PATTERN OF USING MOBILE PHONE, COMPUTER AND INTERNET IN A REMOTE VILLAGE OF ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

Modern mass media plays an important role in changing the life style of people in any society. In recent decades, basically mobile phone and internet plays a major role in bringing up the people towards advanced society. This paper is an attempt to understand the pattern of exposure to modern mass media especially mobile phone, computer and internet in remote areas. The paper is based on empirical study carried out in a remote, forest surrounded village in Cachar district of Assam, India. The village consists of 103 households. To carry out the study, the data was collected from one respondent of each household of the village. Mixed methods were applied involving both qualitative and quantitative for data collection. The findings of the study highlighted that the pattern of using mobile phone is quite significant as majority (70.87percent) of the respondents used mobile phone but due to poor infra-structure facilities they could not properly access to computer and internet. It can be confirmed from the study that though the mental quality of the people of the village is high, due to having poor infra-structure facility, they cannot fully access to modern mass media.

Keywords: Computer, Internet, Mobile phone, Modern mass media, Remote village

1.0 Introduction

The modern mass media is needful to the human society to improve knowledge and it is one of the means for development and change. The rapid development in the innovation of mobile technology and advanced telecommunication system lead to the creation of new pattern of

communication system and bring changes in the social structure in both urban and rural areas. It also posits a great impact on the life style of the rural masses. In this regard, an effort is made in the present study to understand the pattern of exposure to modern mass media especially mobile phone, computer and internet, in the village setting.

2.0. Review of Literature

As the communication has a vast role in developing and bringing change in the society, social scientists have been attracted towards the study of the communication process since the early part of the 20th century. Attempts to develop a general approach to social theory that emphasized the role of communication in social life were initially made by some social scientists under Chicago School (Cooley 1902, 1909; Dewey 1927; Mead 1934). The Chicago sociologists influenced the development of communication studies in several important ways. The focal concern of Chicago sociology and social psychology by 1920's was the effects of urbanization in everyday life and the urban ecology of the city, in which communication was given due attention. The studies of Lynd and Lynd (1929, 1937), Desmond (1937), Lee (1937), Roston (1937,1941) and Thorpe (1939) suggested that mass communication was having brought impact on patterns of everyday life and the creation of national culture. Inversely, the influence of society on the communication media was also recognized (Harris, 1933). Doob (1961) studied the conditions at the birth of mass communication in Africa and the variables involved in understanding and using communication at that stage of development. The contributions of Lerner (1964), Schramn (1964), and Roger (1962) have emphasized on the role of communication in development. Lakshmana Rao (1966) stated that communication helps a person to find alternative ways of making a living, helps to raise the family's socio-economic status, broadens the entrepreneurial base, helps the people in changing from ascribed status to achieved status and also make the people aware of governmental plans. Marc Boulay *et.al*. (2002) suggested that indirect exposure to a mass media campaign's messages can be extensive and the effect is substantial. Khanka (2002) argued that in spite of much hoopla and hype, e-commerce could not take off so far in the North-East Region of India mainly due to the problems of infrastructure and digital illiteracy. Singh (2004) argued that mobile phone is another medium, which has been adopted vary widely by the Indian masses. It has great potential to break the bottlenecks of communication in remote areas as this is based on wireless technology.

3.0. Objective of the study

1. To understand the level of exposure to mobile phone, computer and internet as a modern mass media in rural setting.

2. To understand the mode of using mobile phone, computer and internet by the rural people.

4.0. The Study Area and Methodology

- The study was carried out in a remote forest surrounded village named 'Jarultola', in Cachar district of Assam, India.
- It is surrounded by reserved forest in the East, North and South.
- Mathurapur Khashiapunji (a Khasi Village) and Jibangram Barman Basti are the neighboring villages which are located in the western side of the village.
- The village was having poor infra-structure facilities and the mobile network coverage was also very poor in that area.
- The village consists of 103 households and the data was collected from 103 respondents, one respondent from each household of the village.
- Mixed methods were applied involving both qualitative and quantitative for data collection.
- To elicit the data a highly structured interview schedule was prepared, collected and analyzed the data.

