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The Role of New Media in the Media Literacy of the Auto-rickshaw drivers' community of Motihari Town, East Champaran district Bihar

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Abstract

This research paper tries to focus on the particular role played by New Media and its tools like smartphone and 4G internet connection in the Media Literacy of the auto-rickshaw drivers' community of Motihari town in East Champaran district of Bihar. New Media indeed have brought about a revolution in the entire media industry, and have given stiff competition to print and broadcast media. This paper delves on the media usage patterns among the auto and rickshaw drivers involved in the transport sector of Motihari town located in East Champaran district, Bihar. It tries to know the proper media literacy among the target population, and the catalytic role that New Media has played in this process. The auto-rickshaw driver community always uses the smartphone devices enabled with 4G internet connection throughout the day. This research tries to find out through interview and survey, the purpose for which New Media is being used by the target population. Media is meant for major functions like information, education, entertainment, awareness, but proper media literacy is needed for proper usage of media, which is the main purpose of this research paper.

Key Words

New Media, Media Literacy, Smartphone, auto-rickshaw drivers, media-usage, media industry.

Introduction

New Media is defined as all the different forms of media which are delivered to the audience digitally. It can include websites, blogs, podcasts, apps which are delivered to the target audience

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through digital means like 4G enabled smartphone connections. New Media has indeed revolutionized the media scenario. Now, media convergence has been possible because of the impact of New Media. Nowadays, print media including newspapers and magazines have their own online editions. Also, many short news websites like YourStory, InShorts and others have come to the market. Broadcast media including content of television and radio everything is now available on the digital platform. A person needs one smartphone handset, and the 4G internet connection, from where, the user can access all forms of media. Media has few main functions which include to inform, to educate, to aware and most important to entertain. Media literacy is a very important component of the entire communication structure. The ability to access and identify the different media texts and messages is defined as media literacy. Media literacy is very important, as it enables the media audience to properly access the different forms of media and use them for different varied purposes. Media's primary function is to inform and educate the audience, and in the process make them aware of the happenings around them in the society. But, another major function of the media and unarguably the most important is that of entertainment. Today, in the twenty first century, it is the age of corporatization and globalization, and media has been used the corporate giants hugely in different forms. Entertainment has indeed become the most important function of media, where from films, to web series, from daily soap operas to talk shows; everything is now available in a single click, in a smartphone. This research paper focuses on the role of New Media in enabling the Media Literacy of the auto and rickshaw drivers' community in the town of Motihari, in the East Champaran district of Bihar. Auto and rickshaw drivers are seen in many cases that they roam around the streets of a particular place for entire lengths of day. During this duration, many of these transport community members use their smartphones and 4G enabled internet connection. This research tries to know and dig deep on the usage pattern of these target population. This paper also tries to focus on the level of Media Literacy among this target population, and the effective use of media by them. Any user with a smartphone and 4G enabled internet connection, can access to films and music through YouTube and different applications, also social media usage among people of all ages has become one of the most important media usage patterns. Social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram among many others are used for hours, as it creates a virtual world where, connections from all over the world and content from all over the world can be accessed. Now, the same New Media channels can also be used for reading newspapers, viewing news channels and also different forms of online education channels and tutorials for the youth. Not only this, proper media literacy can enable the users for their own benefit also, like online payment and banking through different apps like GooglePay, PhonePe, AmazonPay, and also different online banking platforms. But proper media literacy can enable the users to use these methods; otherwise they prefer to use new media for entertainment purposes only.

Objectives

1. To find out the role of New Media in the Media literacy among the auto-rickshaw drivers' community in Motihari town.
2. To find out the media usage patterns of the 4G enabled smartphones among the auto-rickshaw drivers of Motihari town.
3. To find out the effectiveness of new media and media literacy on the lives of the auto and rickshaw drivers' community.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of New Media in developing the media literacy among the auto-rickshaw drivers' community of Motihari?
2. What is the exact media usage patterns of 4G enabled smartphone internet connections among the auto-rickshaw drivers?

3. What is the impact of the New Media and proper media literacy among the transport drivers' community of Motihari?

Theoretical Framework

Importance of Mass Communication and Media

Mass Communication spreads its message to the audience through various mass media channels. Hence in today's modern democratic society media have an important and effective role to play as the most important channel of communication. For example, the New Media is the main source of information for the masses, which not only keeps them abreast to the new developments but also helps them build their own opinions as well. Different media sources like the online News websites and video channels are important mediums for propagation of culture, ideas, as well as opinions. If we go on to analyze the cultural selection patterns in today's electronic information society, we find that an important selection pattern lies in the choice of the content.

