested in stories that relate to their current area of education.

With regard to television, the findings in the present study confirm television as an entertainment medium, as the second and third factors that emerged were 'Escape' and 'Entertainment and pass time'. It is but natural that students take recourse to television when they feel the need for some relaxation and entertainment. Students frequent television quite high with a mean average of 6.34 days per week. However, education and current affairs knowledge gratification factor is not to be negated as that has emerged as the first gratifying factor for television. This first factor is an indication that many students are goal-oriented and television is also a means for students to draw resources for their education and gain information and knowledge on current affairs.

The fourth factor in the uses and gratifications of television in the present study is habit. This means that there are some students who frequent television without any particular goal. It is merely a matter of routine for them. It is not uncommon to see students

picking up the remote to flip through channels as a matter of routine when they come home from college.

The Internet is a unique medium that combines most of the qualities of traditional media – print, audio-visual, and graphics. In the present study, factor analysis of gratification typologies of the Internet resulted in three factors, just like newspaper, as against four for television. The first factor was ‘entertainment and pass time gratification’. One would expect students to make the maximum use of the Internet for education and gain knowledge given its tendency to be a rich repository of educational resources. But the reality is that using the Internet for education and knowledge has emerged not as the topmost factor, but as second. Students tend to see the Internet primarily as an entertainment medium.

As it stands out, such finding must not be of great surprise. The entertainment value of the Internet is very high by its very nature. The Internet contains a huge amount of audio-visual material, the primary goal of which is to entertain. Popular video streaming sites such as YouTube basically add to the entertainment element of the Internet. Though ritualistic use of the Internet seems greater than the instrumental use, students do use it for education and current affairs knowledge. Even as this factor has emerged as the second in the factor analysis, the mean scores of the four items grouped ranged from a high of 4.10 to a low of 3.90. This suggests that for quite a number of students the Internet does provide resources that aid them in their pursuit of knowledge and education. One very revealing finding of the factor analysis of the uses and gratifications of the Internet in the present study is the third and the last factor namely ‘procure goods and services gratification’. For students interviewed in the present study, using the Internet to do online shopping or gain knowledge of financial benefits, does not seem to be a top priority, though some students do make use of it in moderate measures as the mean scores of the two items grouped together in this factor suggest. One obvious reason is that the trend of online shopping is yet to become popular among students, especially in the rural areas. Also, students do not have much of a buying capacity. Thus it is but natural that other priorities take the better of them on the Internet.

In comparison to newspaper as well television gratifications that have emerged in the present study, what appears to the bear eye is that the Internet is chiefly used to gratify ritualistic motives. The 9 items that were grouped together in the first factor were ritualistic in nature. The six instrumental items were grouped together in the remaining two factors, namely ‘education and current affairs knowledge gratification’ and ‘procure goods and services’ gratification. If one follows the research conducted in this area in the last decade, what one can notice is that this trend has not changed much. Even as the Internet has emerged as the most powerful medium presently, its use is more for recreation and

entertainment purpose than anything else. This is a pointer to how the Internet will hold on in the years to come.