

Chapter 6

Conclusion

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The advent of new media technology has created an electronic utopia. In the second decade of the 21st century audiences have vast options for information and entertainment around the globe. The digitally connected world has become borderless. These new media technologies are digital, electronic, compact, interactive, convergent, sophisticated, dynamic, user-friendly, and cute and are having direct and constant influence on the personal, social and psychological lives of the people around the globe. These technologies, while spreading knowledge among people, especially women, are developing specific attitude and a type of personality, which is a requisite in order for a traditional society to become modern. Moreover, it is well established that if the incursion of technologies by females happens, it automatically means children getting aware about them. Thus, the focus of this research was on the penetration and usage of technologies like digital television, mobile phones and computers by the Indian women, both in rural and urban areas.

By mid February, 2014, India had 250 million internet users. According to FICCI-KPMG Media and Entertainment report 2014, India had a mobile phone user base of 900 millions by the end of 2013. The country had become third global market for cell phones by the end of 2013. (The Hindu, March, 2014). Both internet and mobile phones in India are digital unifiers. They have brought a large section of female population of the Indian society in the public spheres. Women are taking connectivity for granted today. According to S.A. Chunawala (2012). India has 112 million households in India with television sets and 61% of these homes are having cable or satellite service Thus, women of India are breaking the conventions of the conventional past and are walking on the path of modernization. Therefore, the study has elaborated on the changes occurring in the personal, professional and social behavior of the Indian women. These smart technologies have made women confident and secure. The major objective of the study was to analyze the exposure, penetration and accessibility of new media technologies in urban and rural female population of India. For the research project, the researcher has basically concentrated on three major new media technologies:- digital television, mobile phones and computer (internet). The researcher

had included television in new media technologies, as contemporary television has become digital, electronic, convergent, user-friendly, interactive and dynamic.

The researcher has also focused on finding out the changes occurring in communication patterns of Indian women due to new and emerging media technologies. One of the major objective of the research was to analyze the shift occurring in the worldview, perceptions and cognitive and affective needs of Indian female population. Another aim was to explore the changes occurring in social networking, inter-family and intra-family communication patterns of Indian urban and rural women due to the penetration of mobile phones and computer. Apart from all these objectives, one major purpose of the researcher was to explain the digital divide occurring between urban and rural women of India.

To fulfil all these objectives a survey was conducted. A written questionnaire was used as a tool for doing the research. The scheduled questionnaire helped the researcher in collecting quantitative, as well as, qualitative data.

The research focused on new media technologies as they are the latest media. They are new and are still in an emerging and penetrating phase. A thorough review of literature available on this subject also reveals that not much work has been done on the impact of new media technologies on women, especially in India. The research was also very much focused as it only talked about Indian women.

As per the title of the study i.e. Impact of New Media Technology on Indian Women: A Critical Study, the universe for selecting sample was India. But for the survey, Punjab state was considered, as the literacy rate of Punjab (75%) is very close to that of India (74.04%).

One of the major objectives of the study was to analyze the digital divide existing between the urban and rural women of India. The researcher choose Patiala city for urban sample and Lubhana Kalan village for rural sample. Both Patiala city and Lubhana Kalan village offered the researcher the most representative sample for the research. The sample size for the research was 300 females {150 urban females and 150 rural females}. To enhance the reliability and validity of the study, the researcher classified the sample on the basis of three variables - social status (upper class, middle class and lower class), area (urban and rural) and age (20-30 years, 30-40 years and

40<years). To further add to the validity of the study, an appropriate mix of respondents were secured. The researcher personally interacted with the respondents.

The data collected with the written questionnaire fulfilled all the nine objectives and also all the proposed nine hypotheses were tested.

The first hypothesis was that 'new media technologies are quickly and easily penetrating in India female population.' It was found that new media technologies, like television and mobile phones have deeply penetrated among the Indian female population. The television has almost reached 96% women population of the country. In the rural areas, cable television has more penetration (61%), whereas in the urban areas dish T.V has more penetration (71%). Even Mobile Phone has 99% penetration in urban areas and in rural areas 67% women have mobile phone. The research also revealed that only 10% of rural women have smart mobile phone, whereas 67% of urban females own branded smart mobile phones. Computer has less penetration among Indian female population as compared to television and mobile phones. 78% of urban women have easy accessibility to computer. Also, 71% of urban women have internet facility. Wi-Fi facility has penetrated in the urban upper class and middle class female population (45%). Among the rural females, the penetration of computer and internet is very low. Only 18% of rural women belonging to upper class have an access to computer and only 6% of rural upper class females have internet available to them. *Thus the digital divide among the urban and rural women of India is quite evident.*

Also, the raised hypothesis was proved partially true, as television and mobile phones have easily and quickly penetrated among the urban and rural women, but new technologies like computer, wi-fi, data card and smart mobile phones have not penetrated in rural female population of India that much.

