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Meaningful Access to New Media Technology: A Case for Digital Capability*

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Optimists see Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as having immense emancipatory potential to overcome social inequalities. Recent studies on the Digital Divide have focused on elements of access and usage motivations of ICTs. This study uses the capability approach as a theoretical paradigm for proposing a Digital Capability Index. A focus on capabilities questions the range of real choices that have been available to people; whether they have the genuine capability to achieve a valued functioning. The multi-dimensionality of the Digital Capability is measured through an online survey of 226 undergraduate and postgraduate communication students in Bengal in the eastern part of India, followed by an exploratory factor analysis. Traditional goodness of fit indices and regression weights are used to confirm that the hypothesized model fits with the sample data in a confirmatory factor analysis model. It is proposed that this Digital Capability can be used as a valid and reliable construct to empirically measure the Digital Divide.

INTRODUCTION

The ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) was the precursor to the Internet in the 1960s. A decentralized military computer-based communication network, it was initially set up by the US government to survive a nuclear attack. By 1990 it merged with the Internet created by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN in 1990. The origin of the World Wide Web was made possible through the use of Hyper Text Markup Language, published in 1990. It was originally developed to transfer images and text within the scientific community at CERN, making it possible for common people too within a few years to exchange or access data on a common platform.

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There have been highly optimistic studies about the emancipatory potential of the information and communication technologies in general and the Internet in particular as a tool to help transcend social inequalities (Willis & Tranter, 2006). It was also regarded as a potent tool to overcome informational disparities among minority ethnic groups, the aged, economically disadvantaged and physically disadvantaged groups (Yu, 2006, p. 231). It was also hypothesized that informational poverty is not always related to economic poverty and access to economic resources does not necessarily lead to informational access. The Internet technology was in this regard seen as an enabling technology that would lead even those with scarce resources to acquire informational capital which in turn would provide them with greater access to economic resources. A broad description of an ethical society in the current period implies that liberty and social justice is not possible without informational equality. A political economic perspective regards knowledge as socially constructed, wherein informational inequality leads to segmentation and alienation. A behavioral science perspective too regards information as an important resource for cognition and the individuals' learning process, also reflected in the knowledge gap studies (Yu, 2006, p. 232).

The new computer and telecommunications technologies through their very usage are hypothesized to transform countries into 'knowledge economies' and network societies and remove social disparities. Over the years, development researchers, politicians and social welfare organizations, have promoted the use of ICT – for very diverse development objectives (Strover, 2003).

One of the more popular conceptualizations of the society dependent on information and communication technologies is the network society thesis. In this formulation, digital technologies are seen to have enabled the hitherto private networks to overcome their historical limits and lead to the emergence of global interrelated networks. These networks are regarded as more flexible 'and adaptive, leading to a decentralized activity based on a shared purpose of decision making' (Castells, 2005, p. 5).

According to pessimistic views, Internet technologies destroy jobs, make people social isolates and everybody suffers from an overload of information. The subsequent information gap increases social exclusion. These tools can also lead to greater surveillance by the nation state armed with powerful digital technologies.

Digital Divide

Though the information and communication technologies are regarded as important elements of economic growth, concerns over inequalities in access have also gained ground. The debate over the digital divide is often seen as an extension of the

New World Information and Communication Order debate of the seventies. The Digital Divide is commonly defined as unequal access to the new media related to economic factors. It is either a factor of poverty in the poor countries or a factor of inequality among the richer countries (Cawkell, 2001, p. 55).

Recent studies have looked at the digital divide as a multidimensional phenomenon. A survey of the digital divide literature has identified the divide across eight different factors including class, access, gender, physical location, as well as skills and the ability to create content or find useful content (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly, 2009, p. 185).

An earlier view looks at those on the wrong side of the digital segregation as a transient phase. This school believes that adoption of the new media technology will follow the old paradigm of diffusion of innovation in the familiar S pattern, there are the early adopters and the laggards and in time most people will adopt the new technology (Rogers, 2001). The other view is that the new technologies are crystallizing the historical inequalities. A recent study frames this debate in four divergent approaches (Sassi, 2005). The first is the technocratic approach which sees the digital divide as a factor of competent access to useful content. A gap in the access will have concomitant consequences for education, training, literacy and general economic prosperity. The social structure approach contends that the uneven distribution of internet access reflects existing social disparities. The information structure and exclusion approach looks at the regional disparities of the new technology while the modernization approach provides a more technological deterministic paradigm (Sassi, 2005, pp. 688-694).

A recent study criticizes the linearity in the digital divide concept suggesting a more important role of socio-cultural and policy dynamics in the adoption of ICTs keeping in mind both quality and reach (Tsatsou, 2011). Another widely known study conceptualizes ICT to refer to the convergence of communication and telecommunication technologies stressing on the networking capacity of these technologies (Selwyn, 2004, p. 346). The term digital divide then should encompass the various platforms including mobiles and game consoles. This study also suggests that access should not be limited to private availability of such technologies but whether it is possible to have recourse to the convergent technology on public, shared or government platforms. The concept of theoretical access is introduced in this study.

Another important aspect of the qualitative dimension is the 'usefulness' of ICT content which may or may not lead to medium/long term consequences for the user. The qualitative aspect of the new media technology with respect to its

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relevance for the end user is an important factor of access and has specific localized contexts.

An outcome oriented access too is envisaged in this model. The short term outcomes could be related to greater political participation, increased socialization, increased consumption and higher savings as also a more fruitful production activity (Selwyn, 2004, p. 352). Many other studies have supported the notion that the binaries of access and non-access have to be discarded for the notion of digital divide.

Empirical research has also shown mere access to the Internet or putting more computers in the hands of the deprived will not automatically lead to the eradication of social inequalities. It depends on 'where, by whom, for whom, and for what communication and information technologies are used'. There is however greater consensus that this technological paradigm has far greater potency compared to previous technologies (Castells, 2005, pp. 5-6).

To know how to use ICTs to the best of their potential, it is needed to know the undercurrents, limitations and potentials of the technology and the social structures associated with it. This is precisely the reason that the idea of the digital divide — in terms of denial of access to information and communication technology or in terms of access to online resources, has limited reach.

Quantitative approaches have also considered the question of unequal access in terms of the ability to maximize the effectiveness of the technology in quest of various goals. For example, an individual can own a computer with an Internet connection but not know how to utilize it as a way of getting a technical job (Jung, Qiu, & Kim, 2001).

In the first known study on qualitative aspects of Internet use, (Jung et al., 2001) identified four categories of internet users: 'researchers', who use the Internet mainly for sending and receiving e-mail and also to explore varied issues/events; 'consumers', who use the Internet for online shopping; 'expressives', who express views and opinions online, and 'gamers', who go online to play games (Jung et al, p. 512).

The first element is the recentness of Internet access and is measured by the index of the number of years a person has an Internet enabled personal computer at home. Task scope describes the everyday motives for accessing the Internet for work-related or personal tasks. Site scope distinguishes the spatiality of access;

whether it is in a more private set up or in a shared environment — work, school, a community center, library, or a cyber-cafe.

Goal scope is a factor of whether the Internet was used for socialization or as a medium of expression, as an extension of one's work or to get suggestions. Activity scope was another measure for the Internet Connectedness Index or including categories other than e-mail. In the pre-social media days these categories included bulletin boards, chat rooms, online gaming, mailing lists, and newsgroups. For measuring computer dependency the study asked the respondents to imagine that their personal computer had vanished and noted their response (Jung et al., 2001, pp. 515-517).

In another study on the digital divide in post-Socialist Europe, (Vartanova, 2002) various factors for unequal access were outlined. Lack of financial resources was the predominant reason for unequal access to ICTs. Lack of skills, lack of time, lack of awareness, lack of media activity, and lack of interest were the other factors observed. Other individuals also did not find any need to access the online resources (Vartanova, 2002, p. 450).

A very recent study introduces the concept of usage gap to suggest a usage based approach to defining the digital divide. This quantitative study reported seven clusters of new media access. The prominent motive was to get information. The other reasons included getting updated regarding the latest news, for one's personal development, online shopping or selling, for entertainment, socializing and also for gaming. The study looked at various demographic variables including the number of years one had been using the Internet to explain the variances in usage (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2013, p. 14).

None of these studies provide a theoretical basis for the normative conditions of choice available to users and non-users of Internet. Through the next few sections we intend to provide the normative tools for access.

The Capability Approach

This paper uses the capability approach defined by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and others to suggest the notion of Digital Capability (Sen, 1999). The key idea of the capability approach is that social arrangements should aim to expand the freedom to promote or achieve a valued state (functionings) which the individuals consider important. 'Functionings' are defined as the valuable activities and states that make up people's well-being, such as having a healthy body, being safe, or having a good job. They are related to the goods and resources one has at ones

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disposal but they describe what a person is able to be as a result, when a person's need for food (a commodity) is met, he enjoys the functioning of being well-nourished. Functionings are 'the various things a person may value being and doing' (Sen, 1999, p. 75).

Capabilities are 'the alternative combination of functionings that are feasible to achieve'; they are 'the substantive freedom' a person has 'to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value (Sen, 1999, p. 87). A crucial distinction in the capability approach is the distinction between the means (such as goods and services) and the ends of well-being and development, which are conceptualized, as functionings (the realized dimensions of well-being) and capabilities (those dimensions of well-being that are potentially available to a person). A person's capability represents the numerous permutations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve.' In effect the person's capability reflects his freedom or real opportunities (Sen, 1992, p. 40).

The capability approach focuses on the diversity of functionings and hence capabilities as an important evaluative space. Social and personal factors are important elements of the capability approach. Personal conversion factors include one's bodily health, gender, cognitive skills, or general intelligence. Social conversion factors include public policies, legislations, norms, regulations, hierarchies, power structures, class relations and cultural norms. Environmental factors relate to the ecological and geographical factors including climate, pollution, the possibility and frequency of natural disasters and calamities. Other aspects include physical infrastructure — buildings, roads, bridges, and means of transportation and communication (Crocker & Robeyns, 2009, p. 68).

By focusing on capabilities rather than functionings, this theorization does not privilege a particular account of valued life, but instead focuses on the possible alternatives from which one can choose the good life. A distinction needs to be made between what has actually been achieved or the kind of life that a person has actually decided to live and whether he has had the freedom to achieve or live the kind of life he would like to live. These two concepts are not necessarily congruent. Achievement is the outcome or whatever one has managed to accomplish. However freedom is whether the person had the real opportunity to achieve what he regards as valuable (Sen, 1992, p. 31).

The complexity is with the fact that functionings are what is obvious or what is revealed. One can objectively define the state of life, the resources etc. one has managed to accomplish. But this is inextricably linked to capability since it is a

set of possible functionings one can achieve. The emphasis on capability leads us to the vital concepts of freedom and opportunity – which is not possible with a measure of functionings (Alkire, Qizilbash, & Comim, 2008, p. 3). What is ultimately important is that people have the freedoms or valuable opportunities (capabilities) for these functionings, hence the real freedom. Once they effectively have these real opportunities, they can choose the options they value most.

It asks whether people have access to a high-quality educational system, to real political participation, and to community activities that support them. For some of these capabilities, the main input will be financial resources and economic production, but for others it may be political practices and institutions, such as effective guarantees and protections of freedom of thought, political participation, social or cultural practices and social structures (Crocker & Robeyns, 2009, p. 64). The approach focuses on the information that we need to make judgments about individual well-being, social policies, and so forth, and rejects alternative approaches for example when an evaluation is done exclusively in monetary terms.

Living may be seen as consisting of a set of interrelated ‘functionings’, consisting of beings and doings. A person’s achievement in this respect can be seen as the vector of his or her functionings. The relevant functionings can vary from such elementary things as being adequately nourished, being in good health, avoiding escapable morbidity and premature mortality, etc., to more complex achievements such as being happy, having self-respect, taking part in the life of the community, and so on (Sen, 1992, p. 39).

The Capability Approach for Digital Capability

The capability approach in Digital Divide is a response to the limitations of assessments that measure only resources, or usage patterns. A focus on capabilities necessitates the evaluation of not only one’s satisfaction with their accomplishments or the kind of life they are leading, but to question the range of real choices that have been available to people; whether they have the capability to achieve a valued digital functioning.

The capability approach makes us aware that we cannot simply evaluate resources and inputs (such as access and usage) and that we must look at whether consumers are able to convert resources into capabilities, and thereafter potentially into functionings. If we evaluate the link between resources (access to ICT for example) and capabilities, it is apparent that there are considerable inequalities that standard evaluation methodologies tend to overlook.

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First, at the heart of the notion of a capability is a notion that a person is able to develop a reasoned understanding of valued beings and doings. This in itself is a potent argument for forms of digital capability, through which an individual can explore her own notion of what it is she values.

The capability approach considers equality of capabilities through freedom of choice. Its basic assumption is the fundamental heterogeneity of human beings. It connects individuals and social structures by focusing on equality in the capability to convert resources into functionings. So instead of looking at similar levels of inputs, the capability approach focuses on how free individuals are to participate in the new technological world in different settings. In this way, the capability approach provides a framework which is sensitive to diverse social settings and groups.

