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Uses And Gratification Of Internet Among College Students: A Case Study Of Karnataka State

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Abstract:

The advent of new information and communication technologies has translated the dream of 'global village' into a reality. The new communication and information technologies have brought about the death of distance and facilitated meaningful interactive cum participatory communication all over the world. The emergence of Internet replaced the one to many model of traditional mass communication with the possibility of many to many web of communication. Internet is also one of the major tools of interactive communication in modern society. Interactivity has become a key term for number of new media use options evolving from the rapid dissemination of Internet access point, the digitalization of the media and media convergence. Many researchers have studied the role of Internet in modern society which has brought about connectedness. The present study evaluates the uses and gratification of Internet among the college students with special reference to Karnataka State. The salient features of the study namely - evolution of Internet, utility of Internet in modern society, uses and gratification framework and approach, three ages of Internet research, social significance of the study, statement of the problem and objectives of the study are furnished in this chapter.

Uses and gratification Theory is a popular approach to understanding the process, utility and effects of mass communication. The uses and gratification theory follows a basic model which is based on the audience-centered approach. It states that the audiences actively seek certain services from the media in order to gratify their specific needs which are related to their life and mission. Social situations and psychological characteristics motivate the need for media access and utility. This expectation leads one to be exposed to media that would seemingly fit into the expectations, leading to an ultimate gratification. The uses and gratification research is based on the assumption that individual needs are satisfied by audience members actively seeking out from the mass media.

The researchers in this field of communication find problems with the scope of the research and call uses and gratification an umbrella concept in which several theories reside. They have also argued that researchers have tried to do too much and should limit the scope and take a cultural-empirical approach to how people choose from the abundance of cultural products available. The theory pays too much attention to the individual and does not look at the social context and the role the media plays in that social context. The audience research based on uses and gratification research has been too compartmentalized within certain cultures and demographic groups.

The uses and gratification theory is a basic extension of the definition of an attitude, which is a non-linear cluster of beliefs, evaluations, and perceptions. These beliefs, evaluations, and perceptions give individuals latitude over how they employ media in their lives; in other words, how individuals filter, interpret, and convey to others the information received from a medium. The efforts in seeking answers to this question came to be known as the functionalistic approach to uses and gratification with reference to media of communication. The researchers have also identified three phases in the evolution of uses and gratification approach in the field of communication. The first phase spanning through 1940s focused primarily on descriptions of audience's uses and purposes for choosing the media. The researchers also made assumptions of how audiences used the medium to gratify their needs on the basis of media exposure, access and choice. Herta Herzog (1940:115) used the term 'gratification' for the first time which is described as the functionalist perspective. It also focused on the question of the satisfactions people say they derived from using a particular medium of communication.

Communication researchers have critically analysed the uses and gratification theory of communication. They have criticized this theory as they believe the public has no control over the media and contents. According to them, the nature of the theory underlying uses and gratification research is not totally clear since the line between gratification and satisfaction is thinner practically and otherwise. The researchers have also pointed out that the theory is not very clear about the use of media services since it is only a data-collecting strategy.

Social Significance of the Study

Students' access to Internet is encouraged by schools and teachers. One may even wonder, looking at the varied nature of the content, whether it is right to encourage students to spend more time on Internet. Nevertheless it is on the rise. For effective learning, Internet browsing needs to be guided in the right manner. Internet could be misused dangerously if its power is manipulated otherwise. Internet is a live medium. The power of convergence of various information technologies is realized through Internet. More research is needed in this field to get positive impact of this powerful tool in the hands of students.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the Internet browsing habits of college students.
2. To examine the Internet browsing priority of college students.
3. To evaluate the uses and gratification of Internet among college students; and
4. To explore the possibilities of safeguarding and promoting the personal and academic interests of the college

students.

Study Variables

Keeping the above hypotheses in view, the following variables were selected for the study on the basis of review of literature and discussion with subject experts.

