



Media Dynamics At The Border: A Study On Media Usage In Border Area

Authors Details:

Hassina Jamiel (Research scholar of MERC department, UOK)

Jammu/ Rajouri; 185131/181123

Abstract

In the age of globalization, the media is a potent tool for disseminating information and reflects and shapes the complex dynamics of border areas. By definition, border areas are places of interaction and transition. We can learn about cultural interchange, economic influences, and geopolitical factors by examining media in border regions. This study provides a thorough examination of media usage patterns in Rajouri district border regions, illuminating the distinct factors that influence information consumption. The study's primary goal is to ascertain how people consume media and why they use print, electronic, and digital media. By employing the survey method, the researcher gathered the relevant data via a standardized questionnaire. The target sample of this study consisted of fifty participant aged 15 to 40years above who lived in the nearby villages in the district Rajouri of Nowshera sector. The researcher would use SPSS statistical tools and techniques to evaluate and interpret the data. The findings of the study described the media usage patterns under three sections viz. (a) the media platforms that were accessible to them; (b) media consumption patterns; and (c) the information's accuracy and reliability.

KEYWORDS: Line of control (LOC), Media usage, Media platforms, Accessibility

Introduction:

The emergence of the new media era has brought about revolutionary changes in social interaction, communication, and information access globally, including in remote and conflict-prone regions like line of control (LOC) in Jammu and Kashmir. Individuals can now actively participate in the creation and dissemination of information thanks to new media, which is mainly defined by the internet, mobile devices,

and social media platforms. It has surpassed traditional media such as print and electronic media. Previously isolated communities now have unprecedented opportunities for self-expression, communication, and connection because to the digital revolution.

The advent of new media has started to remove the obstacles that the LOC's residents faced due to its remote location and inadequate infrastructure. Despite occasional outages, mobile internet is becoming more widely accessible and has made it possible to access social media sites, messaging applications, and other online information. These tools allow people to connect with others outside of their immediate surroundings, exchange local stories, and express their opinions in addition to receiving news in real time. Because of the modern media era, LOC people may now record their voices and experiences in ways that were previously impossible, creating new opportunities for activism, awareness, and cultural preservation. New media in LOC regions has the ability to promote more connectivity, facilitate community formation, and act as a tool for resilience in the face of hardship, despite these obstacles.

In addition to unequal access to reliable digital infrastructure, concerns about surveillance, privacy, and misleading information continue to influence online behavior. So, citizens must possess the skills necessary to interact with media and other information sources, including the Internet, in a technologically advanced and media-rich society. One in four people worldwide have access to the internet, and this number is still rising. As stated in Target F of the UN Millennium Development Goal 8, "In cooperation with the private sector, make available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications," internet access is a component of this goal. Due to new competitors and technological advancements, the media environment has changed significantly in recent years.

In terms of media consumption pattern of people who live near borders frequently display distinctive media consumption habits that are impacted by their close proximity to national borders. Being close results in exposure to a variety of media outlets that represent both the local and surrounding countries. Jammu and Kashmir's border region's topographical, socio-cultural, and geopolitical significance influence how its citizens consume media.

The dynamic nature of the region further underscores the importance of media in keeping residents informed about the ever-evolving situation in Jammu and Kashmir. This study will explore the nuances of new media usage among LOC residents, examining how digital platforms influence social dynamics, information dissemination, and daily life in this complex and multifaceted region.

Historical Context of J&K's Border Region:

Border: Definitions and Meanings:

The term "border" is used broadly to refer to the demarcation between two sovereign states as defined by international norms (Mathieu Rigg, 2017). It's not just "visible lines" on the ground or a map; borders are complex social constructions with a variety of imposed meanings and objectives (Haselsberger, 2014). In addition to defining the state's territorial boundaries and the extent of its sovereign authority, borders serve as a

psychological symbol that sets its residents apart and fosters a sense of community. This idea of the border is a key part of nationalism ideology and is conceptually tied to the idea of the nation state (Elaine Correa, 2011). Boundaries serve as both psychological and physical barriers that hinder communication between the citizens of neighboring countries (Gelbaman 2008). In addition to being administrative and geopolitical, these dividing areas are also social, cultural, and economic (Haselsberger, 2014). Borders are complex constructs that shape social, political, and economic relationships.