Media Dependency

Media dependency is not only for the want or need of information only, but also for other means such as entertainment, science, religion, charities, agricultural activities as well as for means of modern day transportation like, Ola, Uber, Rapido and other such modes New Media Communication. In today's twenty first century modern day world, almost every social activity depends on application of media. There are many challenges of the facts that are shown through the media and the accuracy and truth about the facts forms a basis of the internal challenges faced by media. On the external front also, media has created a class bias which has eventually led to the divisions in the society. The social media sites and also the online versions of print and broadcast media show the affluent lifestyle and ignore the proper coverage of the poor and their sufferings, which in turns into bias in coverage and also restrict political apathy to the deprived and the underprivileged.

Audience Theories of Media

The Hypodermic Needle Theory (Magic Bullet Theory)

According to this theory, the intended messages and communication is directly received and accepted in totality. This means that the audiences receive the message and without processing, they directly go on to accept it. This theory was invented in 1920's; in early days of Mass Media by Harold Laswell in relation to Nazi Propaganda in his book "Propaganda Technique" in the World War. Similarly if we see today's New Media, in many cases we are seeing that a volley of fake news are circulating in the social media sites, and the audiences are also relating to them very quickly without even proper challenging or verification.

Two-Step flow theory

According to this theory the intended information flow in two steps, first from the media to the opinion leaders, and then from the opinion leaders to the intended target audience. This concept of two-step flow was given by Paul Lazarfield, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet after they had examined the voters' decision making process during the US Presidential elections of 1940. Similarly if we see the use of New Media in today's society in many cases, the media literacy level is very low, and the audience are not proactive in deciphering the messages, but the information or messages they receive are coming through the opinion leaders be it in movies, films, soap operas or news channels or talk shows in different social media sites.

Uses and gratifications theory

This theory suggests that the audience or the consumers are not helpless victims of the mass media, but rather they use the different media texts and messages for selective gratifications. These

gratifications can be of different kinds like escapism from mundane daily routines, for emotional and similar problems, or for learning and education value inculcation. If we see today almost everyone have a smartphone and internet connections, and all the different forms of media are digitally delivered to them in the form of New Media. Now, certain users use them only for entertainment purposes, while others use them for gaining news and information while others for learning and educational activities. This theory was developed by Elihu Katz in the 1970's along with Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch.

Reception theory

This theory is based on Stuart Hill's encoding and decoding model which states that the "media text" is coded by the media and decoded by the audience. The meaning of any media text is not only based on the producers' intention but also on the experiences of the receiver that is the audiences.

Literature Review

The new media tools and technologies have brought about different changes in the lifestyle and behavioral patterns of the consumers. New Media has developed a new modern culture through which the users and consumers identify themselves as a part of. The New Media culture is indeed new to the media scenario, but it is affecting the way people think and act (Nicoleta G.C., 2008). Now a days the television viewers can watch their favorite shows of entertainment on their smartphones only. The advertisers also put their ads on social networking sites, and the producers earn revenue in the process. It can be said, through the new media, the audiences not only use these forms, but also actively participate in them. The different forms of today's New Media include Blog, Podcast, Wikipedia, Vlogs among others (Friedman H. & Friedman W., 2008). The different online and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter enable the audience to actively participate in the entire process. The impact of new media in the society can be both positive and negative. In many cases, the new media has enabled the audiences to be part of the entire communication process, and create content of their own. It has enabled them to watch and access content according to their needs and wants (Geraee N. et.al., 2015). But, on the other side, frivolous flow of information without proper knowledge and gatekeeping is also taking a rise in the society. Fake news and unwanted information are creating problem in the society to a large extent. The term new media has been used in different ways. Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002) focus on the message (i.e., the communication and its practices), the technology (i.e., the medium), and the social context in which it is used. These particular three aspects of the new media show up repeatedly in the literature along with other more specific technologies and practices such as collaboration among different individuals or organizations, digitization, telecommunication. Gitelman and Pingree (2003) on the other hand take the temporal approach, using the term "media in transition" to describe a period of time during which a medium is emergent and thus a sort of contrast to and competitor for the old media. Manovich (2002) has defined new media as cultural objects "which use digital computer technology for distribution and exhibition." According to Voithofer (2005) specifically he contrasts the new media with old media by describing the "newness" of the new media in terms of the different characteristic changes in production due to convergence of technology and media, storage (digitization and indexing), presentation (in a video display of sorts), and distribution over telecommunication networks.