The capability approach provides a conceptual foundation to overcome the limitations of an access-centered communication technology approach and to re-define development in a broader perspective. In the access-centered approach, the definition of development is narrowly defined as economic improvement or having access to new media technology. Development is perceived as a linear path towards mere access to new media technology, mirroring the developments in the developed societies.

In this sense, development for a nation and its people means having the access to new media and communication technologies similar to the modernization theory. The capability approach helps us to see the broader concept of development as increased human freedom. Therefore, the focus shifts from new media 'haves' and 'have-nots', to what people 'can' or 'cannot' do with them.

The capability approach put much emphasis on the individual aspects of development and the social and cultural surroundings of them. In this respect, digital capability needs to be fully customized and contextualized to the needs of individuals and the local context. Thus, the focus of the new media digital capability should be less on the innovativeness of technology, and more on its fitness to the developmental contents and local contexts (Koltay, 2011).

As we have seen in the earlier section, studies have considered the question of unequal access in terms of the ability to maximize the effectiveness of the technology in the quest of various goals. For example, an individual can own a computer with an Internet connection but not know how to utilize it as a way of getting a technical job (Jung et al., 2001).

The capability approach is an agenda of political philosophy, a normative tool, but it is not a fully specified theory that gives us widespread answers to all our normative questions. It is not a mathematical set of rules that prescribes how to measure inequality or poverty. The capability approach, in a general sense, suggests that the evaluative space should be that of functionings. However, it does not stipulate which capabilities should be taken into consideration, or how different capabilities should be accumulated in a complete assessment. Applying the capability approach implies that we choose the appropriate capabilities and indicate how important each will be in a comprehensive judgment.

Nussbaum (2000) too is regarded as one of the important advocates of the capability approach. She has used the capability approach to develop a universal theory of the good. She distinguishes three types of capabilities — basic, internal and combined. Basic capabilities for her are ‘the innate equipment of individuals that is the necessary basis for developing the more advanced capabilities and a ground for moral concern’ (p. 84).

Internal capabilities are ‘developed states of the person herself that are so far as the person is concerned sufficient conditions for the exercise of requisite functions...mature conditions of readiness’ (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 84). Combined capabilities are ‘internal capabilities combined with suitable external conditions for the exercise of the function (pp. 84-85). She has also drawn up one universal general list of capabilities that can be translated into more detailed and specific lists to suit the context. Her highly abstract list of central human functional capabilities includes: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play and control over one’s environment (pp. 78-80). Her list is sensitive to culture and context and for each country or community it can then be made more specific.

Robeyns (2003) has developed a methodology for selecting relevant functionings in a less ad hoc way. She proposes that the selection of functionings or capabilities be structured along a number of methodological criteria.

These criteria require making the selection (a) as explicit as possible, discussed, and defended; (b) there should be a methodological justification for the selection method used. We should clarify and scrutinize the method that has generated the list and justify this as appropriate for the issue at hand, (c) making the selection sensitive to the context, the level of abstraction at which the list is defined should be appropriate for fulfilling the objectives for which we are seeking to use the capability approach, (d) distinguishing between different levels of generality, the first stage can involve drawing up a kind of ideal list, unconstrained by limitations

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of data or measurement design, or of socio-economic or political feasibility. The second stage would be drawing up a more pragmatic list which takes such constraints into account, (e) and achieving a selection of functionings which is as complete as possible; the listed capabilities should include all important elements. Moreover, the elements included should not be reducible to other elements. There may be some overlap, provided it is not substantial (Robeyns, 2003, pp. 70-71).

METHODOLOGY

Proposing a Digital Capability Index based on the capability approach, three main methodological concerns are addressed: conceptualizing the appropriate functionings, the measurement of these functionings through self-reports, the accumulation of these identified functionings into a composite measure of capability (Kuklys, 2005, p. 21). Each functioning is conceptualized as an unobserved, (latent) variable measured by a number of observable indicators, through a predesigned online survey.

In the present research we hypothesize Digital Capability Index as a factor of five different functionings using the characteristics suggested by Robeyns above. These latent functionings as seen in Figure 1 below correspond to the following components :

- The first component is defined as the *Analytical Efficiency* subscale of the proposed Digital Capability measured by the indicators Online News, reading e-papers and reading blogs.
- Component 2 in the above table is defined as *Multiplatform Efficacy* defined by the measured indicators - mobile apps, online shopping and self-perception of multimedia efficiency.
- Component 3, the third factor in the data is named *Online Ability* measured by understanding and use of Internet advertisements and ability to modify pictures across various platforms.
- The fourth extracted factor is *Social Media Efficacy* measured by an ability to upload pictures, post comments and frequency of using Facebook.
- Component 5 is the fifth subscale defined as *Functionality* measured by the ability to download and use free software, downloading music files and also movie files.

- The sixth component is *Hardware Ability* measured by hardware efficiency (to boot and fix computers) and the ability to book tickets. This component loads on to *functionality*.

The first part of the survey was conducted among a smaller pilot group of 56 students identifying the various aspects of digital capability they thought important. Based on this pilot study a twenty item digital capability questionnaire was developed.

An online survey was conducted among postgraduate and undergraduate students across three Universities in the eastern state of West Bengal in India. Online links were provided on Facebook group walls; emails were sent out to the students and links for the survey were also put out on a website. The responses were collected on the online spreadsheet and then transferred to SPSS 16. This method automatically rejected those who did not use the Internet. Amos 16 to hypothesize and prove the goodness of fit of the following hierarchical model for Digital Capability Index (N=226) was also used.

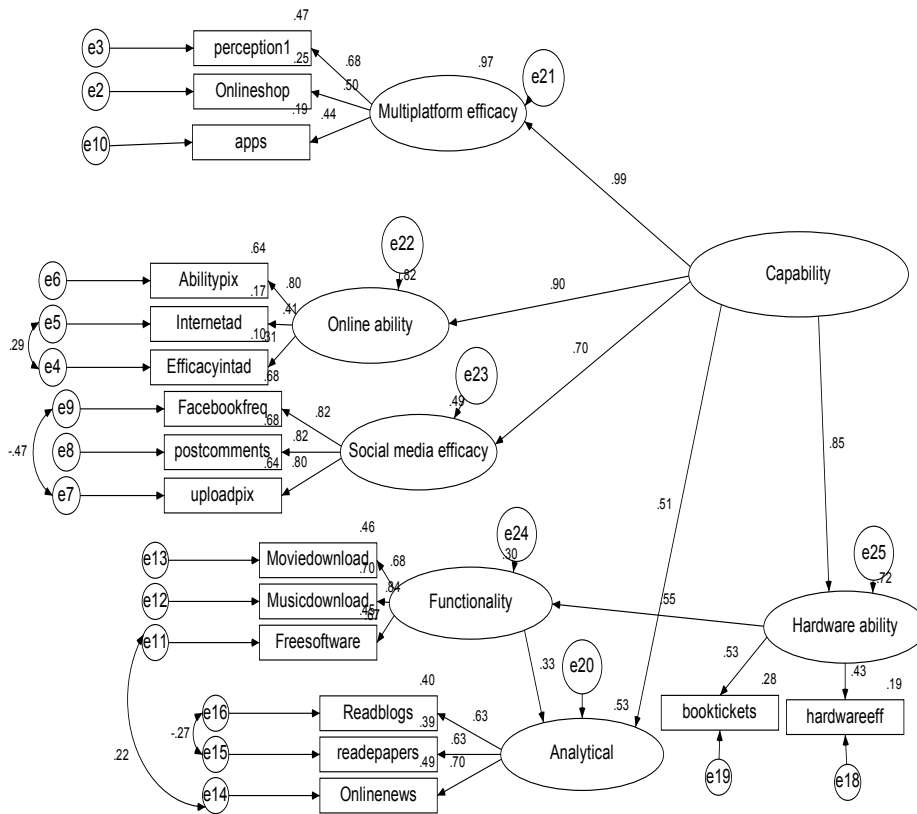
Adequacy tests for factor analysis showed the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is 0.868, with the Bartlett's test of Sphericity chi square as 2683.333 with 528 degrees of freedom with significance values less than .001. This proves the adequacy of the sample data to factor analysis. Extraction of the factors by the Principal Component Analysis¹ method followed by Obliminrotation² with Kaiser Normalization³ for factors above the eigen value of over 0.8 showed the following seven factors.

Table 1: Extracted factors following Oblimin Rotation

| Indicators | Component | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Internet frequency | .081 | .364 | .015 | -.480 | -.445 | -.366 | .501 |
| Facebook | .406 | .158 | .185 | -.580 | -.565 | -.116 | .191 |
| Twitter | .217 | .292 | -.211 | -.332 | -.409 | -.183 | .586 |
| Youtube | .266 | .122 | -.068 | -.393 | -.699 | -.092 | .268 |

| Indicators | Component | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| News update | .685 | .105 | .039 | -.323 | -.454 | -.138 | .298 |
| Music download | .306 | .079 | -.158 | -.310 | -.811 | -.264 | .059 |
| Movie download | .057 | .192 | -.193 | -.116 | -.740 | -.344 | .198 |
| Free software | .258 | .213 | -.087 | -.153 | -.725 | -.193 | .197 |
| Facebook frequency | .310 | .314 | -.098 | -.749 | -.416 | -.270 | .331 |
| Ability pix (edit & modify pictures) | .193 | .458 | -.406 | -.419 | -.276 | -.611 | .227 |
| Post comments | .250 | .288 | -.292 | -.848 | -.290 | -.189 | .219 |
| Upload pix | .215 | .254 | -.287 | -.814 | -.156 | -.223 | .061 |
| Video upload | .179 | .087 | -.457 | -.570 | -.300 | -.151 | .250 |
| Read blogs | .499 | .075 | -.107 | -.309 | -.257 | -.284 | .464 |
| Read e-papers | .622 | .226 | -.233 | -.181 | -.336 | -.213 | .200 |
| Online shop | .109 | .613 | -.158 | -.191 | -.248 | -.334 | .242 |
| Online news | .704 | .255 | -.082 | -.264 | -.405 | -.370 | .362 |
| Perception1 | .362 | .497 | -.349 | -.287 | -.239 | -.341 | .329 |
| Internet ad | .177 | .083 | -.630 | -.316 | -.148 | -.198 | .106 |
| Efficacy internet ad | .141 | .160 | -.673 | -.185 | -.182 | -.046 | .075 |
| Applications | .177 | .723 | .020 | -.294 | -.065 | -.138 | .139 |
| Book tickets | .337 | .459 | .066 | -.217 | -.163 | -.513 | .048 |
| Hardware efficiency (fix/boot computers) | .216 | .213 | -.006 | -.148 | -.188 | -.572 | .233 |

Figure 1: Structural Equation Model (SEM) for Digital Capability



SEM Model proposed by Author
e = error variance

The total number of respondents was N = 226 (151 females, 66.8 per cent and 75 males, 33.2 per cent), Measures of central tendency for the age variable showed (N = 226, M=22.5, SD=3).

The data were analyzed using SEM, which allows us to perform path analysis models with unobserved variables. The software package used was AMOS 16, a covariance-based SEM tool. We use traditional goodness-of-fit indices and the factor loading to prove the adequacy of the model. The first SEM result showed that chi-square statistics were not significant, $\chi^2(108) = 134.71, p = .042$, for the hypothesized model, indicating adequate fit.

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With a reasonable sample size of 226, the results of SEM analysis revealed an acceptable fit for the research model as indicated by various alternative goodness-of-fit indices. More specifically, (Comparative Fit Index, (CFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Root mean square residual (RMSR), and a ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom were all within acceptable thresholds of goodness-of-fit.

As seen in Table 2, below, the Goodness of Fit Index compared to a saturated model is found to be 0.936 proving that the proposed model in Fig. 1 fits with the sample data quite well. The Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index of 0.910 too indicating an excellent fit.

The Comparative Fit Index (Table 2) of the hypothesized model compared to a saturated model is found to be 0.974, proving that the proposed hypothesized model fits with the sample data excellently. The Model Parsimony Ratio (Table 2) of 0.794 fits well with expected values.

The Non Centrality Parameter (Table 2) of the Hypothesized model is 26.71 compared to the Independent Model's 128.842. This too proves excellent goodness of fit. The low value, 0.599 of Minimum Discrepancy Function (FMIN) too proves that the hypothesized model fits well with the sample data. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is found to be 0.033, which means good fit between the proposed hypothesized model and the sample data.

The Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) is 224.7, and is found to be significantly close to the saturated model, hence proving that the hypothesized model fits well with the data. The Expected Cross Validation Index (Table 2) too is found to be close to the saturated model hence proving goodness of fit. The Hoelter value of 223 too indicates that our sample size of 226 is adequate for the hypothesized model. All the above goodness of fit indices proves that the hypothesized model (Fig 1) fits well with our sample data.

The factor loadings in Table 3 below show that the unobserved subscales Analytical Efficiency, Multiplatform Efficiency, Online Ability, Social media Efficiency and Hardware Efficiency have high factor loadings in the range .51 to .98 to the second order Capability factor.