J&K A Land of Boundaries: A Historical overview:

When India gained its independence in 1947, Jammu and Kashmir was a princely state. On October 22, 1947, armed tribesmen and soldiers from Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province crossed the border into Kashmir with the intention of seizing Srinagar, the J&K summer capital. Unable to cope with this invasion, the then-Maharaja Hari Singh signed an Instrument of Accession with India on October 26, 1947. Accordingly, J&K became a part of India (Zutshi 2010). The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) established the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) in January 1948 after India brought the issue before the UNSC to investigate the unstable situation between the two nations. On August 13, 1948, the UNCIP Resolution was fully enacted. On December 31, 1948, a cease-fire line was decided upon (Anand 2001; Zutshi 2010; Banerjee 2010; Jacob 2017). India and Pakistan redefined the ceasefire line as the Line of Control in 1972 during the war of independence in Bangladesh (Jacob 2017; Anand 2001). The area has been designated as a combat zone since 1947, and the situation is typically unstable. Therefore, uncertainty, an unstable life, and unusual living circumstances are "normal" and have an impact on one's quality of life.

Border in Jammu and Kashmir:

The region of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) situated at the northern most tip of India. J&K shares borders with Pakistan and China, making it one of the most militarized and politically sensitive areas in the world. The primarily lines of demarcation that governs the region are the Line of Control (LOC), international Border (IB), Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL), and Line of Actual control (LAC). Most of these lines were demarcated by the British to overcome their security concerns. LOC is the de facto border between India and Pakistan is the result of the 1947-1948 Indo-Pakistani war. IB border separates the Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan's Punjab province. AGPL is the demarcation line between India and Pakistan along with Siachen glacier in the karakoram range. It was created after the Siachen conflict of 1984. LAC emerged after the 1962 Sino-Indian war, LAC marks the boundary between Indian-administered Aksai chin. LAC is not an internationally recognized border; it is the dividing line between two countries. Therefore, these borders are the product of war, conflict, and victory, though they were occasionally drawn for administrative and diplomatic reasons (Tripathi & Chaturvedi 2019). The undivided union territory of Jammu and Kashmir occupies a total area of 2,22,236 square kilometers, of which Pakistan controls 78,114 square kilometers and China controls about 5180 square kilometers (Govt. of India, 2003). Consequently, the UT is faced with a challenging border scenario. At the time of its separation from West Pakistan (IB), the J&K had a recognized and negotiated international border. But when the J&K was split up into regions under the

jurisdiction of India and Pakistan, the outcome was the line of control (LOC), another undefined border. According to its location, Jammu and Kashmir is India's border UT. A significant amount of the nation's land is enclosed by borders, whether in the form of IB or LOC. India and Pakistan have a land border of 3323 kilometers, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs. This boundary is shared by the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Punjab. One-third of the India-Pakistan border, or 1225 kilometers, passes through the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The international border is barely 210 kilometers long, yet LOC makes up the majority of the border.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The purpose of the literature review is to examine earlier research on the study. The literature review on variety of research that investigated the intricate function of media in areas those are prone to conflict. Media consumption in Jammu and Kashmir is heavily influenced by security concerns, cultural influences, and limited accessibility due to the region's particular geopolitical sensitivity along the Line of Control (LOC), which divides the areas administered by Pakistan and India. A selection of the research is listed below:

Arshad Ahmed (2021), examines the Gujjars and Bakarwals, a trans-human community in the Northern Himalayan regions of India, in this study "Dimension of social change among Trans humans: A case study of Gujjars Bakarwals of Poonch district in Jammu and Kashmir." The study focuses on the difficulties they face because of government regulations on forest resources and their reliance on livestock for survival. It draws attention to the financial difficulties these communities face, such as debt and reliance on established neighbors for extra funding. It also highlights the necessity of inclusive development programs and cow culture education in order to properly support the Gujjars and Bakarwals.