TABLE I: Some of the New Media

Blogs	Blogger.com; technorati.com
Social networking	Myspace.com; facebook.com; friendster.com
Social bookmarking	del.icio.us Wikis: Wikipedia.com
P2P filesharing	Bittorrent.com
Video clips, mashups	YouTube.com; Google video
Virtual worlds	SecondLife.com; webkinz.com

Media literacy is defined as the “ability to understand, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages” (Sachdeva P. &Tripathi D., 2019). Media literacy training increases the individuals’ doubt about the media content. After all, existence of the individuals with high media literacy leads to increase in the Media quality because such individuals require more realistic messages of higher quality. According to Germany Kent, American Print and Television Journalist and Etiquette Social Media expert”If you are on social media, and you are not learning, not laughing, not being inspired or not networking, then you are using it wrong”. In recent times the cases of fake news in India has sharply increased (Sachdeva P. &Tripathi D., 2019)

TABLE II : THE OLD VS. THE NEW

Books	E-books, wikis
Journalism	blogs
Music	pandora
Newspapers, Magazines	ezines
Radio	podcasts
Television	Full episodes on the web
Telephone	VOIP
Film	Amateur videos on the web
Photography	Flickr, Picasa
Art	Museums on the web

The year 2018 is often referred to as the “Year of Fake News” in India, with almost three hundred million WhatsApp subscribers susceptible to fake news and misinformation. There were dozen incidents from north to south India due to the increase in fake rumors on social media; a sharp rise in hoax news right now temple vandalism to community killings headlined on social media in India. The need of proper media literacy in the society is indeed very important; otherwise the proper use of media is not possible (Roy S., 2017). New media has opened the door to many opportunities. The auto and rickshaw drivers are also now in many cases using the smartphone devices, and hence they are open to the opportunities provided by New media, but for that, for proper media literacy is indeed very much necessary.

Research Design

This research focused on descriptive research design where the focus of the research aimed at locating the issues related to New Media and its role in the media literacy and media usage patterns of the auto and rickshaw drivers’ community in the Motihari town of East Champaran district, Bihar. The research approach in this study used quantitative approach focused on Survey method.

Research Methodology and Sampling Size and tools

This research has used quantitative research methods of surveys. Surveys of the sample population have been taken from amongst the target sample population of auto and rickshaw drivers. Simple random sampling was used as the sampling method from the target population. Among the sample population of the research the respondents were evenly divided from battery driven autos, petrol driven autos as well as cycle rickshaws. The Survey Questionnaire method was used and it was divided among the respondents, from whom the answers were collected and accordingly analyzed.

Results and Data Analysis

100 responses

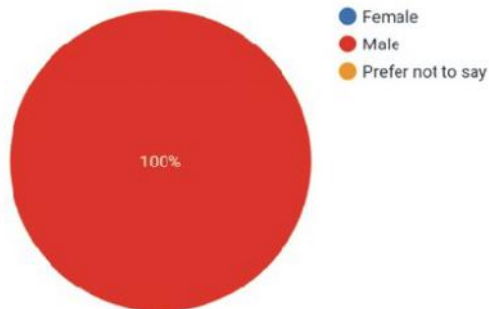


Figure 1: Pie Chart on Gender

In this research study the researcher has surveyed 100 respondents, divided into equal proportions of auto drivers, battery auto drivers and rickshaw pullers of different ages, all being male respondents.

Age

100 responses

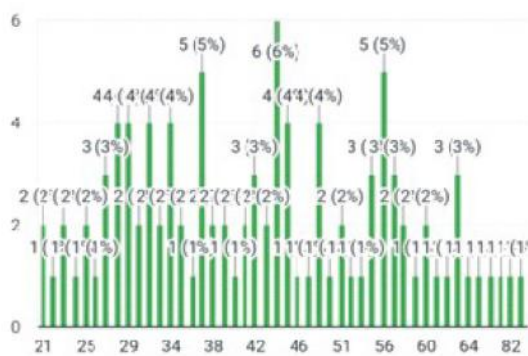


Figure 2: Bar Graph on Age

In this research study, the survey was taken from respondents of different ages from the youth to the aged people, all of who are related with the practice of driving auto-rickshaws and hand-pulled rickshaws.