5.0. Background of the respondents

Among the 103 respondents, there were 53 male and 50 female. As regards to age group of the respondents, data revealed that 27.18% of the respondents belong to the age group of 21-30 while 26.21% belong to the age group of 31-40, 20.38% belong to the age group of 41-50, equally 9.70% belong to the age group of 11-20 and 51-60, 5.82% belong to the age group of 61-70 and 0.97% of the respondents belong to the age group of above 70.

6.0. Pattern of using mobile phone, computer and internet

6.1. Mobile phone

Since the mobile network is started to available in that area, majority of the villagers started to purchase mobile set mostly the youngsters. In most of the time, the mobile network was not available in the household area of the village. But, the villagers were so much enthusiastic in using mobile phone that whenever proper network is not available in their household area, they

used to go outside in the open air or on road side where network is available and used the mobile phone to communicate with their friends or relatives.

6.1.1. Ownership of mobile phone

To understand the ownership status of mobile phone, the data was elicited and it is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Ownership of Mobile phone

Sl No	Whether have mobile phone	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
0	No	14	16	30	29.12
1	Yes	39	35	73	70.87
	Total	53	50	103	100

The data in table 1 showed that majority of the respondents 70.87 per cent had mobile phone while 29.12 per cent of the respondents did not have mobile phone. But those respondents, who had no mobile phone, also used it from their neighbors and relatives.

6.1.2. Number of mobile set in a household

In this village, it is observed that some of the families had 2-3 mobile sets in their households and mostly they were that family who's some of their family members used to live in outside the village. In this regard, the data have been analyzed and shown in table 2.

Table 2: Number of mobile set in a household

Sl. No	Number of mobile set in a household	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	one	21	17	38	36.89
2	2-3	14	15	29	28.15
3	4-5	02	02	04	3.88
4	More than five	02	01	03	2.92
	Total	39	35	74	71.84

The data confirmed that out of 71.84 per cent of the respondents who had mobile sets, 36.89 per cent had one mobile set in their households, while 28.15 per cent had 2-3 mobile sets, 3.88 per cent had 4-5 mobile sets and 2.92 per cent had more than five mobile sets in their households.

6.1.3. Mobile phone network provider

To analyze the popularity of network providers of mobile phone in that area, the data was elicited and shown in table 3.

Table 3: Mobile phone network provider

Sl. No	Mobile phone network provider	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	BSNL	03	01	04	3.88
2	Reliance	08	08	16	15.53
3	Airtel	08	05	13	12.62
4	Aircel	26	24	50	48.54

The data in table 3 indicated that Aircel was the most popular network service provider as most of the respondents (48.54 per cent) used Aircel while Reliance occupy the second position as 15.53 per cent used it followed by Airtel and BSNL with 12.62% and 3.88% respectively.

6.1.4 Types of mobile phone connection

Since prepaid mobile connection system can be used economically and easily recharged, in rural areas, majority people prefer prepaid mobile connection. Regarding it, the data is analyzed and shown in table 4.

Table 4: Types of mobile phone connection

Sl. No	Type of mobile phone connection	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	Prepaid	38	35	73	70.87
2	Postpaid without GPRS	01	00	01	0.97
3	Post paid with GPRS	00	00	00	00
	Total	39	35	74	71.84

The data in table 4 revealed that out of 71.84 per cent of the respondents who used mobile phone, most of the respondents (70.87 per cent) had prepaid connection while a few (0.97 per cent) had post paid without GPRS connection and there was no one who had post paid with GPRS connection.

6.1.5. Calls received in a week on Mobile

To understand how many calls in a week are received by the respondents, data have been elicited and shown in table 5.

Table 5: Calls received in a week on Mobile

Sl. No	Calls received in a week on Mobile	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	Low (1-20 calls)	09	06	15	14.56
2	Medium (21-40 calls)	04	06	10	9.71
3	High (41-60 calls)	05	09	14	13.59
4	Very high (More than 60 calls).	21	14	35	33.98
	Total	39	35	74	71.84

The data in table 5 confirmed that 33.98 per cent of the respondents had very high degree in receiving phone calls while 14.56 per cent had low degree, 13.59 per cent had high degree and 9.71 per cent of the respondents had medium degree in receiving phone calls on mobile.

6.1.6. Calls made in a week

To analyze the calls made in a week, the responses of the subjects have been categorized into four categories as shown in table 6.