Syeda Fakhara Jabeen & et al. (2024), in their research they examine the idea of backwardness in the districts of Rajouri and Poonch, Jammu, employing particular metrics to measure and pinpoint places that are undeveloped. The study's focus on basic amenities, demography, education and health, agriculture, and water resources highlights the complex nature of backwardness. It also highlights the major obstacles these districts face, such as poor infrastructure, socioeconomic disparities, and limited access to basic services, all of which impede regional development efforts.

Regarding the Rajouri and Poonch districts in Jammu province, the document "IB148-BPCR-Maini" highlights the areas' remote location, economic underdevelopment, and diversified population, which includes Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes, Pahari speakers, and a preponderance of Muslims. Even though the area has a history of community cooperation, it has encountered difficulties because of inadequate infrastructure, few economic prospects, and outside influences that have occasionally caused tensions amongst the communities, especially during the 2008 Amarnath property transfer dispute. The text, which draws on the Sufi traditions of tolerance and peace in the area, emphasizes the necessity of governmental and social actions to rebuild communal trust and advance development.

David Gonzalez (2018), in this study "The Representation of the U.S.-Mexico Border in Television News" examines how the border is depicted in television news, with a particular emphasis on immigration and security enforcement. Through textual analysis, the study looks at news reports from Televisa (Mexico) and NBC (United States), showing how both networks employ comparable visual techniques to portray the border as a place of crisis and conflict. The study also examines how television news in the United States and Mexico depicts the border, contending that these depictions are frequently sensationalized and perpetuate unfavorable stereotypes, influencing public opinion and policy.

Martin Sokefeld studied on "Jammu and Kashmir – boundaries and movements" discusses the complex problems pertaining to the region's borders and migrations. The historical background of the borders in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is thoroughly examined in this study, which highlights the complexity and diversity of the region's territorial disputes. Legal frameworks, colonial history, and the sociopolitical forces that have developed over time all play a significant role in the historical background of Jammu and Kashmir's borders. Comprehending these components is essential to understanding the contemporary intricacies of the region's identity politics and territorial disputes. The conversation around Jammu and Kashmir is still influenced by the interaction of historical occurrences, court rulings, and societal factors.

According to existing literature, there is no such research found which specifically focused on media usage among the residents of the line of control (LOC) regions of Jammu. While literature exists on social change, geographical isolation, economic backwardness. Few studies address the unique circumstances surrounding the LOC. The scarcity of research highlights a significant gap in understanding how the residents of the LOC engage with media, both traditional and new media. This study will lay the groundwork for analyzing the distinctive media usage patterns of LOC residents.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

The specific objectives of the study would be:

1. To study the media availability and accessibility to the border area of Nowshera
2. To investigate the media consumption habits and preferences of the residents
3. To investigate the challenges and opportunities for new media technology

Methodology:

To achieve the objectives of this study, a multi-stage approach was employed by the researcher. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized in this research. In quantitative approach a survey method was adopted, utilizing a structured questionnaire to collect data. The target audience consisted of fifty residents from the bordering villages of district Rajouri of Nowshera sector, aged between 15 and 40 years. For collecting data Random and purposive sampling techniques were applied. The researcher will analyze and interpret the data using appropriate statistical tools and techniques.

ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

Data analysis and interpretation provide important insights into their media consumption habits and how consumers access, evaluate, trust, and use different media platforms. Finding out the dynamics of media interaction in these delicate areas is the goal of this study. The analysis of data in the present study has led researchers to the following findings and interpretation.

Socio Demographic:

The socio-demographic level in the border region of Rajouri district's of Nowshera sector, which is classified as a rural area, would include examining a number of variables to comprehend how distinct population groups engage with the media. The demographic variables include occupation, area, age, gender and educational level. These standards were selected in order to guarantee a thorough comprehension of the elements impacting the use of media platforms by residents of the LOC of Rajouri district's Nowshera area. In this study male participation is higher than female participation, i.e. 56% and 44% respectively.