Independent Variables

- a. Gender
- b. Exposure
- c. Purpose
- d. Information Level
- e. Knowledge Level
- f. Rational Mind set
- g. Development
- h. Leadership
- i. Entertainment
- j. Academic
- k. Internet Usage

Dependent Variables

Uses And gratification

Distribution of Study Area and Sample

Revenue Divisions	Name of the Districts	Number of Parents	Number of Students
Gulbarga	Gulbarga city and semi-urban areas	90	300
Dharwad	Hubli-Dharwad cities and semi-urban areas	90	300
Bengaluru	Bengaluru city and semi-urban areas	90	300
Mysore	Mysore city and semi-urban areas	90	300
Total		360	1200

Definitions of the Terms Used in the Study

Developed Regions and Under-Developed Regions:

Four revenue divisions of Karnataka State namely - Gulbarga, Dharwad, Bangalore and Mysore were selected for the purpose of study. Eight parameters, namely - educational status, infrastructure development, modernization, economic development, urbanization, industrialization, people's participation and status of women were identified for the purpose of selection of developed and under developed areas. The data supplied by the

National Informatics Centre, Bangalore was utilized while selecting the urban and semi-urban areas on the basis of development. Bangalore and Mysore districts represent the developed regions while Gulbarga and Dharwad represent under-developed regions of Karnataka State. This was done with a view to understand the role of Internet in the lives of the college students of Karnataka State.

College Students:

The students who study in the degree colleges after pre-university level of education in Karnataka State are usually considered as 'college students'. They attend the college between the age range of 18-21 under normal circumstances. In the present times, college students are encouraged to have the benefit of access to higher education which is the primary indicator of human development. The college students need the benefit of Internet exposure which has resulted in instantaneous information dissemination on all aspects of academic life and personality development in the present times. The college students who have access to Internet either at home or elsewhere are considered primarily for the purpose of the study.

Tools of Data Collection

In the present study interview schedule and interview methods were used as the principal tools of data collection by the researcher. Interview schedules was developed for the purpose of collection of primary data from the students regarding the Internet exposure, accessibility of the Internet, uses of Internet and gratification of Internet from the college students' point of view in Karnataka State.

Major Findings of the Study

Demographic Details of Students

There were more number of male respondents (58.33%) among the students. A majority of the students (55.84%) belonged to the 18-21 years. A majority of the students (75%) belonged to the nuclear and extended families. A majority of the students (69.17%) belonged to the low income group and middle income groups. A majority of the students (55%) studied in public schools in developed and underdeveloped regions of Karnataka State. A majority of the students (66.67%) represented the urban areas while remaining students (33.33%) represented the semi urban areas of Karnataka State.

Internet Browsing Habits of Students

All the respondents (100%) in developed and under developed regions of Karnataka state have browsed the Internet in order to get certain advantages and Karnataka State have u gratification.

- A majority of the respondents (70.67%) in developed and under developed regions of Karnataka State regardless of their status have they used desktop computer for Internet browsing
- More number of the students in developed region (47.33%) and under developed region (45.33%) have stated that they browsed the Internet in the private browsing centres. Others have stated that they browsed the Internet at home in developed region (45.33%) and under developed region (42.67%) cities.
- A majority of the students in developed region (80.67%) and under developed region (79.33%) have

stated that they browsed the Internet alone either at browsing centre or at homes.

- A majority of the students in developed region (62.0%) and under developed region (66.0%) have stated that they browsed the Internet on working days while other students in developed region (38%) and under developed region (34%) have browsed the Internet on holidays including Sundays.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (60.67%) and under developed region (70.67%) have stated that they browsed the Internet for about 28 hours in a week. Other students have stated that they browsed the Internet in developed region (24%) and under developed region (18%) for about 21 hours per week. There are a minority of students in developed region (15.33%) and under developed region (13.33%) who browsed the Internet for about 14 hours per week.
- The students in developed region have stated that they browsed the Internet according to individual convenience (65.33%), parental instruction (12.0%), friends' instruction (10.67%), teachers' instruction (4.0%), classmates' instruction (5.33%) and siblings' instruction (2.67%). The students in under developed region have stated that they browsed the Internet according to individual convenience (62.67%), parental instruction (12.67%), friends' instruction (10.0%), teachers' instruction (5.33%), and classmates' instruction (5.67%) and siblings' instruction (2.67%).
- A majority of the respondents in developed and under developed regions of Karnataka State (68.33%) have stated that they discussed about the Internet browsing before Internet browsing while others have stated that the discussed about Internet browsing after browsing (19.67%) and before browsing (12.0%).
- A majority of the students in developed region (52.67%) and under developed region (57.33%) have stated that they accorded high priority to gathering information pertaining to academic skills development through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (57.33%) and under developed region (64.67%) have stated that they accorded high priority to gathering information pertaining to knowledge enhancement through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (50.67%) and under developed region (56.0%) have stated that they accorded moderate priority for gaining entertainment through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (58.67%) and under developed region (60.67%) have stated that they accorded low priority for watching advertisements through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (54.0%) and under developed region (58.0%) have stated that they accorded high priority to gather information pertaining to personality development.
- A majority of the students in developed region (54.0%) and under developed region (58.0%) have stated that they accorded high priority for gathering information pertaining to leadership development.