Table 6: Calls made in a week

Sl. No	Calls made in a week	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	Low (1-20 calls)	10	06	16	15.53
2	Medium (21-40 calls)	03	08	11	10.68
3	High (41-60 calls)	04	09	13	12.63

4	Very high (More than 60 calls).	22	12	34	33.00
	Total	39	35	74	71.84

The data in table 6 indicated that most of the respondents (33 per cent) had very high degree in making phone calls while 15.53 per cent made calls in low degree. Whereas, 12.63 per cent of the respondents made calls in high degree while 10.68 per cent made calls in medium degree on mobile phone.

6.1.7. SMS received in a week

The data of frequency of receiving SMS in a week have been classified into four categories and analyzed as shown in table 7.

Table 7: SMS received in a week

Sl. No	SMS received in a week	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	1-10	03	10	13	12.62
2	11-20	01	01	02	1.94
3	21-30	00	00	00	00
4	More than 30	01	00	01	0.97
	Total	05	11	16	15.53

The data indicated that out of the 15.53 per cent of the respondents who used to receive SMS on mobile, 12.62 per cent received 1-10 SMS in a week while 1.94 percent received 11-20 SMS and 0.97 per cent of the respondents received more than 30 SMS in a week.

6.1.8. SMS sent in a week

As regards to SMS sent by the respondents in a week, the data have been categorized into four categories as it is shown below in table 8.

Table 8: SMS send in a week

Sl. No	SMS sent in a week	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	1-10	03	10	13	12.62
2	11-20	01	01	02	1.94

3	21-30	00	00	00	00
4	More than 30	01	00	01	0.97
	Total	05	11	16	15.53

The data in table 8 revealed that 12.62 per cent of the respondents sent 1-10 SMS in a week while 1.94 per cent sent 11-20 SMS and 0.97 per cent sent more than 30 SMS in a week.

It was also observed that due to poor educational facility in the village, most of the students of the village, basically almost all the students of class-VIII onwards used to study in institutions located at far distance of the village or in town where proper mobile network is available. This had also an opportunity for them to communicate with other people on mobile while staying in proper mobile network available areas.

6.2. Computer

So far as computer literacy is concerned, it was observed that the level of computer literacy was very low in the village. The reason could be noted that as all the computer institutions were located at very far away from the village and the village was also located in a remote area with having poor infra-structure facilities, it was become difficult for the villagers to go and attend computer classes.

6.2.1. Access to Computer

To understand the total number of respondents who can access to computer, they were asked whether they can access to computer or not. The distribution of the respondents is shown in table 9.

Table 9: Access to Computer

Sl. No	Whether access to Computer	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
0	No	49	48	97	94.17
1	Yes	04	02	06	5.82

	Total	53	50	103	100

The data in table 9 highlighted that 5.82 per cent of the respondents could access to computer whereas 94.17 per cent could not access to computer.

6.2.2. Place of using Computer

To analyze the place of using computer by the respondents, the data have been categorized into five categories, such as- 1. Home 2. Cyber cafe 3. Office 4. School/College/University and 5. Other places. The distribution of the categories is shown in table 10.

Table 10: Place of using Computer

Sl. No	Place of using Computer	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	Home	02	00	02	1.94
2	Cyber cafe	01	02	03	2.91
3	Office	00	00	00	00
4	School/College/University	01	00	01	0.97
5	Other places	00	00	00	00
	Total	04	02	06	5.82

The data in table 10 revealed that out of 5.82 per cent of the respondents who could access to computer, 2.91 per cent of the respondents used computer in cyber cafes while 1.94 per cent used at home and 0.97% used computer at Schools/Collages/Universities. Moreover, it is also found that majority of the respondents used computer for educational purpose.

6.2.3. Purpose of using Computer

The data for the purpose of using computer have been elicited and shown in table 11.

Table 11: Purpose of using Computer

Sl. No	Purpose of using Computer	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	Education	02	02	04	3.88
2	Business	01	00	01	0.97

3	Education +Entertainment+ Business+ Games	01	00	01	0.97
	Total	04	02	06	5.82

The data in table 11 revealed that out of 5.82 per cent of the respondents who used computer, 3.88 per cent used computer for educational purpose whereas equally 0.97 per cent of them used computer for business and for the purposes of Education + Entertainment + Business /Games.