Table 2: Model Fit Summary

CMIN

| Model | NPAR* | CMIN | DF | P | CMIN/DF |
|--------------------|-------|----------|-----|------|---------|
| Default model | 45 | 134.710 | 108 | .042 | 1.247 |
| Saturated model | 153 | .000 | 0 | | |
| Independence model | 17 | 1179.650 | 136 | .000 | 8.674 |

*NPAR is the number of parameters, CMIN minimum discrepancy, DF is the degree of freedom and P is the probability value. CMIN value of 134.71 is the discrepancy between the unrestricted sample covariance matrix and the restricted covariance matrix and, represents the Likelihood Ratio Test statistic, most commonly expressed as a χ^2 statistic.

RMR, GFI

| Model | RMR* | GFI | AGFI | PGFI |
|--------------------|------|-------|------|------|
| Default model | .049 | .936 | .910 | .661 |
| Saturated model | .000 | 1.000 | | |
| Independence model | .324 | .452 | .383 | .401 |

* The root mean square residual (RMR) represents the average residual value derived from the fitting of the variance–covariance matrix for the hypothesized model in Figure 1 to the variance–covariance matrix of the sample data. The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) is a measure of the relative amount of variance and covariance in the hypothesized model that is explained by the sample data. The Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) adjusts for the number of degrees of freedom in the hypothesized model. The Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI) takes into account the complexity of the hypothesized model.

Baseline Comparisons

| Model | NFI* | RFI | IFI | TLI | CFI |
|--------------------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|
| Default model | .886 | .856 | .975 | .968 | .974 |
| Saturated model | 1.000 | | 1.000 | | 1.000 |
| Independence model | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |

*Normed Fit Index (NFI) uses a comparison with an independence null model.. The Relative Fit Index (RFI) represents a derivative of the NFI; the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) addresses the issues of parsimony and sample size. The Tucker-Lewis Index(TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) take the sample size into account.

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RMSEA

| Model | RMSEA* | LO 90 | HI 90 | PCLOSE |
|--------------------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| Default model | .033 | .007 | .050 | .952 |
| Independence model | .185 | .175 | .194 | .000 |

**The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) takes into account the error of approximation in the population expressed per degrees of freedom. LO 90 and HI 90 contain the lower and upper limits, respectively, of a 90% confidence interval around RMSEA. The closeness of fit (PCLOSE) tests the hypothesis that the RMSEA is good in the population.*

HOELTER

| Model | HOELTER* | HOELTER .01 |
|--------------------|----------|-------------|
| Default model | 223 | 243 |
| Independence model | 32 | 34 |

**Hoelter's Critical N labeled as Hoelter .05 and Hoelter .01 indices focuses directly on the adequacy of sample size, rather than on model fit. Hoelter proposed that a value in excess of 200 is indicative of a model that adequately represents the sample data.*

Table 3: Factor Loadings of the unobserved endogenous and exogenous factors

| Regression Weights | | | Estimate |
|------------------------|---|------------------------|----------|
| Hardware ability | ← | Capability | .848 |
| Functionality | ← | Hardware ability | .548 |
| Analytical | ← | Capability | .512 |
| Multiplatform efficacy | ← | Capability | .985 |
| Online ability | ← | Capability | .904 |
| Social media efficacy | ← | Capability | .699 |
| Analytical | ← | Functionality | .333 |
| Onlineshop | ← | Multiplatform efficacy | .498 |
| perception1 | ← | Multiplatform efficacy | .684 |
| Efficacyintad | ← | Online ability | .314 |
| Internetad | ← | Online ability | .412 |
| Abilitypix | ← | Online ability | .802 |

| Regression Weights | | | Estimate |
|--------------------|---|------------------------|----------|
| uploadpix | ← | Social media efficacy | .802 |
| postcomments | ← | Social media efficacy | .825 |
| Facebookfreq | ← | Social media efficacy | .822 |
| apps | ← | Multiplatform efficacy | .441 |
| Freesoftware | ← | Functionality | .672 |
| Musicdownload | ← | Functionality | .838 |
| Moviedownload | ← | Functionality | .681 |
| Onlinenews | ← | Analytical | .701 |
| readepapers | ← | Analytical | .627 |
| Readblogs | ← | Analytical | .631 |
| hardwareeff | ← | Hardware ability | .432 |
| booktickets | ← | Hardware ability | .526 |

DISCUSSION

Building on the Capability Approach, we anticipated that the Digital Capability would consist of the capability to achieve multiple functionings. The functionings were treated as endogenous variables. The five functionings of Multiplatform efficacy, Analytical Ability, Functionality, Social Media Efficiency, Online Ability and Hardware Ability were unobserved, endogenous variables, while Digital capability was an unobserved exogenous variable.

The Capability Approach does not allow for the revealed preferences to define functionings. The present study takes care of this through the latent unobserved endogenous functionings. There is no trade-off between the number of subscales and the informational richness of the evaluative space of the functionings in which the proposed model is conceptualized. Since a fairly homogenous group of students was chosen, the two-factor hierarchical SEM works quite well to predict Digital Capability.

This method is different from the approach of Jung, Qiu, & Kim (2001) and (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2013) which looked at various qualitative aspects of Internet use. The Digital Capability approach, appreciates the underlying themes as well from functionality to readiness to efficiency and to analytical ability and the various other valued activities. This also highlights the practical benefits of

methodical clarity about ends and means: its ability to raise issues requiring value judgments.

CONCLUSION

The Capability Approach used in this study as a theoretical paradigm for Digital Capability focuses on the plurality of functionings that is available to an individual in the networked digital world. For evaluating Digital Capability, functionings measured by Analytical Efficiency, Multiplatform Efficiency, Functionality, Online Ability, Hardware Ability and Social Media Efficacy are a fairly comprehensive evaluative space. Personal and socio-environmental factors that make possible the conversion of commodities into functionings have been taken into account. By focusing on Capability rather than exclusion, we focus on the range of possible ways of functionings from which each person can choose.

To be in a position to make legitimate insightful critiques, consumers/producers need to gain a good understanding of how things work partly from having the experience of making and sharing media themselves and partly from learning – through their own research – about how the digital world operates.

The underspecified nature of Sen's capability approach makes it possible for us to address several different problems to be applied in quite different ways. Since the capability approach by definition, recognizes the basic heterogeneity of humans, it is quite possible to arrive at a different set of functionings as an evaluative space in different socio-cultural and economic environments. This open and somewhat nebulous character of the capability approach also defined as a 'framework of thought' makes it possible for us to aggregate the functionings space from different situations to arrive at a fairly universal hypothesized model.

NOTES

- 1 Principal Component Analysis is a multivariate statistical technique for identifying the linear components of a set of variables. It is concerned with establishing which linear components exist within the data and how a particular variable might contribute to that component.
- 2 Oblimin Rotation is a method of rotation in factor analysis that allows the underlying factors to be correlated.
- 3 Kaiser normalization is the method of extraction in factor analysis based on the idea of retaining factors with associated eigen values greater than 1.

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Manipuri *Shumang Leela*: A Paradigm Shift from Folk Culture to Popular Culture

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Cultures are the products of continuously evolving and dynamic societies. A society's identity is reflected from its own culture which includes a wide array of both tangible and intangible forms. Tangible forms of culture include the physical artifacts such as clothing, jewellery, objects and decorative items, whereas intangible forms include language, customs, beliefs, traditions and law. One such medium which exhibits socio-cultural traditions of the society is the indigenous folk art form. The present study attempts to examine the role of the indigenous folk theatrical art form of Manipur, a north eastern state of India, in exhibiting and transmitting its cultural values in the community. This theatrical art form called Shumang Leela is a courtyard theatre of Manipur. This case study aims to explore and analyze how Shumang Leela, through its continuous evolution transforms itself from a marginalized traditional folk culture to a dominant popular culture.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous folk art forms reflect the shared cultural values, traditions and identity of the society. These folk art forms have been evident from ancient times for moral, religious, ceremonial and socio-cultural purposes. Folk arts and crafts are closely intermingled and blended in everyday life – usually evident in terms of objects used in the home, in festivals, in ceremonies and rituals, and also as a means of self-expression in every community and ethnic group (Dhamija, 1970). The materials, methods, structures, techniques, motifs and patterns in the construction of folk arts have special significance and can reveal a great deal about the cultural values of the society. Folk art is all about expressing, maintaining and passing a community's shared values and identity from one generation to another generation and to other cultures and societies.

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Folk arts, which are the creation of indigenous folk artists since time immemorial take different manifestations through varied forms of artistic expressions such as dance, song, story, drama, theatre, martial arts, instruments, music, paintings, handicrafts, and many more (Parmar, 1975). Folk arts are mainly exhibited in the form of performing arts and visual arts. Folk performing arts include those folk art forms where the folk artists display artistic expressions through their body and voice which include popular folk forms such as folk dance, drama, theatre, song, music, storytelling, puppetry, etc. (Thornbury, 1997). Visual folk arts constitute a wide array of folk artworks such as drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, printmaking, handicrafts, and so on that are primarily visual in nature (Thornbury, 1997).

In India, folk arts are a dominant form of disseminating the messages among the people. Folk media refer to various means of communication having distinct styles purely based on the socio-cultural traditions of the society and objectives suited to local needs and taste of the rural and tribal people (Srampickal, 1998). Such media forms exist in isolated groups within the community and are very different from the mainstream sophisticated professional mass media forms like newspaper, radio or television. According to noted traditional folk media expert Shyam Parmar (1975), folk media can be categorized into:

- Action-oriented folk arts and verbal musical forms like rural theatre and puppetry; discourses like *harikatha*¹ and *kathakalakshepam*²; folk songs, ballads, storytelling, *kabi-gaan*³, and poetic symposia.
- Audience situations like fairs, festivals, social, ritual and ceremonial gatherings, market occasions and rural meets.
- Social institutions like the *ghotul*⁴ of the *mudhias*⁵ of Madhya Pradesh, or *dhumkuria*⁶ of the Oraons of Bihar, *baithaks*⁷; opinion of leaders like village heads, teachers, etc.
- Rural arts and crafts, traditional designs and miscellaneous motifs.

With the rise of urbanization, modernization and globalization, a structural change has been incorporated in the traditional folk cultures of society. The rise of contemporary popular culture can be witnessed in many societies. Popular culture is less a culture of art objects and images, and more a set of cultural practices by which art is imbricated into the routines and conditions of everyday life (Curran & Gurevitch, 1997). In the simplest terms, popular culture is simply culture which is widely favored or well liked by many people (Storey, 2001). In many societies, folk culture came to acquire the ways of urban culture and gradually became popular culture. An amalgamation of certain contemporary culture into the traditional folk

culture came to be evident in the urbanized sections of society. This structural change has clearly redefined the overall concept of folk art in certain communities and societies.

The present study attempts to examine the indigenous folk theatre art known as Shumang Leela, a courtyard theatre of Manipur, a north eastern state of India. Shumang Leela, which is also considered to be one of the most popular forms of folk media in the state, plays a dominant role in disseminating social awareness in the region. Through the case study, the paper aims to explore and analyze how the popular performing art Shumang Leela, through its continuous evolution transforms itself from a marginalized traditional folk culture to a dominant popular culture. The highly specialized theatrical art form and the artistic skills possessed by its highly skilled and talented artists have been the basis for analysis.

Folk Theatre – A Dynamic Medium of Communication

Folk art, of any country, has developed along with the society and so they become a part of the culture of that region and community (Kumar, 2012). They cannot develop in isolation because they are the manifestations of the culture and society itself to which they belong (Johnson, 2005).

“Folk arts and performances are in a way a reflection of the culture of the society as culture reflects itself through art, jewellery, folk plays, songs and rituals. Its relation with the society and the community to which it belongs is somewhat different as they are a part of the daily life. Through folk art and performances, the society expresses its sorrow, happiness, celebration, achievements, etc.” (Kumar, 2012, p.2).

Folk theatre is one performing folk art form which has been a vital means of communication since ancient times, owing to its interpersonal and interactive appeal with the masses (Shukla, 2011). In India, folk theatre has a rich legacy ever since the ancient Vedic culture (Mukhopadhyay, 1994). Folk theatre is the earliest form of folk plays which have a specific storyline and a proper cast, performed by troupes consisting of actors and actresses, musicians and singers (Varadpande, 1992). They have themes ranging from mythology and legends to commercial and contemporary issues. A lot of music, singing, dancing and martial art forms occur in between the enactment of scenes and sequences of the story in order to entertain the audience in any possible way. Some of the popular forms of folk theatre in India are *Jatra*⁸ of Orissa, Bengal and Eastern Bihar, *Tamasha*⁹ of Maharashtra, *Nautanki*¹⁰ of Uttar Pradesh, *Bhavai*¹¹ of Gujarat, *Yakshagana*¹² of Karnataka and *Therubuttu*¹³ of Tamil Nadu (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2001).