The age distribution of study was categorized into three groups: younger (15-30 years), middle-aged (31-45 years), and older (46+ years). The younger group had the highest participation at 38%, followed by the older (34%) and middle-aged (28%) groups. Younger individuals were more engaged with digital platforms especially social networking sites. In terms of education, most participants were well-educated: 12% had a middle-level education, 42% had higher secondary, 32% were graduates, 12% had advanced degrees, and only 2% were illiterate.

The researcher found that the occupation and income of respondent, 20% are engaged in agriculture, 8% hold government jobs, 20% work as laborers, while 32% are unemployed, and another 20% are involved in various other activities. These occupational roles often restrict their access to diverse media channels. This study helps to understand how these occupational patterns affect their exposure to both national and cross-border media narratives and shape their perspectives on regional issues.

As we know that income plays a crucial role in media access and literacy, with clear disparities among respondent. This study found that 46% respondents have no regular income, 20% respondents earn up to ₹7,000, 20% between ₹8,000 to ₹14,000, and 8% above ₹21,000 per month. The study found that lower-income individuals tend to have limited access to technologies like smart phones and the internet, while higher-income participants are more likely to engage with both digital and traditional media.

Availability of Media Platform:

In the district of Rajouri in Jammu and Kashmir, the availability of media platforms among residents near the Line of Control (LOC) is generally limited due to a number of factors, including geography, security concerns, and infrastructure constraints, although connectivity and access have improved in recent years. According to

this study, the primary available platform is digital media, which accounts for roughly 76% of the respondents, indicating a high level of reliance on digital media. Traditional media, such as radio and television, accounts for 16% of the respondents, but there is no daily newspaper available in the LOC region, and 8% of respondents have no available source of information.

Electronic Media:

Devices used to access electronic media platforms:

Peoples along the Line of Control (LOC) in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in remote and rural regions, encounter significant infrastructural challenges. Nevertheless, they have adapted by accessing a range of media platforms to stay informed. Digital devices—primarily smart phones, tablets, laptops, and computers—dominate media consumption, with 82% of the respondents depending on these tools for news and updates. In contrast, traditional media usage remains limited; only around 6% of respondents utilize television for news and entertainment, and just 2% rely on radio. Notably, 6% of the respondents in the Nowshera sector still lack access to any electronic media, underscoring the persistent digital divide in these border communities.

Television:

Medium of watching Television:

Television continues to serve as a significant source of news, entertainment, and information for residents along the Line of Control (LOC). Access to television in these areas varies based on electricity availability, economic conditions, and local preferences. The most prevalent mode of access is satellite television, with 20% of the participants relying on services like Dish TV, Tata Sky, and the government-operated DD Free Dish due to the lack of cable infrastructure. However, 80% of the population in this region does not access television through any medium.

Accessibility of Television:

The accessibility of television viewership varies due to factors such as electricity availability, access to satellite services, security conditions, and individual schedules. The study reveals that 14% of respondents watch television daily, 2% tune in once a week, and 4% watch sporadically based on their mood. Notably, 80% of participants do not watch television at all. Additionally, there is no consistent viewing schedule observed among those who do watch television.

Program watched on Television:

Television serves as a primary source of real-time information for residents in areas along the Line of Control (LOC). Only 20% of respondents reported viewing television, with their usage split between news and entertainment. Around 10% primarily access channels like Doordarshan (DD Jammu, DD National) and national news networks such as Zee News and Aaj Tak to stay updated on regional and national developments. Meanwhile, another 10% watch television for entertainment, preferring channels like DD National, Star Utsav,

and Zee Cinema for daily serials and movies. Notably, a substantial 80% of participants do not engage with television at all, underscoring significant barriers to media consumption in these areas.