6.3. Internet

In the village, it was observed that most of the people could not access to internet and only some of those who were students or professionals living outside could access to internet. It was also observed that they mostly used to visit internet very frequently i.e., almost daily for their personal matter.

6.3.1. Access to internet

To confirm how many of the respondents can access to internet the data have been analyzed and shown in table 12.

Table 12: Access to Internet

Sl. No	Whether access to internet	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
0	No	51	48	99	96.11
1	Yes	02	02	04	3.88
	Total	53	50	103	100

The data in table 12 revealed that 3.88% of the respondents could access to internet while 96.11% could not access to internet.

6.3.2. Frequency of using internet

The data of frequency of using Internet is distributed, analyzed and shown in table 13.

Table 13: Frequency of using internet monthly

Sl. No	Frequency of using Internet	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	Occasionally	00	00	00	00

2	Daily	01	02	03	2.88
3	1-5 days	01	00	01	0.97
4	6-10 days	00	00	00	00
5	More than 10 days	00	00	00	00
	Total	02	02	04	3.88

The data in table 13 confirmed that out of the 3.88 per cent internet using respondents, 2.88% used internet daily while 0.97% used 1-5 days in a month and it is also found that they basically used internet for the purpose of email.

6.3.3. Purpose of using Internet

The distribution of categories for the purpose of using internet is analyzed and shown in table 14.

Table 14: Purpose of using internet

Sl. No	Purpose of using internet	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	E--mail	01	02	03	2.91
2	E-mail+ Downloading reading materials+ Downloading free software + Downloading MP3 music	01	00	01	0.97
	Total	02	02	04	3.88

The data in table 14 indicated that out of the 3.88 per cent of the respondents who could access to internet, 2.91 per cent used internet for the purpose of e-mail while 0.97 per cent used internet for the purposes of e-mail + downloading reading materials + downloading free software + downloading MP3 music.

6.3.4. Sending e-mail in a month

The data of frequency of sending e-mail in a month have been distributed into three Categories and analyzed as shown in table 15.

Table 15: E-mail sent in a month

Sl. No	E-mail sent in a month	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1	1-5	01	02	03	2.91

2	6-10	00	00	00	00
3	More than 10	01	00	01	0.97
	Total	02	02	04	3.88

The data in table 15 showed that 2.91 per cent sent 1-5 e-mails in a month while 0.97 per cent sent more than 10 e-mails in a month.

6.3.5. Access to internet by family members of the respondents

To understand the status of access to internet by family members of the respondents, the data have been collected and the finding is shown in table 16.

Table 16: Access to internet by family members of the respondents

Sl. No	Whether any other family member can access to internet	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
0.	No	45	46	91	88.34
1.	Yes	08	04	12	11.66
	Total	53	50	103	100

It is confirmed from the data that out of the 103 respondents, 11.66 per cent had some members in their families who could access to internet whereas 88.34 per cent had no one in their families who could access to internet.

6.3.6. Number of family member who can access to internet

To analyze the number of family members of the respondents who can access to internet, the data have been categorized into three categories and the findings is drawn as shown in table 17.

Table 17: Number of member who can access to internet

Sl. No	Number of family member who can access to internet	Frequency			Percentage
		Male	Female	Total	
1.	1-2 members	06	04	10	9.71

2.	3-5 members	02	00	02	1.95
3.	More than 5 members	00	00	00	00
	Total	08	04	12	11.66

The data in table 17 confirmed that out of 11.66 percent of the respondents who's some family members could access to internet, 9.71 per cent had 1-2 family members while 1.95 per cent had 3-5 family members in their households who could access to internet.

7.0. Discussion and conclusion

From the above findings, it can be noted that the pattern of using mobile phone is quite significant as majority (70.87percent) of the respondents used mobile phone. The frequency level of using mobile phone is also found quite high. As regards to computer and internet, the rate of computer literacy and number of internet users is very low due to poor infra-structure facilities and unavailability of computer institutions in the locality. But it is found that those respondents who can access to computer and internet had high degree in using the same. It can be measured from the findings that the villagers are very enthusiastic in adopting or using new technologies and modern mass media, but due to living in a remote area, they cannot properly utilize the same. In short, it can be concluded that though the mental quality of the people of the village is high, due to having poor infra-structure facility, they cannot fully access to modern mass media.

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