Indian urban women across all the income groups are using television for entertainment, awareness, information and also for companionship. In the urban areas 67% women switch on the television in the morning and it remains switched on throughout the day. But in the rural areas, television is usually switched on in the evenings. 44% of rural women belonging to middle class and lower class watch television in the evening time when their whole family is at home. 16% of rural women

belonging to upper class watch television throughout the day (approximately 10 hours). The urban and rural women, who watch television throughout the day, are not active viewers of the television, as they do all the domestic activities with television. Just to escape from being alone at home they turn to television.

The Urban women are using mobile phones heavily these days. 68% urban women spend approximately five hours on their mobile phone per day. Urban women, especially from the age group of 20-30 years are very possessive about their mobile phone. The data collected also reveals that 25% of urban women prefer to use mobile phones in the evening, whereas 47% of urban upper class and middle class women use mobile phone throughout the day.

The rural women use mobile phones only when required, as the penetration of smart phone is quite low in rural areas. Only 10% of rural women have smart mobile phone. It is concluded that rural women use mobile phones only for calling people. Rural women are not in the habit of using mobile phone for writing SMSs, or for accessing internet. Now, as far as the computer is concerned, it has not penetrated much in the rural areas of Punjab, as a result its usage is very limited. This also shows the digital divide among urban and rural women of India.

As far as the urban areas are concerned, 65% women are using computer with ease. In fact, more than 35% of urban women are using internet on mobile phones. 47% of urban women have laptops and they also have internet (wi-fi) facility available to them. The urban women are using computer for socializing, entertainment and also for information. But the intensity of use of computer is low as compared to the usage of mobile phones and television. Both urban and rural women are using television with high intensity as compared to computer and mobile phone. Television perhaps is easy to use, and it is also very entertaining.

Thus, the next hypothesis that Indian women are using new media technologies with high intensity and frequency has also been proved partially true.

Another hypothesis formulated was that there is a paradigm shift in the behavior of women due to these technologies. This hypothesis has been proved partially true.

The new technologies are today influencing the behaviour of Indian urban women a lot. Urban women, especially from the upper class and middle class are very conscious about their looks. In fact, more than 80% of urban women are using branded skin and hair products. L'oreal products are very popular among the females residing in cities. Maximum of urban women are very conscious about their physical stats also. 70% of women, especially from the age group of 20-30 years regularly do yoga and also more than 45% of urban females are regularly go to a gym or for a walk. Urban women regulate their diet, eat nutritious food and maintain their figures. All these trends have penetrated from television and now women are also exploiting mobile phones and computers for gathering information on good health, skin and hair. 84% of urban women also go to beauty parlours regularly. They all know about spas.

Even in the rural areas more than 19% of women across all the income groups use Fair & Lovely cream. Thus, television has influenced the consumption patterns of rural women but the change in the behaviour is more prominent among the urban women as compared to rural females. More than 96% of rural women have never seen a gym or yoga class. The trend of going to beauty parlours is also very low among them. In fact, in rural areas these services are not easily available. Only the rural women from upper class go to the beauty parlours regularly. Among the urban women there is a competition for looking good and young but rural women are far too busy with their domestic activities to be bothered about their looks and age. The urban women believe in going out for dinners, movies, kitty parties, birthday parties etc. This culture is not there in rural areas. The data reveals that more than 77% of urban women are very brand conscious. These females say that they get to know about various brands through television and computer. The rural women are not brand conscious at all. The urban women have money to spend and they have the brands available to choose from. They have shopping malls to visit. These women are also very conscious about their social status. For maintaining their status in the society, they pick up tips from the television and computer. Infact, mobile phone is a way to social success for them. 73% of urban women have an apple i-phone. More than 86% of women prefer to shop only from malls. The views of urban women are totally different from rural ones. In the villages the life of women is still very simple and conventional. They restrict themselves only to

their home and family. But urban women have a life of their own also apart from their home and family.

The fourth hypothesis was that 'the worldview, perceptions, cognitive and affective needs of Indian women are getting affected due to advancements in media technologies'. This hypothesis has been proved partially true, as the worldview, perceptions and attitudes of urban women are getting global while the rural women are still unaware of concepts like information super highway and global village. The penetration of information technology among the rural women is still quite low. Thus, leading to a digital-divide among the urban and rural Indian women. In the rural areas, the media influence is not very prominent.