Radio:

Radio has traditionally been a widely accessible medium of communication near the Line of Control (LoC), surpassing television and internet connectivity in terms of reach. Participants in this area primarily rely on radio for news, entertainment, and information. However, in recent times, radio usage has significantly declined, with only about 4% of participants tuning in, while 96% do not. Radio is more popular among older generations, while younger individuals prefer using mobile phones and other digital devices for accessing media. The most commonly accessed radio stations in the region are All India Radio (AIR) Rajouri and AIR Jammu, which are favored for their diverse content, including news, weather updates, cultural programs, and music. Interestingly, participants do not have a fixed schedule for listening to the radio; instead, they tend to rely on it during times of conflict or harsh weather, as it serves as a vital source for news, government announcements, and safety information.

Print Media:

Access to print media is significantly hindered for those living along the Line of Control (LoC) due to factors such as geographical isolation, security restrictions, and logistical difficulties. Despite these obstacles, some still engage with print media, albeit on a limited scale and with reduced variety compared to other regions. Notably, only about 12% of participants reported accessing daily newspapers, primarily through digital devices rather than physical copies. In contrast, 88% of the respondents lack any access to print media.

Medium of Accessing Newspaper in LOC region:

Newspapers, whether in print or digital formats, serve as regular sources of news, articles, opinions, and advertisements. However, access to newspapers in the Line of Control (LoC) region remains significantly limited due to geopolitical tensions, inadequate infrastructure, and digital divides. Only 2% of respondents reported accessing newspapers, primarily through digital platforms, while 98% do not engage with them, largely due to delayed availability reducing reader interest.

Urdu-language publications such as Daily Udaan, Kashmir Uzma, and Taskeen are the most popular among LoC residents, with minimal readership for English or Hindi newspapers due to accessibility and literacy constraints. Only 2% read newspapers daily, and another 2% do so weekly, while the majorities abstain entirely. For those who do read, the focus is on local news, weather updates, border developments, and government policies, with a strong preference for content relevant to their immediate region.

Internet:

Internet accessibility among residents along the Line of Control (LOC) is heavily restricted due to the region's sensitive security environment. The Line of control region is highly militarized, frequently experiencing skirmishes that disrupt infrastructure, including telecommunications. High-speed services like 4G and

broadband are scarce, with the area primarily dependent on basic mobile networks accessed through smart phones by about 86% of participants. Only 2% use tablets/laptops, while 12% lack internet access entirely.

The reasons for internet usage among residents vary. The majority (44%) uses the internet for entertainment, such as streaming movies, music, or watching videos on YouTube. 16% respondents rely on it for official purposes, including biometric attendance and virtual meetings on platforms like Zoom. About 12% access the internet to gather news and stay updated on local and national events. For educational purposes, 10% utilize online classes and e-learning platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom, Byju's, Unacademy, and Wings Ek Udaan, especially during school closures caused by curfews or conflict situations. Additionally, 18% of participants use the internet for miscellaneous activities.

In terms of internet consumption patterns, 46% of participants use it frequently, while 38% respondents are online for 5-6 hours a day. However, 16% respondents do not use the internet due to connectivity challenges and socio-economic barriers. When it comes to reliability, 44% of respondents find the internet to be highly reliable, 24% somewhat reliable, 22% partially reliable, and 2% do not trust it at all.

The impact of the internet on the lives of LOC residents is multifaceted, presenting both opportunities and challenges. While it has significantly enhanced communication, education, and information access, its inconsistent availability and frequent disruptions limit its full potential. Notably, 46% of participants strongly agree that the internet has had a significant impact on their lives, while 38% partially agree, 16% somewhat disagree, and none completely dismiss its influence.

Largest coverage of media platforms:

Media consumption patterns reveal that traditional platforms like television and radio continue to have significant reach; however, the landscape is rapidly shifting towards digital mediums. Presently, digital media commands the largest share, with 60% of participants using it as their primary source of information. In contrast, traditional forms of media, such as TV and radio, account for about 36% of total usage. Interestingly, a small fraction—around 4% of respondents—indicated that they do not engage with any media platforms.

In terms of reliability, the internet has emerged as the most trusted source, with about 80% of participants considering digital platforms to be reliable. On the other hand, only 14% of respondents place their trust in traditional media formats. Additionally, 6% of participants expressed a lack of reliance on any media platform, highlighting a segment of the population that remains disengaged from both traditional and digital information sources.