- A majority of the students in developed region (50.67%) and under developed region (54.67%) have stated that they accorded high priority for gathering information pertaining to academic competence development through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (54.67%) and under developed region (57.33%) have stated that they accorded moderate priority for gathering information pertaining to social network development through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (51.33%) and under developed region (54.0%) have stated that they accorded moderate priority for gathering information pertaining to emulation of role models through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (54.0%) and under developed region (51.33%) have stated that they accorded moderate priority to gathering information pertaining to career opportunities through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (75.33%) and under developed region (77.33%) have stated that they accorded moderate and low priority for gathering information pertaining to cultivation of healthy lifestyles through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (57.33%) and under developed region (56.0%) have stated that they accorded high priority for developing their communication skills through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (54.67%) and under developed region (50.67%) have stated that they accorded moderate priority for gathering information pertaining to problem solving ability development through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (66.0%) and under developed region (64.66%) have stated that they accorded high and moderate priority for gathering information pertaining to the development of rational mindset through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (50.67%) and under developed region (52.0%) have stated that they accorded high and moderate priority for gathering information pertaining to the development of sensitization through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (68.66%) and under developed region (67.33%) have stated that they accorded high and moderate priority for gathering information pertaining to the development of competitive spirit through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (78.0%) and under developed region (79.33%) have stated that they accorded high and moderate priority for gathering information pertaining to the adult's welfare opportunities through Internet.
- A majority of the students in developed region (57.33%) and under developed region (55.33%) have stated that they accorded high priority for gathering information pertaining to the development of creativity in the students through Internet.

- A majority of the respondents in developed region (57.33%) and under developed region (55.33%) have stated that they accorded high priority for gathering information pertaining to the development of adventurous personality through Internet.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (57.33%) and under developed region (55.33%) have stated that they accorded high priority for gathering information pertaining to the social obligations of the students through Internet

Uses of Internet Services

- A majority of the respondents in developed region (60.67%) and under developed region (59.33%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful since it facilitated their academic skill development practically.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (54.0%) and under developed region (52.67%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful since it enhanced their knowledge academically.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (54.0%) and under developed region (52.67%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them since they derived entertainment.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (58%) and under developed region (54.67%) have stated that Internet was useful to them since they obtained commercial messages through advertisements.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (78.0%) and under developed region (80.67%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a means of personality development.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (54.67%) and under developed region (57.33%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a means of leadership development.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (51.33%) and under developed region (54.0%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a means of enhancement of their academic competence.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (67.33%) and under developed region (67.33%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a means of social network development.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (57.33%) and under developed region (61.33%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a source of inspiration for the emulation of good role models.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (56%) and under developed region (54%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a source of understanding career development opportunities.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (65.33%) and under developed region (65.33%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a means of adopting healthy lifestyles.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (56.0%) and under developed region (57.33%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a means of communication skill development.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (72.67%) and under developed region (76.0%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a means of enhancing their problem solving ability.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (72.67%) and under developed region (68.67%) have stated

that Internet browsing was useful to them as a means of developing rational mindset.

- A majority of the respondents in developed region (75.34%) and under developed region (76.0%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a source of developing necessary sensitization.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (53.33%) and under developed region (53.34%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a means of developing competitive spirit.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (80.0%) and under developed region (80.37%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a source of a understanding adults' welfare opportunities.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (57.33%) and under developed region (56.0%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful them as a source of creativity development.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (60.33%) and under developed region (58.17%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a source of inspiration to develop adventurous personality.
- A majority of the respondents in developed region (80.33%) and under developed region (78.0%) have stated that Internet browsing was useful to them as a source of understanding social obligations.