In the Indian villages more than 85% of women have an Adhar card and more than 64% know about the ruling political party at the center. But the credit for this political and social awareness goes mainly to the of mouth communication. Rural women depend on midwives, doctors, nurses, school teachers, Asha workers or sarpanches of village for information. These rural women trust these opinion leaders more than the media. Thus, the word of mouth is still an effective form of communication in the villages of India. The perceptions and worldview of rural women are less influenced by media and more by the interpersonal contact with the opinion leaders. 95% of urban women know about the Delhi rape case of 2012 and majority credited television for this information. But in rural areas only 53% of population knew about this incident and these rural women mostly know the distorted version of this incident, as they have received the information from mediated channels i.e. opinion leaders rather than media itself.

The new media technologies are also influencing the buying habits of Indian urban women. Television has made these women more informative, confident and even modern. These urban females feel that new media technologies have influenced their buying habits. More than 87% of urban women across all the income groups feel that television has encouraged and increased consumerism. T.V has made them very brand conscious. This is the most prominent change in their personality. Little more than 82% of urban women say that new media technologies like television and mobile phones have made them confident, expressive and also, secure. Television has made these

women informative and updated. Almost 79% of urban women knew about Domestic Violence Act and more than 85% are quite well aware about politics of the country.

New media technologies are also changing the attitudes of urban women towards relationships. 76% of these women are candid about live-in relationships. These women do not find anything bad about such relationships. More than 74% urban women think that both husband and wife should share domestic responsibilities. These women believe in gender equality. More than 90% of urban women of Indian are also open to divorce and remarriages. These women are of the opinion that life should be content and happy. The rural women on the contrary are still very conservative. The smart technologies have not influenced their attitudes, perceptions and worldview. Thus, partially proving the fourth hypothesis.

The next hypothesis was that there is a change in communication patterns with the penetration of these recently developed smart technologies. The new media technologies are affecting the communication patterns of urban women more as they are heavy users of technologies like mobile phones and computers.

Urban women are now connected with the world around way better than before. More than 70% of women feel that mobile phone has made them social, talkative and expressive. Now, they are connected to their friends, relatives and even colleagues. Urban women now wish all their relatives and friends on their birthdays, marriage anniversaries or other festive occasions. Approximately, 33% of urban women also feel that their visits to friends have decreased due to mobile phones. They send SMSs rather than personally visiting their friends. In the rural areas, the communication patterns of women have not changed much, as the penetration of mobile phone is still very low. Only 33% of rural women across all the income groups are using mobile phones for talking to their relatives or friends.

Due to new media technologies, the trend of writing letters or sending greeting cards has decreased a lot in recent years. 56% of urban women are in the habit of writing SMSs. More than 42% of urban females from the age group of 20-30 years exchange approximately ten SMSs in a day. These women prefer to compose a mobile message rather than writing letters or sending greeting cards. On the contrary, the rural

females were never in the habit of writing letters or sending cards and they are also not in the habit of writing SMSs.

Urban women are also into social networking through mobile phones. More than 51% of urban women across all the age groups and income groups are either using facebook or twitter for socializing. More than 50% of urban women are also in the habit of sharing their photographs (selfies) with friends or relatives via mobile phones and computers. More than 50% urban women opined that they have become more close to their family members, relatives and friends with new media technologies.

Thus, the formulated hypothesis that new media technologies are affecting the communication patterns of Indian women has been proved true. the influence of these recently developed smart technologies is more prevalent among the urban women as compared to the rural women. These recently developed technologies like television, mobile phone and computer have made Indian women more social. Rural women feel that television has given them topics to talk about. These women discuss serials mostly with their neighbours. Rural women opined that television has made them more social and confident. Contrary to this, mobile phones and computers have made urban women very social, talkative and expressive.

86% of urban women always carry their mobile phone with them. Also, 74% of urban women keep a check on the activities of their children and husbands through mobile phones. More than 47% of urban women are using mobile phone throughout the day and majority of these females are using phone for remaining in touch with their family members. More than 95% of urban women use mobile phone for keeping in touch with the family members and relatives. Slightly more than 83% of urban women are using mobile phone for keeping in touch with their friends around the world. According to urban women, mobile phones and internet have brought them more close to their family members, relatives and friends. No doubt, their visits to friends, neighbors and relatives have reduced due to mobile phone and various social networking sites, but still they feel more connected to the world around.

The SMS service has also made them more social and well connected to the people around the globe. According to majority of urban women their social interactions have actually increased due to the penetration of new media technologies.

The new media technologies have not influenced the social interactions of rural women a lot as the penetration of mobile phones and computers is still low among them. The media illiteracy is acting as a barrier for rural women in using applications like SMS, MMS, facebook, Twitter etc. This also clearly represents the digital-divide among Indian female population.