Discussions:

The quantitative analysis underscores substantial disparities in media access and consumption among residents living along the Line of Control (LOC) in rural area of Nowshera sector of Jammu and Kashmir. Although most participants possess a basic level of literacy, the community is predominantly engaged in agriculture. In this context, television and radio emerge as the primary sources of information, particularly in regions where internet access is limited and newspapers are scarce. Recurrent internet shutdowns and power outages further compound the challenges in obtaining reliable, timely information, leading many to depend on traditional channels like radio or interpersonal communication.

Social media, although increasingly popular among younger demographics, faces limitations due to intermittent internet connectivity. Despite its potential to offer diverse perspectives, many respondents expressed concerns regarding misinformation on these platforms. Broadly, the media landscape along the LOC is profoundly shaped by the region's enduring conflict, with state-controlled narratives largely influencing the flow of information to the local populace.

Media Landscape and Consumption Patterns among LOC Communities

The media landscape in Line of Control (LOC) regions is shaped by restricted access, security concerns, and specific social and cultural needs. Media consumption within these residents is deeply rooted in cultural and social influences. Television programs and radio broadcasts in local languages or dialects are particularly favored, as they align closely with the residents' cultural and linguistic identities.

Television and Radio Usage

Television remains the most prevalent medium in LOC areas, serving as a key source of news, entertainment, and educational content. However, frequent power outages, limited access to cable services, and restricted satellite coverage often disrupt viewing. Radio, on the other hand, continues to be widely used, especially among older generations and in remote areas where other media are less accessible. Its portability and reliability during electricity outages make radio a crucial source for news and emergency broadcasts. While traditional media like radio and television maintain their popularity, younger populations are increasingly gravitating toward mobile phones and digital platforms.

Smartphone and Social Media Trends

Smartphone penetration has grown, particularly among younger residents. Platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook are commonly used for staying connected with family, friends, and for local community updates. However, limited data connectivity restricts broader social media usage, resulting in these platforms being more localized and community-focused.

Trust in Media Sources

Due to limited internet access and intermittent availability of newspapers, the LOC population predominantly relies on national and regional television and radio for news. There is considerable skepticism toward social media as a trustworthy news source, with widespread concerns about misinformation. National television channels, especially those broadcasting news, are generally trusted more than social media platforms or foreign news sources, which are often viewed as biased or politically motivated.

Digital Divide and Media Literacy

The study highlights a pronounced digital divide based on age, education, and socioeconomic status. Younger residents are more adept at using digital media, while older generations primarily rely on traditional media sources. Media literacy levels vary significantly, with younger, more educated individuals demonstrating a better understanding of digital platforms and associated risks. The lack of formal media literacy training, especially concerning online information verification, contributes to vulnerability to misinformation and cyber threats.

Impact of Security Concerns on Media Consumption

Residents living in close proximity to the LOC face unique security challenges that influence their media consumption habits. The threat of cross-border shelling and military operations increases reliance on timely, reliable information sources. Many residents depend on local community networks and messaging apps for real-time updates on security situations. The heightened security environment also discourages some from sharing or posting on social media due to concerns about surveillance and privacy risks.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive overview of media usage among LOC residents, highlighting the crucial role of television, radio, and mobile internet in their daily lives. However, security-related disruptions, such as internet shutdowns and curfews, significantly hinder consistent access to media. The findings underscore the need for improved infrastructure, reliable information access, and media literacy initiatives to empower residents to critically engage with the media they consume.

Recommendations

1. **Enhance Digital Infrastructure:** Invest in providing stable internet access to LOC residents, especially minimizing disruptions during periods of conflict.
2. **Promote Media Literacy:** Implement programs to educate residents on critically evaluating the reliability of various media sources, particularly on social media.
3. **Support Local Journalism:** Strengthen support for local journalists who understand the region's unique challenges to provide balanced and nuanced reporting.
4. **Ensure Reliable Power Supply:** Address frequent power outages, especially during curfews, to improve access to television and radio for timely information dissemination.

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