Gratification of Internet

- A majority of the college students of developed region (90.0%) and under developed region (88.67%) have stated that they derived the gratification of entertainment through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (83.33%) and under developed region (87.0%) have stated that they derived the gratification of firm through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (84.67%) and under developed region (86.67%) have stated that they derived the gratification of enjoyment through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (84.0%) and under developed region (84.67%) have stated that they derived the gratification of habit cultivation through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (83.67%) and under developed region (86.0%) have stated that they derived the gratification of daily routine habit through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (79.33%) and under developed region (85.33%) have stated that they did not derive the gratification of spending time everyday through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (79.67%) and under developed region (81.0%) have stated that they derived the gratification of interpersonal relations through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (83.67%) and under developed region (84.36%) have stated that they derived the gratification of registering the sense of belongingness to a group through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (85.67%) and under developed region (86.67%) have stated that they derived the gratification of registering the sense of caring about others through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (81.67%) and under developed region (82.0%) have stated that they derived the gratification of interaction with others though Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (81.33%) and under developed region (87.0%) have stated

that they did not derive the gratification of feeling less lonely through Internet.

- A majority of the college students of developed region (83.67%) and under developed region (82.33%) have stated that they derived the gratification of meeting new people online through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (76.67%) and under developed region (78.67%) have stated that they did not derive the gratification of passing time when bored through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (78.0%) and under developed region (79.33%) have stated that they did not derive the gratification of doing something when they had nothing to do better through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (82.330%) and under developed region (84.0%) have stated that they did not derive the gratification of occupying their time in the absence of serious academic preoccupations through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (81.67%) and under developed region (86.0%) have stated that they did not derive the gratification.

Escaping from day-to-day pressure and responsibilities through Internet.

- A majority of the college students of developed region (76.67%) and under developed region (81.36%) have stated that they did not derive the gratification of forgetting their problems through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (79.0%) and under developed region (80.0%) have stated that they did not derive the gratification of feeling less tensed through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (80.0%) and under developed region (82.33%) have stated that they derived the gratification of knowing what was going on in the world and in the neighbourhood through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (78.67%) and under developed region (80.67%) have stated that they derived the gratification of searching required information through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (88.33%) and under developed region (88.0%) have stated that they derived the gratification of finding out things required in their daily lives through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (89.33%) and under developed region (88.67%) have stated that they derived the gratification of meeting their educational requirements through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (86.67%) and under developed region (86.67%) have stated that they derived the gratification of preparing for various academic activities through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (85.0%) and under developed region (85.67%) have stated that they derived the gratification of practicing online tests and application forms through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (89.33%) and under developed region (92.67%) have stated that they derived the gratification of gaining control over information technology through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (84.0%) and under developed region (80.67%) have stated that they derived the gratification of gaining familiarity in computer use through Internet.

- A majority of the college students of developed region (83.33%) and under developed region (80.0%) have stated that they derived the gratification of gaining familiarity in web applications through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (87.67%) and under developed region (88.0%) have stated that they derived the gratification of saving money through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (85.67%) and under developed region (86.0%) have stated that they derived the gratification of knowing about products/services at bargain prices through Internet.
- A majority of the college students of developed region (86.67%) and under developed region (87.67%) have stated that they derived the gratification of online job hunting, banking and e-commerce activities through Internet.

Implications on Universities and other Educational Institutions

The educational institutions should also provide adequate Internet services to the students in general. The digitalization of information resources and services should also be undertaken in particular to empower the students academically. A new virtual environment should be created in the educational institutions in order to cater to the informational, educational and developmental needs of the young generation. Series of research activities, extension programmes and publication programmes are also required in the new virtual environment in order to sensitize various stakeholders of education, health and development in modern society.

Implications on Non-Government Organizations

The non-government organizations are also equally responsible for promoting information literacy, computer literacy, media literacy and development literacy among the young generation of students in the schools, colleges and universities. The new media and social media should be actively utilized by them for various educational and developmental endeavors in a developing country like India. These organizations should also play a major role in transforming the lives of students and adults through better Internet exposure and utility in modern society.

Implications on Research and Development Organisations

There are good numbers of research and development organizations in Karnataka and other parts of the country. They should conduct innovative research and extension programmes which would sensitize the various stakeholders of national development in the state on the scientific and systematic application of new media and social media for various development purposes. In particular, the impact of new media on society should be constantly evaluated by these organizations in order to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of new media including Internet in modern society.