Thus, the raised hypothesis that ‘there is a decrease in the interpersonal, social networking and family communication level due to high usage of these new media technologies’ has been disproved. On the contrary, due to these recently developed technologies, a very small percentage of media literate women are becoming over-connected with world around which is also a disturbing situation.

Another hypothesis formulated was that ‘mobile phones and satellite TV are influencing Indian female population more than any another new media technology’. The analyzed data supports this statement. The penetration of television is high both in urban and rural areas as compared to mobile phones and computers. In fact, more than 70% of urban women from the age group of 30-40 years consider television as an integral part of their family. In urban areas more than 66% of women watch television throughout the day (more than 10 hours) and 16% of women from rural upper class also watch television throughout the day. More than 51% of urban women do all the daily household activities while watching television. They are not always the active viewers of television but they spend maximum time with television. In fact, television is influencing the perceptions, attitudes, worldview and behaviour of urban women a lot. Urban women spend a lot of time with television, especially the house makers. These house makers depend on TV a lot for treating their loneliness.

In fact, mobile phones are being used by Indian women for remaining busy, entertained and also connected. 99% of urban women today own a personal mobile phone. Approximately, 70% of rural women also have an access to mobile phone, though majority of them don’t own them personally. Little more than 10% of rural females have branded and personal mobile phone sets.

More than 68% of urban women spend approximately five hours on their mobile phones, while 47% of them use it throughout the day for various activities like Facebook, Twitter, e-mails, Whatsapp, games.....etc. In rural areas, 33% of women

across all the income groups use mobile phone in the evening mainly for calling their family members and relatives.

Computer has not penetrated much in rural areas of Punjab. Only 18% of rural women have internet facility. In the urban areas 78% of women population has on access to computer or internet.

In the urban women population, 68% of women know how to operate computer. Use of computer is not very common both in urban and rural areas as compared to television and mobile phone.

New media technologies like television, mobile phones and internet are more popular among the young women (age group of 20-30 years) and also those who belong to upper class both in urban and rural areas. Both in urban and rural areas dish television have maximum penetration. 76% of urban upper class females have smart mobile phones and also 20% of rural upper class females have an access to smart mobile phone. The study reveals that in urban areas maximum young females belonging to upper class have an Apple I-phone, while in rural areas more than 52% of females belonging to 20-30 years of age group and also from upper class have an exposure to latest branded mobile phones.

The data analyzed also clarifies that 61% of young women from upper class have laptops in urban areas and 60% of these females have wi-fi connection at home or at workplace..

In rural areas 36% of women belonging to 20-30 years of age group know how to operate internet. 47% of these females are from upper class society. In the urban areas 94% of women from 20-30 years know how to operate internet or computer. In fact, majority of these young women have Facebook, Twitter and e-mail accounts. YouTube and Google search engines are very popular among the females of this age group. In fact online shopping and tele-shopping have increased among the urban young females (20-30 years) from upper class only. These females are using new media technologies with ease. The women belonging to this age group are more receptive and experimental regarding these smart technologies. Therefore, the hypothesis that young women are using new media technologies more has been proved to be correct.

The last hypothesis framed was that 'a digital divide is occurring in Indian female population due to new media technologies'. This hypothesis has been fully proved. The whole research reveals that there is a huge digital gap between the urban and rural women of India. There is digital divide existing between upper class, middle class and lower class female population both at urban and rural level. There is a digital-divide also between females belonging to 20-30 years age, 30-40 years and 40 years and above, again at urban and rural level. It is concluded that variables of age and income groups play a major role in determining the usage of new media technologies. .

The major reasons for the digital divide are-media illiteracy lack of financial independence, lack of exposure and awareness and also lack of opportunities. The rural women of India lack all these vital pre-requisite, which are essential for becoming information rich. One thing is clear that both urban and rural woman across all the age groups and income groups desire for new media technologies to be at par with the world around.

The study explains that urban women who have money to spend on technologies and are educated enough to know how to use them, are more media literate as compared to their rural counterparts. It is evident from the data that media literate women have more progressive outlook towards life, society and relationships. They are more global in worldview. The behavior of urban media literate women is very different from rural media illiterate females. These urban media literate women are more receptive, candid and open to new things in life, whereas rural women are still mostly confined to the four walls of their homes.

With new media technologies the urban women have broken the old conventions and orthodoxies, which were acting as a barrier in their empowerment and have moved towards being personally, socially and politically well-informed and developed personalities. The rural women do not have the resources for buying the latest gadgets like mobile phones, laptops, dish T.V., etc. But they have recognized their importance and, therefore want to enrich their personal and social lives by using these new media technologies. As consumerism is increasing in rural areas to a large extent, more and more national and international companies and corporations are focusing on Indian

rural markets, there is a possibility that this digital divide will narrow down, if not totally eliminated in the near future.