No. of Family Members

100 responses

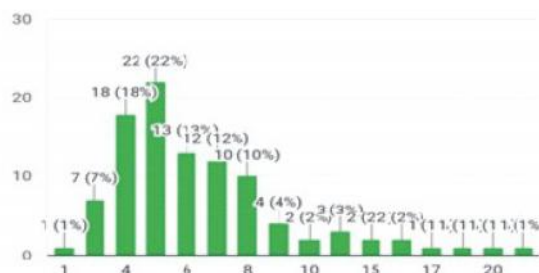


Figure 3: Bar Graph on No. of family members

The family members of the respondents were also known from the research study and the questions were asked accordingly.

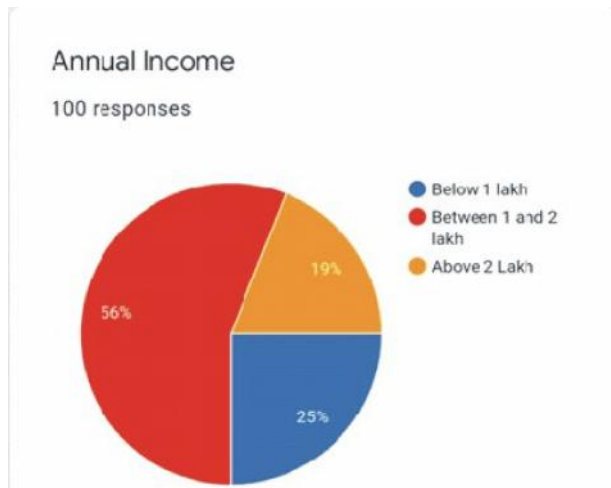


Figure 4: Pie Chart on Annual Income

The Annual income of the respondents were asked, where 56% of the 100 respondents replied that their income remained annually between 1 lakh and 2 lakhs, where 25 % of the respondents were below 1 lakh annual income, while, 19 % only have income above 2 lakhs. This pie chart clearly shows the economic condition of the auto and rickshaw drivers.

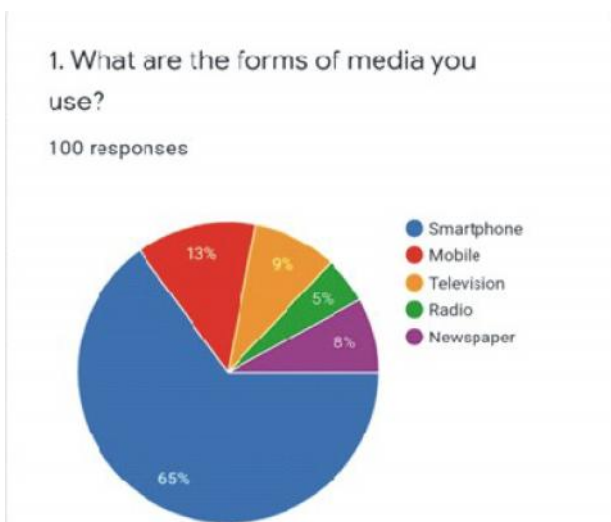


Figure 5: Pie Chart on Forms of media use

65% of the respondents use smartphone and thus we can ascertain the importance of new media, whose one of the main tools is smartphone and internet. Smartphone in today's date is indeed one of the most important means, through which one can access the different forms of media digitally. From this part of the survey it is quite evident that even the low-income group people who are associated with activities like driving autos and rickshaws are also using smartphone in today's date.