Folk theatre has been found to be useful in motivating people by way of interpersonal communication. Messages are disseminated through informal, interpersonal communication forms such as dialogue and varied forms of body gestures to the people watching such live shows (Shukla, 2011). As folk theatre is local and very close to the hearts and minds of the people, its appeal is at a personal and intimate level. Hence, the degree of permeability among people interpersonally is also very high. People can have varied emotions of happiness, sorrow and excitement through individual experiences and perceptions of messages. As folk theatre performances are always participatory, audiences can actually relate to the messages thus it acts as a tool for influencing people at the interpersonal level (Varadpande, 1992).

Traditional performing arts such as folk theatre being functional, interpersonal and having a contextual base would be able to carry the message of change, development and growth (Mohanty & Parhi, 2011). Growth and development can be achieved only when individuals inculcate change and transformation within themselves. Through informal personal contacts imparted via folk dramas, people can be persuaded to adopt or reject innovations. As such, folk theatre forms such as *nautanki*, *tamasha*, *jatra*, *bhavai* and many others with their catchy dialogues and social messages have the power to invoke elements of social change in the community (Mohanty & Parhi, 2011).

Gupta (2000) observes that traditional communication forms such as folk theatre can be used as a means of disseminating information in the Indian villages. Folk theatre such as *Jatra* was used successfully in communicating to the rural masses by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore during his famous Swadeshi Samaj speech in July 1904 (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2001). It tries to act as a medium of communication to invoke social and political messages in the society. Ibobi (2002) investigations suggest that the impact of folk theatre on the public is more powerful than any other mass media form.

Nevertheless, folk theatre is a means by which culture is preserved and adapted. Folk theatre, a traditional form of communication, has evolved as grassroots expressions of the values and lifestyles of the people and, because they use local languages with which the people are familiar, have become embedded in their cultural, social, and psychological thinking (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 1998). Folk theatrical performances in varying forms of dialogue, song, music and dance have been an effective medium of communication to the masses. Even the everyday aspects of culture such as attire, jewellery, make-up, etc., act as sources of non verbal communication. The advantage with folk theatre as a source of communication is

because of the instant feedback system in such communication forms. So it is not surprising that folk theatre has become an informal channel of communication with the people.

Shumang Leela, the courtyard theatre of Manipur, as an indigenous folk art

Manipur, which is situated in the north eastern corner of India, bordering Myanmar has a rich tradition of culture and heritage exhibited through various folk art forms. One of the most popular performing art forms which acts as a platform of cultural and traditional representation is the popular folk theatre form Shumang Leela. Manipuri Shumang Leela (courtyard theatre) is a play popularly played in the courtyard by artists touring from house to house on invitation. 'Shumang Leela' derives its meaning from the combination of the words, 'Shumang' (courtyard) and 'Leela' (play or performance). It is an informal dramatic play conducted in an open courtyard before live audiences.

This aesthetically and structurally unique folk art form reflects the dynamics of the culture and tradition of Manipuri society where elements ranging from myth, culture, history, traditions, norms, values, beliefs, song, dance and humor are projected. According to noted playwright Ningombam Ibobi Singh (2002), the impact of such courtyard plays cannot be conveyed by theatre and cinema and thus it comes nearer to the general peoples' life, contemporary to the changing world and Manipuri society.

The history of the development of Shumang Leela can be broadly divided into three phases – first, the period preceding the time of Chandrakirti Maharaj (1850-1886 AD); second, the period between the time of Chandrakirti Maharaj and 1950; third, from 1950 to the present day (Imokanta, 2005). Shumang Leela in its earliest form is believed to have originated from the *Laiharaoba*¹⁴ festival traced as early as 400 BC, in which the tradition of *Tangkhul Nurabi Loutaba*¹⁵ is performed on the night of the last day of the festival as an important part of the ritual (Seram, 2012). Structurally, the *Laiharaoba* performance space is the same as that of Shumang Leela where the entire ritualistic performances, including dances, are performed in the sacred space surrounded by the audience. This dramatic performance has all the elements of a Shumang Leela performance – humour, pantomimic elements with simple and meaningful dialogue, traditional proverbs, riddles, singing and dancing (Seram, 2012).

In the second phase, during the reign of Chandrakirti Maharaj, a genre called *Phagee Leela* (*Phagee* means comic; *Leela* means play) came up in its native

form to entertain the royal family by the court jesters and comedians of the land. Then it was succeeded by plays such as *Ramlila*, *Sabha Parba*, *Kabul Leela*, etc (Imokanta, 2005). During this time, modern proscenium theatre (*Phampak Leela*) made an entry into Manipur from Bengal with the staging of the play *Pravas Milan* (1902). The epic play *Harishchandra* (1918) based on the life of Hindu legendary king Harishchandra brought certain innovations into the structure and form of existing folk theatre (Imokanta, 2005). The play ushered in certain elements of drama, sentiment and the tone of the modern day Shumang Leela and hence it was officially recorded as the first Shumang Leela play (though the concept started much earlier).

After the play *Harishchandra*, Shumang Leela plays in certain genres cropped up. Another popular genre of Shumang Leela during the early 20th century was *Thok Leela*, which was in the form of a satirical comedy play addressing the social and economic problems of the people (Neken, 2012). One of the most significant accomplishments of this phase during the 1930s was the dramatization of the legends of *Khamba* and *Thoibi*¹⁶ of *Moirang Parba*¹⁷ (Sanajaoba, 1998). During the reign of Churachand Maharaj (1891-1941), different forms of theatrical plays such as *Moirang Parba*, *Mandav Leela* and *Phagi Leela* such as *Phadibi Pala* and *Kabuli Pala* were very popular (Rajmani, 2012).

The second phase started in 1950 with the introduction of scriptwriting. The first scripted play was *Puya Meithaba* of N. Angouton followed by the play *B.A. Mapa Lamboiba* (Imokanta, 2005). This phase opened up a new scope for creative writers to experiment and inculcate dramatic literature in the theatrical art form. This phase is characterized by value-loaded 'social plays' performed by the organized Shumang Leela troupes in the nooks and corners of the Imphal valley and even outside it (Shyamsunder, 1980). Thus Shumang Leela evolved in the form of tragic-comedies by mixing ideology with entertainment, and successfully weaving the two elements into an organic whole. Such social plays succeeded in highlighting the various socio-politico-economic dynamics of Manipur.

The third phase in the development of Shumang Leela in the post-1950s era was marked by the emergence of a new genre called *Eshei Leela* (Eshei means song) with the addition of live background music and playback singing on the lines of film songs by the singers from the artistes' troupes (Shyamsunder, 1980). The change came as a response to the booming entertainment media such as cinema and television and today Manipuri Shumang Leela is predominantly the *Eshei Leela* genre. This stage also started the concept of commercialization, as the Shumang Leela artists became pure professionals who lived out of the earnings from this theatre form. Some of the *Eshei Leelas* of that time were *Krishna Bal Leela* (1975),

Thadoi (1976) and *Ashira Mioibagi Punshi* or *Chaktheipi* (1977) (Neken, 2012).

All the stages in the development of Shumang Leela which have taken place in the history of traditional Manipuri theatre were the outcome of the changes in the social, political and cultural milieu of Manipur through the ages (Premchand, 2008). Each and every stage in the structural development of Shumang Leela has deep roots and an association with the functional community life.

The “art” and the “artist” in Manipuri Shumang Leela

Shumang Leela is a touring theatre performed by a group of around twelve or thirteen artists, forming a self-sufficient unit with directors, actors, singers and musicians who perform their assigned roles significantly (Neken, 2012). Shumang Leela is enacted without any proper stage setting or heavy props. It is usually performed in the centre of any open space, courtyard of a house, playground or mandap (pavilion) of Hindu temples (Neken, 2012). A bamboo pole is placed in the middle to hold the lights, one table and two chairs adorn one side, while the orchestra (in case of *Eshei Leelas*) occupies another side. In all the four corners, two jointed poles are erected for affixing microphones and tube lights or half lamps (during earlier days). The play starts with an invocation song to God, the King or the Motherland followed by a song saluting the audience .

The “art” in Shumang Leela is intricately woven with the “artist” and their performances. The dramatic element in this art form is the realistic presentation style in terms of its form and content (Imokanta, 2005). The theme, dialogue, musical lyrics, language, acting – all cater to the contemporary social conditions of the community (Neken, 2012). These troupes are exclusively male (nupa) Shumang Leela artists where male artists dress and impersonate female characters (Rajmani, 2012). Female (nupi) Shumang Leela also exists but is far less popular than the male Shumang Leela. Nupi Shumang Leela started in the 1970s to revive the forgotten tradition of the traditional *Moirang Parba* in Shumang Leela, which had been overtaken by social plays since the 1950s (Rajmani, 2012). But still mainstream Shumang Leela is the male (nupa) Shumang Leela. One of the distinctive features of popular Shumang Leela is that the ‘nupi shabis’ (female impersonators) who can be called ‘male actresses’ of the nupa Shumang Leela are feminine par excellence in their looks, bodily gestures and facial expressions (Neken, 2012).

Shumang Leela art is not just mere entertainment. It also has many sacred and ritualistic elements (Neken, 2012). Before the performance begins, traditional prayers along with the offering of flowers, fruits, betel nuts and leaves and burning of incense sticks is done at the centre of the performance space. Before the starting

of the play, the troupe of artistes pay tribute and offer their respects to God and the audience seated on all the sides of the performance space join in live singing with the help of the singers and the orchestra group. During the play, live songs are also provided by the musical group to enliven the spirit of the audience (Neken, 2012). *Dholak* and cymbals are popularly used musical instruments to provide background music in between the performances. One of the most remarkable features here is that female voices are also mimicked by the male artists as Shumang Leela artists are popularly and exclusively male members (Shyamsunder, 1980).

The success of the Shumang Leela play depends on the audience. This folk art form is a two way form of communication. In order to maintain and preserve the intimacy and involvement of the audience in the drama, the performance is always audience-oriented. There is elaborate and intricate use of the actor's voice, body and mime to depict an imagined world corresponding with that of the audience (Imokanta, 2005). Acting in Shumang Leela is particularly difficult, for the whole body of the actor has to be used, as he/she cannot hide anything from an audience that surrounds him (ibid). Once the actor is in the performance space, he is left to act on his own terms by using the minimum props available to him. In terms of dialogue delivery, Shumang Leela adopts the natural conversational style of the masses with the additional advantage of using the local language. This means that there must be a symbolic two-way communication between the audience and performers in order to facilitate and enhance the efficacy of the play.

This folk art tradition deals with the day-to-day problems of people. Shumang Leela, being a realistic art sticks to natural make-up and costumes as in day to day life in order to make the characters more lifelike. The language employed by this folk art is the common local dialect and idiom of the society. The dialogue, the wit and the cross talk in the play are all spontaneous creations of the wonderfully skilled artists that weave an amazing experience for the audience. Hence, the "social message" is easily comprehended by both the educated and the uneducated audience. The sole aim of Shumang Leela is to communicate with the people, who can understand the message easily.

Again, apart from all these factors, owing to the fact that Shumang Leela performances are always live performances with no screens in between the artists and the audience, the feedback is always immediate. As it is a totally live media, there cannot be any form of cheating in acting and no chance of rewind or recast. What has happened on stage is the message. Right from the moment the artist comes out on the stage to the moment he leaves it – every movement is the message (Neken, 2012). All forms of artistic behavior are accepted as ways of communication by the heterogeneous and active audience.

Apart from the actors, singers and musicians who always remain in the forefront, directors, playwrights and choreographers are also occupying an important part back stage for the success of the play. Specifically in the contemporary Shumang Leela plays, these back stage artists play no lesser roles than the on stage artists. Many noted Shumang Leela directors and playwrights have won prestigious awards at the state, national and international platforms. They are in fact the backbone of the Shumang Leela plays.

Shumang Leela art influenced not only the creation but also the propagation, perfection, and adaptation of texts to the needs of the audience members. With this indigenous folk art form, the relationship between the performer, performance and the audience has diffused all barriers of culture or religion, and it has undergone the final fusion process with local Manipuri conditions, problems and sensibilities.

The Transition – Folk Culture to Popular Culture

Over time, with gradual structural change, Shumang Leela has transformed itself from a mere traditional folk culture to a contemporary dominant folk culture form. Earlier Shumang Leela plays were acknowledged only by a section of the community or the older generations. Some of the main reasons for this modern transformation are:

- *Changing themes– From mythological/historical to existing contemporary issues*

Shumang Leela has shifted its focus from mythological/historical issues to contemporary societal issues. As it presents the contemporary societal issues, it has intruded into the lives of the common man. In this sense, it attracts more audience from different age groups and generations.

- *Expansion of themes – From local/regional/national to international themes*

The emerging trend today is that Shumang Leelas have even started to focus on international themes. Many Shumang Leela plays focusing on international themes have been performed in many national and international places and have been appreciated by people of these diverse communities.

- *Urbanization and modernization (clothing, speaking, behavior, etc.)*

With globalization, society experiences a structural change in life style and habits. People have adapted themselves to modern culture (food habits, speaking, dressing, behavior, etc). With changing peoples' lifestyle, Shumang Leela too, projects such structural change.

- *Hybridization of different cultures*
Shumang Leela plays have even projected hybridization of different cultures. This cultural hybridization takes the form of amalgamation of regional, national and international cultures in diverse ways. For instance, the audience would like to watch a Korean ‘Gangnam style’ song mixed with traditional Manipuri martial arts rather than a typical traditional folk art form.
- *Ethnic heterogeneity*
Earlier, Shumang Leela was prominently performed with regard to the Manipuri speaking population, the *Meities*. Nowadays, Shumang Leela plays have come to be equally popular among other ethnic community groups of the state. Plays in *Tangkhul, Kabui, Thadou, Paite* and *Hmar* dialects were created some years ago for the purpose of spreading HIV/AIDS awareness in the nooks and corners of the state (Neken, 2012). These ethnic groups specifically focus on their societal culture and issues in such plays.
- *Influence of films (song, dance, plot, etc.)*
The inculcation of bollywood songs and dance sequences is also another remarkable structural change that is appreciated by the audience. The performance of the female impersonators in this genre is worth mentioning. The female impersonators are real entertainers as they are no less than the original female counterparts in terms of looks, fashion, dressing styles, body gestures, dance, dialogue delivery and overall behavior.
- *Society’s current trend and fashion*
It is the fastest medium through which the society’s current trend and fashion is exhibited. So, for the younger generation of the society, Shumang Leela is a way through which they gain a lot of information on dressing, new hairstyles, gadgets, accessories, etc. ‘Whats in’, ‘whats out’ and ‘whats hot’ is generally predicted in the contemporary Shumang Leela plays.
- *Entertainment*
Entertainment is the core element of this art. In its inception stage also, Shumang Leela started with the sole purpose of entertaining people through satire, wit and humor. With the inculcation of song and dance sequences, it became more entertaining, thereby catering to a wider audience.
- *Social awareness – serious issues projected in comic ways*
One of the most important elements of Shumang Leela is to spread social awareness on certain existing issues such as drug abuse, unemployment, women empowerment, insurgency, etc. Shumang Leela spreads awareness about these

serious issues by depicting it through comic and humorous ways. In this way, the rate of acceptability of contemporary Shumang Leela among the audience is very high.

- *Popularization by mass media*

Mass media forms such as television, radio, YouTube¹⁸, DVDs, etc have contributed a lot in popularizing the art by broadcasting Shumang Leela plays through its programmes. So, for the larger section of the population who cannot watch the live performances, it is a good option.

All the above factors which led to the transformation of Manipuri Shumang Leela to a dominant popular culture played a part in enhancing the dimension and magnitude of the art form. The change has brought Shumang Leela more audience and popularity within the society as well as in other societies. A successful communication is the one which caters to the needs of the receiver (audience). This structural transformation is also made owing to the likeness, wants and demands of the new generation audience (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2001). This paradigm shift in Manipuri Shumang Leela's structure is popular with the audience.

In spite of being an indigenous folk art, Shumang Leela has achieved great strides in the domestic and international arena. Now, Shumang Leela has crossed the boundaries of linguistic, regional and cultural barriers and gained wide exposure to other societies also. Certain Shumang Leela associations and organizations are formed within the state to promote Shumang Leela within and outside the state. These groups keep touring within and outside the state to present their performances and thus broaden the horizon of Shumang Leela in other societies. Manipur State Kala Academy, Manipur State Shumang Leela Council and other associations have been organizing Shumang Leela festivals and competitions within the state for promoting the art.

Society and the Changing Face of Manipuri Shumang Leela

The changing face of Manipuri Shumang Leela is a way of empowering the Shumang Leela art in accomplishing its mission of rediscovery and rejuvenation of Manipur. Shumang Leela plays catering to a variety of modern contemporary themes tend to display the current trends on the social, political and economic scenario of the state (Ibobi, 2002). Even national and international issues are also projected to make the people aware of the contemporary issues of the world. Contemporary Shumang Leela is one performing art of the state which depicts the latest fashion trends to a maximum level. In this regard, it even beats other mass media forms like films, television and radio. Hence, Manipuri Shumang Leela has become a popular household name in the society (Rajmani, 2012).

Shumang Leela has also been heavily impacted by the changing time, growth and development in the society. A paradigm shift from folk culture to popular culture can be easily witnessed in Manipuri Shumang Leela over its whole journey since its inception in the society. A series of differences and changes in view of the transition of Manipuri Shumang Leela from folk art to popular art has been observed. Some of the differences are enumerated below:

Traditional Shumang Leela vs Contemporary Shumang Leela

| Sr. | Traditional Shumang Leela as a Folk Art | Contemporary Shumang Leela as a Popular Art |
|-----|---|--|
| 1 | Practiced by small homogenous groups in rural areas, royal places, religious gatherings, etc. | Practiced by large heterogeneous groups, associations, organizations, private parties, etc. |
| 2 | Adheres strictly to the traditions, folk customs, culture and norms of the society. | Flexible ways of performance, inculcation of elements of cultural norms and traditions of other societies. |
| 3 | Audience comprises of older generations and specific sections. | Diverse audience comprising of all generations and sections of the society. |
| 4 | Themes concentrate only on mythological, historical, cultural and socio-political issues of the society. | Themes concentrate more on contemporary issues of the society focusing on fashion, new trends and lifestyles. |
| 5 | Performed during royal, religious and socio-cultural functions. | Performed widely on any type of occasions, functions, festivals and leisure time. |
| 6 | Traditional forms of instruments, music, songs, dance and attire constitute the supplementary elements for the performance. | Contemporary and western styles of music, songs, dance and attire heavily influenced by films constitute the supplementary elements for the performance. |

In Manipur, Shumang Leela is not just a performance but it acts as the society's mirror by educating native people with useful messages pertaining to a variety of themes. Shumang Leela is a composite indigenous art form of the Manipuris that informs, educates, entertains, persuades and motivates people on a variety of issues (Neken, 2012). "Beneath the main notion of providing entertainment, the performance had a strong under-current of society against violence, exploitation, change in religious life and dominance of material values over social and moral

values. The criminal penal code, Indian Penal Code, etc., that were set up in Manipur by the early 1950s were even reflected in Shumang Leela in the form of protest and awareness to the audience” (Waikhom, 2004, p. 258). This art form can be used effectively to criticize the social and political ills of contemporary Manipuri society.

“Shumang Leela takes up almost all the present day issue of our society, insurgency problems to AIDS. A minister or a bureaucrat is the devil, whereas the underdogs are the heroes. These underdogs suffer, they are subjected to exploitation and they die in pain and agony. The audience claps and whistles when they utter meaningful words of truth, sympathy, love and humanism. The audience reactions underscore the throbbing pulse of truth and justice in the otherwise decadent and degenerate looking Manipuri society. The Manipuri Shumang Leela has the courage to challenge the morbid and corrupt system perpetuated by a Government led by a group of people who are denied of principle and morality and is thus the most popular art form of the common people who yearn for a better life” (Somorendro, 1997).

The popularity of Shumang Leela in the society is marked by the fact that no blockbuster film or television or radio shows have ever out shadowed the theatrical art. “It is said even when the world watched the Hollywood blockbuster ‘Titanic’, audiences were not diverted from watching the ‘*Keishamthong Thoibi*’, a mega Shumang Leela” (Singh, 2008). The play shows the concept of inter caste marriage in the society and disapproves of the general assumption in the society that inter caste alliances are bad and unacceptable. The play depicts how a family can be nurtured and saved if the housewife (irrespective of caste, creed and religion) is good, hard working and caring. The play was such a huge hit among the audience and the society that it has become a trendsetter in every household in the society. Ch. Jamini Devi, former Chairperson, Manipur State Women’s Commission, said, “This is the nerve centre of the people of Manipur. People pour in to watch the plays, as the young and the old alike love this art form. And the theatre form is simple and inexpensive, providing wholesome entertainment. People certainly enjoy this courtyard theatre form” (quoted in Singh, 2008).

Another famous play *Lidice gi Gulab* (based on the memory of the destruction and massacre of Czech village *Lidice* in 1942 by German forces) which depicted the culture and tradition of the native regions in many ways have become extensively popular not only in Manipur but to other parts of India and foreign countries. The portrayal of Adolf Hitler, the German dictator, the Nazi armies with their uniforms, the lead female protagonist sisters with their traditional attires (gowns),

dancing skills and exquisite beauty, the scene where the Nazi army cuts the arm of the male protagonist were in fact breathtaking aspects of the play. According to A. Kalyani Devi, a middle aged housewife and an avid Shumang Leela lover, “Manipuri Shumang Leela has the power to mesmerize the audience with its social value loaded theme depicted with an instant sense of humor and realism. The artists in such plays are no less than a social researcher. They are great observers of society, they portray the conditions and characters of the common man in their performances.”

One of the emerging popular Shumang Leela of present times Dinesh Tongbram’s “*Pizza*” marked by its peculiar title is a current hit in the society, specifically among the youths. This play depicted the concept of cultural invasion through westernization. How pizza, a famous Italian food, finds huge popularity in the state is heavily depicted connotatively through various instances and situations in the play. The main negative character in the play, Ngamba (portrayed by Gurumayum Bonny Sharma), has become so popular among the youth population because of his unconventional bold dialogues, westernized dressing sense and portrayal of a comic negative character. Social networking sites have popularized him even more through *Facebook* pages, forums and communities and he has already become a trendsetter and youth icon in the society because of his unconventional styles of presentation. In YouTube, “*Pizza*” which was first uploaded in 2011 has as many as 17,376 views so far. According to James, a college going student, “Shumang Leelas provide us with the latest updates on fashion trends and we simply like to follow such portrayals because it is really cool, new and smart”.

“As such, Shumang Leela can interpret various ideals and objectives of day-to-day life of the people, can be seen easily touring from one courtyard to another courtyard, and it can easily be mobilized. Under this condition, State Government may better put a thrust area in Shumang Leela to use it as a medium for disseminating information and awareness for development.” (Ibobi, 2002, p. 25). The socio-cultural impact of Shumang Leela is so great that it has become one of the weapons of mass media in spreading awareness. Shumang Leela remains the only indigenous medium that can counter the negative impacts of newer media like the satellite cable networks and Bollywood films (Neken, 2012).

Manipuri Shumang Leela artists have been performing their plays in different parts of Meitei-inhabited areas of nearby states. ‘Sanaleibak Nachom Artistes’ group gave its excellent Shumang Leela performance at Meghadoot Open Air Theatre on the premises of National School of Drama, New Delhi, with their play ‘*Meigee Ching* (Volcano)’ in the year 2000. The show was a huge success and the performance of the artistes won the hearts of the elite audience and highly

qualified critics of the capital of India. Thereafter, the same group was invited for their performance at the 11th Indian Peoples' Theatre Association (IPTA) at Thrissur (Kerala) in 2001. With their success, they gave 11 more shows at Kerala. On their return journey they gave performances at Dharwad (Karnataka), Prithivi Theatre (Mumbai), IMA hall (Nagpur) and at many more places. They altogether gave 24 shows performances during the entire journey.

Shumang Leela, too has reached an international platform. The high profile group Sanaleibak Nachom Artistes was invited to give its performance at the Bolshoi theatre at Moscow (Russia). Shumang Leela finds its popularity in American and European countries as well. *World Trade Centre, Mem Saheb ki saree, Lidice gi Gulab*, and many more has been played in many of these foreign countries and have been appreciated greatly. Most of these Shumang Leelas have been made on contemporary or world historical themes and hence such plays are liked by the foreign audience. Even though the style and way of presentation is based on Manipuri culture and language, they are being provided appropriate interpretations in the respective foreign languages. Moreover the beauty of the nupi shabis (female impersonators) captivates the hearts of the audience to a huge extent.

Manipuri Shumang Leela, an indigenous performing folk art reflects the traditional culture in the course of their everyday social life through the wide array of tangible and intangible forms of culture. It has projected the community's identity, revealed the rich cultural heritage and tradition and acts as a mirror of the society to the outside world (Sashikumar, 2009). Over time, as the Shumang Leela art progresses, its theme and scope has widened the horizons of its presentation and audience reception. The folk art no longer concentrates on its folk audience but its existence and popularity has spread to other communities, societies and regions.

CONCLUSION

Manipuri Shumang Leela is one art which still caters to its tradition, societal customs and norms along with contemporary styles of themes and presentation. It is still one art which merges entertainment and value-loaded social elements. In its several stages of growth and development, Shumang Leela polishes its creative, structural and cultural traits. But nevertheless, some traditional norms and ritualistic performances such as offering prayers to the deities before the start of the play, sacred fervor, display of societal culture, and many more are still intact. Shumang Leela changes its look according to time and situation, but the traditional and cultural significance still exists within its domain.

Owing to the social values embedded in Manipuri Shumang Leela, the government and the people have been working hard on the preservation of this medium for utilizing it in disseminating news and views to people. The impact of Shumang Leelas in the society can be conveyed easily to the masses as the play is centered very close to the general peoples' life. Since the language used is simple and expressed in common parlance, the message is easily understood by the literate and the illiterate (Ibobi, 1974). Educating the public in contemporary problems of the changing society such as AIDS, insurgency issues, unemployment, domestic violence, etc., have been the main domains of the theatrical art form. Even many NGOs and social organizations, government and non-government agencies have started hiring the Shumang Leela artists to perform plays focusing on creating public awareness on such social issues.