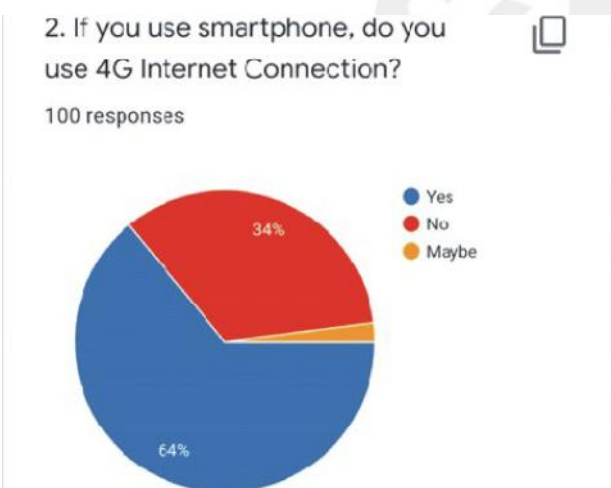


Figure 6: Pie Chart on 4G internet connection

Similarly, like smartphone internet service is also essential that too 4G internet connection, with the help of which, the smartphone comes to proper use. 4G internet connection helps in different kinds of dissemination of information, entertainment and education. Different forms of media like, print, television is now available on smartphone.

3. Which purpose do you use smartphone the most for?

100 responses

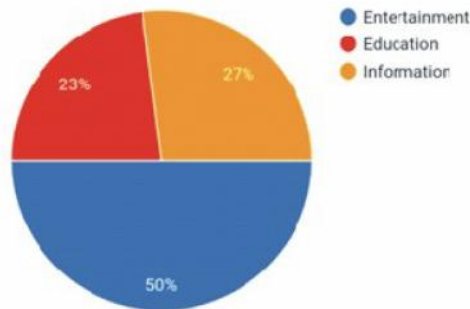


Figure 7: Pie Chart on Purpose of Smartphone use

Among the respondents, an important question was asked to assess the media literacy among the users of new media, or to know the actual purposes for which the new media tools are being used by them. 50 % of the respondents use 4G internet and smartphones for entertainment purposes, whereas the rest use them for education and information purposes. Thus, it can be ascertained that proper media literacy for the proper use of new media for information and education is still not that much present among the respondents.

4. Do you read Newspapers on the smartphone?

100 responses

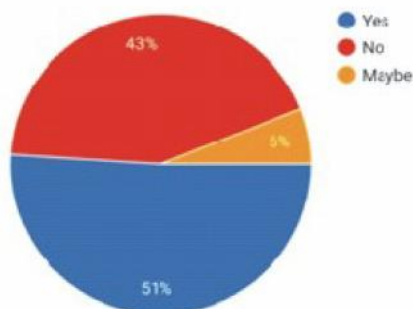


Figure 8: Pie Chart on Online Newspaper reading

In today's twenty first century smartphone and internet have indeed become one of the most important part of everyone's life. Almost all actions of our daily lives depend on these smartphone devices. In the above question it was asked to the respondents whether they use smartphone for reading online versions of newspapers, and it was found out that 51% of the respondents read online newspapers and 43 % read in offline mode.

5. How many hours do you use smartphone and internet?

100 responses

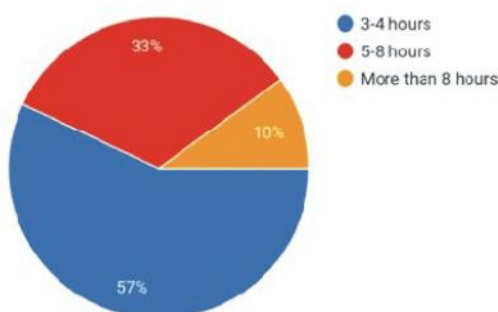


Figure 9: Pie Chart on Hours of use of Smartphone

Smartphones and 4G internet connection is now available in almost maximum parts of the country. People of different age groups use internet connection on their smartphones for varied reasons for long periods of time. 57% of the respondents answered that they use 3-4 hours a day, while 33% of the respondents use 5-8 hours a day, and surprisingly 10 % of the respondents said that they use even more than 8 hours a day.

Do you watch news on YouTube or Internet Web Portals?

100 responses

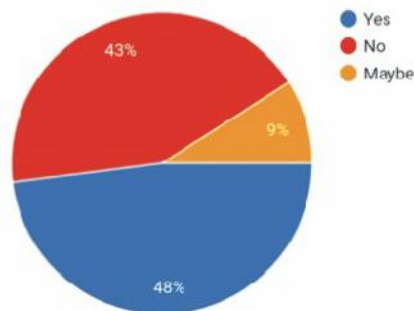


Figure 10: Pie Chart on viewing of online news

News is one of the most important elements of our social lives. News gives us information on different aspects all around our society. People who regularly follow news on different aspects remain ahead of others; there is no doubt about it. In the above question it was asked whether the respondents follow news on YouTube or other news websites, and 48% of them responded with a yes, and 43% said no. This result shows the paradigm shift happening continuously in the news viewing section from Television to Online media.