The Shumang Leela play *Meekap Thokpa* written by Heishnam Dhana in 1974 was the first attempt towards utilizing the art form in disseminating family planning messages (Neken, 2013). Family Planning Bureau's *Chayam Pokpa* and Chana Lukhoi's *Anouba Mangal* carrying family planning messages, *Singareina Kenkhrabada* and *Kanagi Maralno* based on polio immunization, Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Government of Manipur with plays on sanitation issues such as *Amambada Meingal* and *Anouba Lambi*, historical plays campaigning against drug abuse and illicit trafficking such as *Opium War* and *Ugandagi Maraibak* and AIDS awareness plays such as *Matamgi Helloi* (widely displayed in public places under the Manipur AIDS Control Society in 1999), *Khuntak Lanshidringeida*, *Ngashigi Nonglei*, *Swargagi Lambi* and *Matamgi Khoimu* were successful plays towards generating awareness among the people (ibid). This art form has become a tool for judiciously employing a social change in the society.

Shumang Leela, now is no longer just a traditional folk art. It has become a popular culture of the community. It starts adapting to the contemporary culture of the society. The cultural elements embedded in it have expanded its scope and horizons to accommodate younger generations. Some of the gradual transitions in making Shumang Leela a popular art are the inculcation of contemporary dialogue, dressing style, westernization, societal themes, song, dance and sequence on the likes of Bollywood films, and so on. Shumang Leela's look has totally transformed into a dominant cultural art with so much of contemporary trend, fashion and flavor. Shumang Leela has refined itself to such an extent that it has become a dominant medium of cultural presentation in the society.

NOTES

- 1 *Harikatha* is a form of folk monologue story-telling form in Hindu religious discourse. Here, the story teller narrates the life history of Hindu mythology epic figures usually with the help of music and songs.
- 2 *Kathakalaksepam* is a popular traditional South Indian folk form of narrating stories of mythological discourse with the help of music, singing and dramatic elements. The performer narrates, enacts and comments on episodes and themes from the mythological lore of India in a lucid manner.
- 3 *Kabi-gaan* is a form of folk song which is composed by folk poets and recited and sang by the poets themselves in front of audiences. The compositions are packed with humorous and witty riddles.
- 4 *Ghotul* is a kind of youth dormitory found among the Mudia tribes of Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. In this kind of social institution, young unmarried boys and girls are admitted as members and they are taught lessons of cleanliness, discipline, respect, hard work and ideas and significance of public service. These youths perform traditional singing and dancing in festivals and other community gatherings.
- 5 *Mudia* is a tribe community in Bastar region of Chattisgarh state of India. Youth dormitory such as *ghotul* is a necessity for all unmarried boys and girls of the region.
- 6 *Dhumkuria* is a traditional youth dormitory system prevalent among the Oraon tribes of Bihar. In such social institutions, there are separate dormitories for boys and girls and it is compulsory for every boy and girl to become a member when they are around eight years old. Apart from imparting economic, social, educational and public services, it also imparts informal sexual education to the boys and girls. As part of the social service, the youths engaged themselves in entertainment activities in the form of folk performances.
- 7 *Baiithak* is a kind of audience centric traditional performance set up in close form of gathering which is popular among the north Indian states. The performance can be song, musical, poetic, dramatic, etc.
- 8 *Jatra* is a popular Bengali folk theatre performed by travelling troupes in open air arenas. The musical folk theatre form started in around 16th century during the era of Vaishnavism and Bhakti movement where artists used to perform devotional singing, dancing and dramatic enactments inspired by religious, mythological and epic events. *Jatra* was only performed by male members but since the 19th century, there are female cast members also. By and by, *Jatra* also came to be popular in the neighbouring states and Bengali speaking areas like Orissa, Bihar, Tripura, etc.
9. *Tamasha* is a traditional Marathi folk theatre form performed by local or travelling groups. It is a highly entertaining theatrical performance with lots of music, song, dancing and impromptu dialogue in a humorous style.
- 10 *Nautanki* is a traditional folk theatre performance of Uttar Pradesh and nearby northern states. *Nautanki*, which is usually performed at night as long entertainment shows is an overtly dramatic performance and is generally full of songs, dances and catchy dialogs. It's theme ranges from mythological and folk tales to stories of contemporary heroes.

- 11 *Bhavai* is a traditional folk theatrical drama of Gujarat. It is a popular form of entertainment for the rural communities where issues of religious, mythological and contemporary significance are presented in a humorous way. Bhavai performance is very popular during the *Navaratri* festival celebrations. Bhavai is also prevalent in Rajasthan as a traditional folk dance form.
- 12 *Yakshagana* is a folk theatre form of Karnataka that depicts Indian epic, mythological and religious stories. It exhibits various art manifestations in the form of dance, music, dialogue, costume and make-up. It is usually a long night show performed by travelling troupes in coastal areas.
- 13 *Therubuttu* is a popular folk theatrical form of Tamil Nadu. The play is usually performed in streets with heavy packed dance, drama, music, singing, costumes and make-up by travelling troupes.
- 14 *Lai Haraoba* is a traditional ritualistic and religious festival of the *Meiteis* (Manipuri speaking) community of the state of Manipur. The sacred festival is celebrated in honor of the ancestral gods/goddesses and forefathers of the land. The word *Lai Haraoba* is derived from the word *Lai* which means God and *Haraoba* which means happiness/enjoyment. So *Lai Haraoba* literally means 'merry making of the Gods'. It is believed that Gods held the first *Lai Haraoba* on the *Koubru* hill (a hill situated in the northern end of Manipur) in order to celebrate the creation of this universe and the birth of different lives on this earth. Celebrated any time between April and June, *Lai Haraoba* may last from a fortnight to a month depending on the community's enthusiasm and infrastructure. The festival is dedicated to the local pre-Hindu deity, and is officiated by *maibas* (male priests), *maibis* (priestesses), and the *pena-khongba* (the person playing *pena*, an indigenous stringed instrument) to bring peace and prosperity in their land. Apart from affirming the pre-Hindu cultural identity of the *Meiteis* and other mythological significances, *Lai Haraoba* provides the foundations for indigenous art, games, dance and theatrical traditions of Manipur.
- 15 *Tangkhul Nurabi Loutaba* is an important ritualistic event performed on the night of the last day of the *Lai Haraoba* festival. This is an enactment of the repartee between *Tangkhul*, the incarnation of lord *Nongpok Ningthou*, who dresses up in the *Tangkhul* (also the name of a Manipuri tribal community) attires, and *Nurabi*, the incarnation of goddess *Panθοibi*, who dresses up as *Tangkhul* lady, when they are out in the field for farming. This episode incorporates the philosophy of fertility in terms of reproduction. Again, it teaches the importance of work culture for a polity to sustain and progress. The existence of this episode in *Lai Haraoba* festival also documents the close affinity between Hill and Valley people. This dramatic episode has all the elements of a *Shumang Leela* performance - humour, pantomimic elements with simple and meaningful dialogues from the rites, traditional proverbs, riddles, singing and dancing. The origin of *Shumang Leela*, as scholars believed, can be traced from as early as 400 BC or 2400 years back from today, as it is originated from the traditions of '*Tangkhul Nurabi Loutaba*'.
- 16 *Khamba-Thoibi* is a famous legendry epic story of the *Meities* (Manipuri speaking community of Manipur). It depicts the tale of the love of a poor but a noble youth (*Khamba*) for a princess (*Thoibi*), a story which has become the most enthralling folk tale of Manipur. *Khamba*, who lost his parents at a very young age was raised by his sister *Khammu*. His

sister brought him up by begging from door to door and doing menial labour at the houses of the rich. *Thoibi* was the only daughter of the *Moirang* king. Despite facing certain hardships in their relation, *Khamba* finally married *Thoibi*. Shortly after one night, *Khamba* in order to test the chastity of *Thoibi* had entered his house in disguise but *Thoibi* killed him with a spear thinking that a stranger had come to pollute her chastity. Finding that she had killed her own beloved husband, she committed suicide then and there. *Khamba* and *Thoibi* became two mythological immortal characters in Manipuri folklore.

- 17 *Moirang Parva* is a traditional musical play of Manipur centered on the legendary epic stories of *Moirang*, a place of great historical and cultural significance of Manipur. *Moirang Parva* depicts certain instances of the legendary epic *Khamba-Thoibi* love story. A significance of the *Moirang Parva* plays is the use of *pena*, an indigenous musical instrument of Manipur for providing musical elements.
- 18 YouTube has become one of the main sources for providing Manipuri indigenous folk theatrical form *Shumang Leela* a platform for public viewing. Peacemaker Artiste Association's famous *Shumang Leela, 21st Century gi Kunti*, which was first uploaded in 2006 in YouTube has had as many as 16,423 views. Other popular hits in YouTube are *Thawaiji Kalabazaar*, *Urerei Madhabi*, *Melody*, *Gulapki Thinkgang*, and many more. Another recent hit is *Pizza* (uploaded in 2011), which has 16,776 views so far. With the public broadcast of *Shumang Leela* in social media forum such as YouTube, *Shumang Leela* has become ever more popular among the public, especially for people who cannot access direct and live performances of *Shumang Leela* at home. This concept has even enhanced the transmission of Manipuri cultural and traditional heritage of *Shumang Leela* to other communities. The instant interactive feature of the social media platform has provided a scope for free flow of discussion about the indigenous folk art form among people of diverse communities.

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Mobile Telephony in Rural India: Reaching Out to the Bottom of the Pyramid

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The advancement in the telecommunication sector and penetration of mobile services in rural areas imply that mobile phones are now an affordable and an accessible means of communication. People in the rural areas are realizing the potential of mobile phones to create better opportunities for their enterprises and farming, bringing socio-economic benefits and acting as agents of rural transformation through improved communication. Mobile services like SMS and voice messages have helped in sharing information in a cost effective manner, removing the distance barrier between information seekers and information providers. Recent developments such as broadband and 3G mobile telephony offer significant new possibilities for communication and education in rural areas.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile telephony is transforming the lives of people in rural India, providing timely information and better business opportunities to rural entrepreneurs and creating better access to social services in the areas of governance, healthcare, education and farming. With the mobile phone becoming affordable in terms of charges, and accessible in terms of network, an increasing number of rural people are using mobile phones. Information is a key component in improving agricultural production and linking increased production to remunerative markets, thus leading to improved rural livelihoods. Farmers need to access the information about new technologies before they can consider adopting them and thus look up to research and extension agents as sources of new technologies. However, the traditional approach of providing agricultural information is overstretched and under-resourced. It is in working with and improving these information and communication systems that

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ICTs can be used to enhance the delivery of these services (Masuki, Tukahirwa, Kamugisha, Mowo, Tanui, Mogoi, & Adera, 2010).

Improvement of agricultural productivity will be realised when farmers are linked to timely information. However, one major problem in many rural regions is that farmers and small entrepreneurs generally have no way of knowing market prices before they travel to the market. Accurate and timely market information, particularly of perishable items, can significantly reduce transaction and travel costs. Correspondingly, a positive view that mobile phones offer good value for money appears to support the increase of mobile phone applications (Masuki et al., 2010). Along with land, labour and capital now information is regarded as the fourth important factor of production, and information and communication technologies (ICTs) are revolutionizing the knowledge and information flows. In recent years, there has been a rapid growth of mobile phone networks in developing countries. Currently mobile telephony is the predominant mode of communication in the developing world (Rashid & Laurent, 2009).

Growth of Telecommunications in India

Telecommunications have played a critical role in shaping India's progress and the importance they hold for the future of India cannot be overstated. Telecommunication services were introduced in India soon after their invention in the late 19th century by the British. The history of the Indian telecommunications industry goes back to 1839, with the setting up of the first telegraph line between Kolkata and Diamond Harbour. Formally the industry started in 1881 after the first telephone exchanges were established connecting Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Chennai. Presently the Indian telecommunications sector is second only to China in terms of the number of subscribers. The first step towards deregulation and beginning of liberalization and private sector participation was the announcement of the National Telecom Policy (NTP) 1994. For the first time, NTP 1994 allowed private/foreign players to enter the 'basic' and the new cellular mobile section. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was established to reduce the government's control regarding fixing of tariff rates and intruding in telecom policy matters (Banerjee, 2011).

Rural Telecommunications Policy

The rural sector plays a very important role in the balanced growth of a country. To achieve sustainable development it is essential that people in rural India, representing the bulk of society, are given the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the global information revolution, even if in only the most basic of ways. The importance of telecommunications in the development of rural areas is well known

(Taneja, 2007). As telephone gets cheaper and more widely accessible across the country, the real life of rural people of the country could undergo a transformation, providing the needed impetus for development. Telecommunications has become especially important because of the enormous growth of IT and its potential effect on the economy, (Rao & Pattnaik, 2006). Providing telecommunications to the rural areas and bridging the urban-rural divide has been the objective of the Government for long. However expansion of telecommunications in the rural areas has been slower than urban areas, with the former accounting for only 34% of the total connections. There is much to do with regard to improvement in the field of telecommunication specifically, with respect to its participation in rural development in India. The NTP-2012 envisages support to platform neutral services in e-governance and m-governance in key social sectors such as health, education and agriculture that are at present limited to a few organizations in isolated pockets (www.traai.gov.in).

Some of the immediate and discernible advantages that improved mobile telephony in rural areas would bring are:

- Reducing rural-to-urban migration by providing potential for improved employment and livelihood in rural areas through small business and microenterprise development.
- Enabling immediate access to assistance during civil emergencies and natural disasters.
- Improving access to health extension services. For example, telemedicine services, including remote diagnosis and treatment advice.
- Increasing access to up-to-date market and price information, greatly reducing the opportunity cost of transactions for farmers and rural-based traders.
- Increasing access to up-to-date agricultural information, consultancy and advice from experts, availability of inputs etc.
- Aiding education services, including distance learning.
- Accountability, transparency, and efficiency of government operations can be increased through information systems developed in rural areas. (Gupta, 2005)

Information is critical to the social and economic activities that comprise the development process. Telecommunications, as a means of sharing information, is not simply a connection between people, but a link in the chain of the development

process itself. It is because of these wide-ranging and vital benefits, improvement in rural telecommunications services in terms of coverage and availability in rural areas should be at the forefront of the telecommunications development agenda.

Government Role in Rural Telecommunications Policy

The following are the main reasons for a more active government role in rural telecommunications policy :

- 1) New rural economic development requires a reliable infrastructure of enhanced telecommunications. Participation by rural and lower income segments of society in the information economy should be a strategic priority both for social and economic development reasons;
- 2) Special transition policies are a fair way to help rural India adjust to the new telecommunications marketplace;
- 3) Rural residents deserve an equal opportunity to participate in the national economy and determine their own destiny. Particular emphasis should be given to the role of telecommunications technology in enabling rural citizens to integrate effectively in the Indian economy and then the new global economy;
- 4) Successful systems require not just appropriate technology but primarily that all other elements - policies, people, processes, incentives, institutions, and infrastructure - are present and work well. This is possible only under the guidance of a regulatory authority of the Government e.g. TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India) (Taneja, 2007).

Guidelines for Rural Telecom Sector Policy

Various factors have been suggested by Taneja (2007), while preparing guidelines for rural telecom sector policy for the benefit of rural people. He believes that the communication facilities in rural areas should be provided such that no person would have to traverse more than 1 km for connectivity. Connectivity should be provided on the basis of population distribution as well as density. For the under-served rural areas, low-cost options are advocated that extend the reach of the global information infrastructure.

It is also suggested that the communication system should be extremely reliable and hence, the technology implemented should be specific for rural applications, according to the availability of climate and the power facilities. The facilities in rural areas should be planned in such a manner that in future telephone on demand can be provided in the rural areas. The network for the villages including the technology should be such that it can be upgraded as and when required. The tariff

rates should not be biased for the urban centres and if possible a discount should be given on tariff rates in villages so that the telecommunication sector gets a boost in the rural sector.

Emphasis should be given to improve the awareness level of utilization of communication systems in various sectors for the society, which might include health, education, rural business, agriculture and tourism. In addition, policy guidelines should not be too stringent for the rural sector as long as the above rules are followed on a broad basis under the supervision of TRAI.

Role of Private Sector in Rural Telecommunication Development

Significant growth in the telecom subscribers and mobile phone users in rural areas are creating competition between the service providers for providing services in terms of better network coverage and user friendly services to the users. The rural market is being identified as a potential service area by mobile services operators. Handset manufacturers like Nokia have launched their Life Tools Services, through which they offer agricultural news and advise, information on market prices, educational and healthcare information to people in both rural and urban areas (Taneja, 2007).

The Private Sector can play a crucial role in the Rural Telecommunication Development by developing products which are technologically compatible for further integration with the new technologies systems as well as suited for the rural sector. Both the urban and rural areas should be given equal opportunities for development technologically as well as in utilization capabilities.

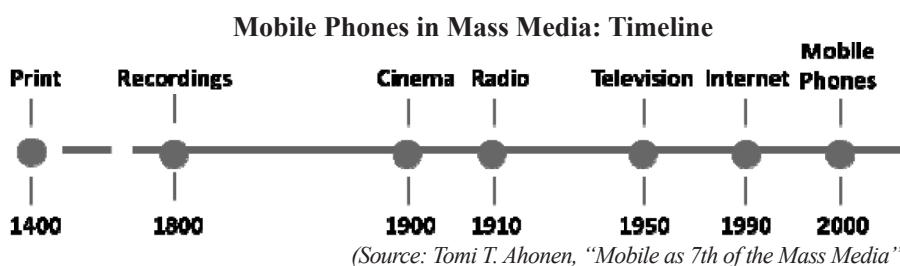
The process of human resource development should be started for supporting sales, service and maintenance, awareness development and further expansion of the rural telecom sector. Some specific strategies should be followed for the development of telecommunication in the rural sector in association with the Government. The private sector can work towards the fulfilment of objectives set by the Government for the rural sector for the development of Rural Telecommunication Development (Taneja, 2007).

Mobile Phones in the 21st Century

Over a period of time, media intended to reach the masses have assumed different forms. In tracing the continuum of this transformation, there have been many avatars: Print (Newspapers, Magazines), Recordings (Cassettes, CDs, DVDs), Cinema, Radio, Television, Internet and Mobile phones. The degree of richness of content and/or interactivity has been mainly limited among modes that have

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been offered in the last few decades. The goal, however, has remained constant – acting as a vehicle for exchanging content between a communicator and the “target group.” In adhering to this vital goal, media and their encompassing content are in the mode of continuous exploration. One of the most recent media options coupled with latest technological innovations is - Mobile. It is often termed as the “fourth screen” (subsequent to Cinema, Television and Internet) or the “seventh mass media” (Report on Mobile VAS in India, 2010).



Mobile Penetration in Rural India

In India mobile services were launched commercially in 1995. The composition of rural and urban subscribers has been changing in the last few years. While the proportion of rural subscribers has been growing lately, it is still dwarfed by the magnitude of urban subscribers. On December 2008, the rural wireless subscriber base was 93.15 million which had grown to 164.57 million a year later – an increase of 76.7%. Urban wireless subscription, on other hand, had grown from 253.74 million to 360.52 million in the same period – a 42% increase. The number of telephone subscribers in India increased to 893.15 millions in 2013 out of which 862.62 millions were wireless subscribers. This clearly indicates the growing trend of mobile telephony in India (Table 1). However, the proportion of rural to urban subscribers is 38:62. The inequality suggests a large untapped market to reach the users at the bottom-of-the pyramid.

Table 1: Telecom Subscription in India

| Particulars | Wireless | Wireline | Total |
|------------------------------|----------|----------|--------|
| Total Subscribers (Millions) | 862.62 | 30.52 | 893.15 |
| Urban Subscribers (Millions) | 528.88 | 23.66 | 552.55 |
| Rural Subscribers (Millions) | 333.74 | 6.86 | 340.60 |
| Overall Teledensity | 70.57 | 2.50 | 73.07 |

| Particulars | Wireless | Wireline | Total |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|--------|
| Urban Teledensity* | 142.10 | 6.36 | 148.46 |
| Rural Teledensity | 39.26 | 0.81 | 40.07 |
| Share of Urban Subscriber | 61.31% | 77.54% | 61.87% |
| Share of Rural Subscriber | 38.69% | 22.46% | 38.13% |

(Source: TRAI 2013)

*Teledensity is the number of telephones in use for every 100 individuals living in an area. A teledensity greater than 100 means there are more telephones than people.

According to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) 2010, 91% of the villages in India are covered by at least one operator. Overall, 51% of the villages in India are covered by three operators and 31% of the villages are covered by four operators. The population density across India is very low in villages making it less viable for the telecom companies. Difficult topography and climatic conditions are the other reasons for this low tele-density in rural areas. As telecom and network connectivity are seen as enablers of a nation's socio-economic growth, the Government is aggressively looking at plans to improve the tele-density in rural areas. The industry has made several suggestions for improving the tele-density in rural areas. A study from the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and Ernst & Young (2012) projected that the total telecom penetration is expected to reach 58 - 60% and approximately 40% users will be from the rural sector.

Mobile phones can be used to deliver content and services that can help foster inclusive growth in India by digitally empowering citizens across all cross-sections of society, both urban and rural. Provision of relevant application services through phone could accelerate the uptake of phones in rural areas. With the spread of mobile telephony utility application services can be utilised as a vital tool for providing agricultural and other relevant information to rural masses. There is a wide range of services, which can be delivered via mobile phone, including services relating to video applications, e-commerce, e-education, e-agriculture, e-health and various other innovative services which have immense potential yet to be realised (TRAI, 2012).

Mobile Phone Usage and Rural Communities' Livelihoods

Mobile phones can have a positive influence on the livelihoods of the rural communities. Phones have also enabled farmers to know the prevailing market prices of agricultural commodities in various markets which enabled them to negotiate and sell their produce at competitive and relatively higher prices. Using mobile phones, farmers are able to get information on weather and crop management from

experts. SMS alerts help farmers to schedule their agricultural practices in a more effective manner. Due to availability of mobile phones and decrease in the call rates there is increased information and knowledge sharing amongst rural communities as a result of interaction among different actors within the production chain. The greatest contribution of phone usage to agriculture is regarding accessing of market information, directly impacting the income of farmers (Masuki et al., 2010).

Agricultural Development and Mobile Phone Usage

Internet connectivity using the mobile phone is an opportunity that the farmers in rural areas could explore to improve communication with the outside world. With the establishment of rural telecentres, mobile phones could be a solution to internet connectivity because most rural areas lack communication infrastructure like landlines. Rural communities have embraced the idea of microfinance. With increase in microfinance schemes, M-banking facilities could be an opportunity to explore the reduction of transaction costs caused by travelling all the way to urban centres just for bank services. This would save the cost of transport for the person. Regarding the improvement of extension services through public-private partnership, there are opportunities in using phone web systems and multimedia messages (MMS) (in case of disease incidences) in agriculture. As most of the agricultural production systems in this region are rainfed, use of mobile in weather updates would boost agricultural productivity as farmers will be aware and plan when to plant their crop. On the other hand, in case of farmer learning groups, consultations with subject matter technocrats could be enhanced through a group teleconference using a hand free application of the mobile phone whereby a group could ask questions directly to the technical person and receive prompt answers (Masuki et al., 2010).

Mobile Banking in Rural India

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Mobile banking, Quality of service, Regulation, 2012) is of the view that mobile banking is a catalyst to promote mobile services in untapped rural India. Even today banking services have not reached rural India fully. It will be very expensive to provide the banking services through branch expansion or through ATM. Mobile phone is the ideal and unique vehicle to extend the banking services to rural India. In South Africa, the DRC, Zambia and Kenya for instance, mobile phone banking is taking services to remote areas where conventional banks have been physically absent. Tanzania and Uganda have successfully employed mobile phones for fund transfer among the rural population (Ondiege, 2010). RBI and the banking sector should make the necessary policy changes and join hands with the telecom sector to reach the banking services to the uncovered areas.

Challenges of Mobile Phone Usage in Rural Areas

The following are the major challenges which need to be addressed in order to effectively utilize the potential of mobile telephony in reaching out those who are at the bottom of pyramid.

- *Language barrier and illiteracy*
The main challenge that the rural communities face, is impeded mobile application due to language barrier and illiteracy. The SMS usage by rural communities and farmers is low due to higher rate of illiteracy. However with the advancement in mobile telephones, SMS services in local languages are possible. Attention must be given to availability of local language options in SMS services by service providers (Ibid).
- *Accessibility to services and network*
Poor signal of the service provider network in the rural areas is also another problem. Farmers also reported problems in charging the phone batteries as power is also a problem in many rural areas.
- *Cost of handsets*
Even though the mobile handsets are available now at Rs 1000 and below, the rural households may still consider this as expensive and it could be a major entry barrier in rural India. The telecom companies should consider bundling of handsets along with connections and subsidise the handset cost. In turn, the Government needs to provide financial support / subsidy to the telecom companies to compensate this cost.
- *Develop applications to make the mobile handset more useful*
It is important to develop content in local languages and design the application software such that it is user-friendly and menu driven, with innovative graphics to overcome the limitations of illiteracy. Operators should take initiatives to offer regional and national news, weather forecasts and market prices for crops in regional languages to help improve mobile uptake in rural areas (www.indiatelecomonline.com, 2012).

Impact of Mobile telephony on Socio-Economic Development of Rural Areas

Rural wireless communication technologies are used for a wide variety of purposes, such as personal communication, tele-medicine, entertainment, education, commerce and e-governance. The increase of rural penetration has had significant impacts on the socio-economic development of rural areas. The socio-economic

impacts include improved social status and thus a better personal identity, improved family relationships through communication, reduction in costs as a result of better negotiation skills and lessened need to travel, and ultimately higher incomes for rural producers. These benefits rely on various key factors that enable the success of mobile penetration in rural areas (Swaminathan, 2012).