7. Do you or anyone in your family use smartphone and internet for online education classes or reading books?

100 responses

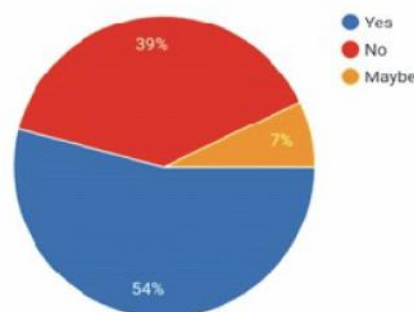


Figure 11: Pie chart on Online education

Like all other sectors a major shift has happened in the education sector also. Online education was there for a long period of time, but recently there have been numerous upgradations in this sector. The above question was intended to find out the use of smartphone and internet for the purpose of education purposes. The respondents were asked whether they or someone from their family use smartphones for education, online classes, or reading books, and 54 % of the respondents answered yes, while 39% said no. These figures show the continuous change happening in the education sector as well through the online internet medium, and people gradually shifting towards the New Media.

8. Does smartphone and internet connection help you in incoming money somehow?

100 responses

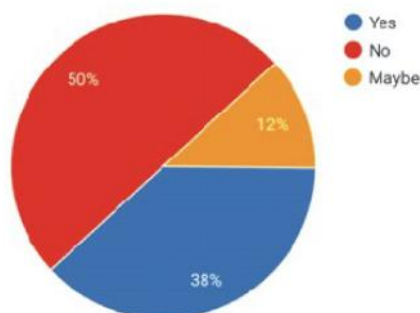


Figure 12: Pie chart on Income related to Internet use

In today's society everything is related to the economy of a society and at large of this entire global village of which we all are a part of. Likewise internet connections and smartphones also help many people to income for different purposes. This question was also intended to know if the smartphone and internet connections help the respondents to earn money in any means or not, and 38 % of the respondents said yes whole 50% said no, which shows still many need to be properly educated on this front.

Conclusion

This paper focused on the role of new media that is the online internet based media especially smartphone and internet connections, in developing the media literacy among the target population of the auto-rickshaw drivers of Motihari of East Champaran district, Bihar. This survey conducted on them found out different important points. It was found that many of them use the new media nowadays, and many use them for education purposes as well, for reading newspapers and even watching news on the online sites. But, more and more media literacy is needed so that they can use for proper means, and change for the betterment of their lives in the future as well. Also, many users use the smartphones for long hours of the day only for entertainment purposes, which must be avoided. It can have negative effects on the health. Parents also must remember that too much addiction of the social media sites and gaming apps by the teenagers is a very dangerous phenomena, where both the health as well as mind gets affected.

Media literacy is indeed one of the most important phenomena of today's times. It is very vital and important as media content is now online and anybody is the creator of the content. Social media sites to websites information and content is available everywhere. Also, the amount of usage of smartphone and internet has also increased manifold in the past few years. This research was indented to find out both the positive and negative effects of media on the society and such researches on media and media literacy should come more often in our society by media scholars and social science researchers.

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Appendix

The Role of New Media in the Media Literacy of the auto-rickshaw drivers' community of Motihari, East Champaran

Questionnaire

Name:

Age:

Sex:

Occupation:

No. of Family members:

Annual Income:

Questions

1. What are the forms of media you use?
a. Smartphone; b. Mobile; c. Television; d. Radio; e. Newspaper
2. If you use smartphone, do you use 4G Internet Connection?
a. Yes; b. No; c. Cannot Say
3. Which purpose do you use smartphone the most for?
a. Entertainment; b. education; c. Information
4. Do you read Newspapers on the smartphone?
a. Yes; b. No; c. Cannot say;
5. How many hours do you use smartphone and internet?
a. 3-4 hours; b. 5-8 hours; c. more than 8 hours
6. Do you watch news on youtube or internet web portals?
a. Yes; b. No. c. Cannot Say
7. Do you or anyone in your family use smartphone and internet for online education classes or reading books?
a. Yes; b. No; c. Cannot say;
8. Does smartphone and internet connection help you in incoming money somehow?
a. Yes; b. No; c. Cannot say;