ICT Mobile Initiatives in Rural Areas

A study conducted by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) on Socio-Economic Impact of Mobile Phones on Indian Agriculture (2010) concluded that mobile phones are contributing to agricultural productivity enhancements. The benefits emerge mainly from the characteristics of mobility, customized content delivery and convenience (Mittal et al, 2010). In the case of fishermen, in addition to economic benefits, there were other benefits like safety and enhanced quality of life from decreased isolation and vulnerability. In India, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Co-operative Limited (IFFCO) Kisan Sanchar Limited (IKSL), Reuters Market Light (RML) and Tata m-Krishi are the successful examples of mobile information service for the farmers.

- i. *IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited: Green SIM:* IKSL is a joint venture between Bharti Airtel and the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO). Farmers who purchase a Bharti Airtel “Green SIM” have access to value added services which include daily agri-voice messages (weather, crop/animal husbandry advice, market prices, government schemes etc) and an agri-helpline (costs Rs. 1/- per minute). Over one-and-a-half million green card subscribers were using this service in 2009 adding more than two lakhs subscribers per month (Farmingfirst.org, 2009).
- ii. *m-Krishi:* m-Krishi uses mobile technology to cater to the needs of the rural area. It offers personalized advisory services in voice and visual using mobile phones. m-Krishi connects farmers with a system that empowers them to make sound decisions about agriculture, drive profits and conserve the environment. Through m-Krishi is offered by the Tata Consultancy Services, farmers get answers to queries related to agriculture, such as advice on use of fertilizers, pesticides and growth hormones. It also provides up-to-date weather and market information through text messages on cell phones. TCS’ Mobile Agro Advisory System provides information on microclimate, local market price and climate change adaptation. It also enables farmers to send queries in their local languages specific to their land and crops, and receive personalized replies from agricultural experts

on their phones. m-Krishi's strength lies in the fact that it can offer personalized advisory services in voice or graphic modes on simple cell phones. These services are based on real-time data as well as the needs of the farmers. m-Krishi is currently working with farmers in the Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. In Tamil Nadu, the m-Krishi field partner Chennai Horticulture Produce Producer Company Limited (CHPCL), and almost 1,500 of its 5,000 members are registered m-Krishi users (Sethu, 2013).

- iii. *Reuters Market Light (RML)*: Subscription of the RML cards makes the customer eligible to receive information on two crops, three markets or one crop and six markets. Information related to crops advisory is made available from sowing to harvesting periods. Information on weather is supplied via SMS, every morning for the entire year. Farmers can subscribe to this services by buying vouchers (3 monthly, 6 monthly or annual subscriptions) and the service costs approximately Rs.2 per day. RML employs market reporters to collect the information from each of the markets covered. Since its launch in 2007, over 200,000 farmers in 15,000 villages across 10 states in India have subscribed to RML (Pawar, 2009).
- iv. *aAQUA and Agropedia mobile SMS Alerts to farmers*: Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Babhaleshwar in Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra is also using mobile phones for disseminating agricultural information. There are currently 284 registered farmers availing this services on paid basis (Rs.100/- per annum) from this KVK. KVK scientists source market prices and weather information from the internet, interpret and broadcast them as SMS. The messages cover weather, market prices, plant protection measures, agricultural practices, subsidies and government schemes. (Bhaskar, 2009).
- v. *Fisher Friend*: In 2007, Qualcomm India, TATA Teleservices, Astute Technology Systems and M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) have started a joint initiative called "Fisher Friend", a mobile application which provides vital real-time information to fishing communities when and where they need it the most, at mid-sea. This includes when and where to sell the fish through access to market prices, weather (e.g., sea wave heights, satellite scan data about fish shoals), government schemes, etc.(Sharma, 2009; Saravanan, 2010). A study on use of mobiles in the fisheries sector reports that the introduction of mobile phones decreased price dispersion and wastage by spreading information

which made the markets more efficient. Mobiles allow fishermen, to get timely price information and decide the best place to land and sell their daily catch (Jensen, 2007).

- vi. *e-Governance initiative using mobile phone*: information dissemination is a critical success factor for any e-Governance initiative. For emerging countries like India, deployment of e-Governance is typically limited by two key constraints: technology rollout and literacy. With a limited broadband infrastructure but high mobile penetration, mobile communications could play a critical role in e-service delivery. For example, number of telephone subscribers in India increased to 960.90 million at the end of May, 2012. (TRAI, 2012). In such a scenario, focusing on e-Governance via mobile is likely to be a key way forward, especially in the medium-term. A case in point is the Indian state of Rajasthan where an e-Governance service has been launched that relays essential information to the public, including rural pensioners, the elderly and disabled via mobile phone. Updates on everything from approval of pensions to information alerts are provided via this channel. The system also includes text to speech conversion to address the needs of those with low literacy.
- vii. *Sehat Saathi*: A rural telemedicine system is being developed at Media Lab Asia research hub at IIT Kanpur. It can be used to extend medical care to patients in the remote parts of the country. The model provides for front-end contact through a suitably trained non-medical professional; back end support from doctors, pathologists and other health professionals for diagnosis and treatment; use of digital technology to achieve objects and dissemination of information on health and disease through digital means (Murthy, 2008). The pilot deployment of Sehat Saathi (ophthalmology module) telemedicine software has been done at Primary Health Centre (PHC) Chaubepur (Kanpur) in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. An expert eye treatment provided to more than 700 patients over a period of 6 months (Medialabasia, 2011).
- viii. *Cell Shakti*: A specialized mobile Value Added Services (VAS) offering for rural India was launched by imimobile.com in 2010. Cell Shakti is a unique product that focuses on the rural segment offering various services to the rural population. Cell Shakti aims at empowering this section of the population with valuable information primarily on Interactive Voice Response (IVR) based services which include Weather Info, Health

Care, Mandi Bhav (market prices), Educational Information and Information on Basic Law and Order for the benefit of the rural people in India. Its an IVR based services in regional languages and can also be customized on demand (www.teck.in, 2013).

CONCLUSION

As the telecommunications penetration increases in the rural parts of the country, the services that the telecommunications sector, as a carrier of information, can offer to the rural masses will determine the extent of socio-economic upliftment of the rural people. With the penetration of mobile phones in rural areas and increase in rural subscribers the coming years will see a beginning of active participation between telecom service providers and various industries like banking, healthcare and education in reaching the rural areas and offering services which would empower them. Some value added services in agriculture, healthcare and banking have already seen the light of day.

One of the major impacts of mobile phones in a country like India is its capacity to partially include the illiterate population in rural areas, who have very limited access to computer and internet. Mobile phones constitute the most promising and affordable ICT platform to convey the required information. Use of mobile phones as basic communication devices to seek information offers convenience and cost savings benefits to farmers. Short Message Service (SMS) is a text-based system, which is gaining popularity due to its convenience and affordability. SMS can be used in local languages to deliver a wide range of information to mobile phone users from crop prices to weather patterns. Voice messages over mobile phones are extremely useful to the illiterate section of population as this enables farmers to get instant help in the case of unexpected events, to get advice on crops, weather and animals. Recent developments in key technical areas, such as the wider availability of broadband, the introduction of 3G mobile telephony offer significant new possibilities for communication and education. The mobile phone has the potential to effectively supplement the efforts of existing extension services and synergise the whole process. The fast growth of mobile penetration and the rapid expansion in the mobile communication network provide a fertile ground for looking at this medium seriously. Mobile phones enable farmers to access this information from scientists, extension officers, veterinary doctors, agents/traders, and so on. This helps to reduce transaction costs and also improves the returns farmers get for their produce.

Although, India has seen a telecom revolution in the last two decades in terms of technology and connectivity, much still needs to be achieved to extend this infrastructure and connectivity to rural areas. With the advancement in wireless technologies, Government support and policy changes in the telecommunication sector have made it possible to overcome many of these difficulties. While launching wireless technologies in rural India, operators are required to focus on service availability, affordability, acceptability and awareness.

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Domesticity and Changing Portrayal of Women in Indian Television Commercials

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This study examines the portrayal of women in Indian television commercials and documents the stereotypes associated with these. The old and new advertisements of the Indian brand “Nirma” were analyzed. First semiotic analysis was performed to determine the extent to which female characters portrayed in these advertisements were subject to stereotypical portrayals. Then a survey was conducted to study the people’s perception of portrayals of women in television advertisements and how it reflects the changing role played by the women in Indian society. Chi-square test and correlation analysis was done to check the validity of data. The study provides evidence that the stereotypes associated with women are reducing when it comes to television commercials. The study provides evidence of the emergence of a new trend toward portraying women and men as equals. The study focuses on the analysis of domesticity and the portrayal of women in Indian television advertisements.

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates how television advertisements in India construct changing portrayals of women. Looking at the traditional roles that are associated with women and men usually provides a backdrop to analyse representation of women in media. Conventional roles for women are that of a wife and a mother. Women are stereotypically associated with being caring, emotional, needing guidance and support, and are weak. McArthur and Resko (1975) claimed that women were most likely to be defined not by occupational or other types of roles, but in roles that defined them in terms of their relationships with others, i.e. as spouse, girlfriend, parent or friend.

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The study aims to analyse the discourse on how female characters are portrayed in Indian advertisements. In the past advertising has been blamed for stereotyping women. It has been established in the previous research that advertising messages about women are generally stereotypical such as women are supposed to stay at home, they are not decision makers, women are dependent on men, and they are objects of sex for men (Kaufman, 1999). Advertisements have time and again restricted women to the roles of mother, house wife, and involved in domestic affairs.

The tasks and activities performed by protagonists in commercials strengthen the traditional and stereotypical images of women and are interested in maintaining the status quo. Advertisements signify that most often women characters carry out domestic tasks involving the advertised product. These activities include demonstrating the product features by using the product – for example: washing clothes with ‘Nirma detergent powder’ (Gangadhar, 2008). The portrayals of women in Nirma advertisements have showcased the changing roles of women. The trusting housewife and affectionate mother, who was largely concerned with domestic duties, has now become a powerful and confident woman.

Nirma holds a special place in the Indian washing powder market. The key aspects of its advertisements have been the inclusion of women as protagonists. They have set the definition of the ideal women as involved in household chores that also includes washing clothes. But with changing times, portrayal of women in television commercials is also changing.

Sign systems are involved in the construction of meaning (Chandler, 2001) and advertising makes use of signs to convey its message (Bezuidenhout, 1998). This study employs semiotics as a method for analyzing the ideological messages of Indian television advertisements. The proposed structure of the semiotics analysis in this study is guided by Barthes (1977) essay “the rhetoric of the image”.

Advertisements become a vehicle for ideology by reflecting ideas, beliefs and opinions that are a reflection of the society, within a culture. The ideology is generated by the signs that are contained in the advertisements and their message. In advertising, various codes serve to reproduce bourgeois ideology, making it seem natural and inevitable. Thus the ideology-semiotics relationship is established as ideology makes use of signs to convey messages (Bezuidenhout, 1998; Chandler, 2001).

This study attempts to analyse the domesticity in advertising and portrayal of women by comparing the old Nirma advertisement in 1982 and the current

Nirma advertisement in 2012, showcasing the changing roles played by women in India. Survey data were subjected to correlation and chi square test to validate the analysis of the advertisements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

During the 80's and 90's, the Indian advertisements involving domesticity emphasized the traditional role of women – as wives and mothers. Through the ideologically constructed messages, the advertisements affirmed the traditional role of Indian women but also made the domestic role of the woman appear natural to the viewers (Roy, 1998).

The transforming role of women in society is reflected in the portrayal of women in advertisements. Earlier women were represented as objects of sexual gratification. Their prominent roles were that of homemakers and spouses. The stereotypical image of women can be witnessed in the 21st century advertisements of Ariel, Moov, Surf Excel, ICICI, to validate this argument.

In the mid 80's the woman in the Surf Advertisement got a name – Lalitaji, and was brought to life on television by Kavita Chaudhary in a TV commercial with the tag line “*Surf ki Kharidari mai hi Samajdari hai*” (It makes better sense to buy Surf). They were fighting a soapy detergent war against Nirma. The woman in this commercial is presented within the domain of domesticity - the home. This highlights the patriarchal ideology, which suggests that it is the woman's job to take care of the household as well as to look appealing for the man (Roy, 1998).

Domesticity was the dominant ideological theme of the advertisements as they emphasised the traditional role of a woman as a housewife and mother (Vestergaard & Shroder, 1985). The following examples illustrate this fact as the woman is shown as attending to the needs of the husband and children in the Brooke Bond, Clinic Plus, Complian, Surf and Sundrop advertisements in 90's thereby, maintaining a feminine ideal of domesticity. Moreover, such advertisements that involved domesticity echoed a distinct separation of the public and private spheres and depicted women primarily in the private domain, and men in the public domain. These advertisements showcased the women involved in different domestic roles like that of mothers and wives. For example in the advertisement of Sundrop oil, the mother can be seen involved in cooking for her son.

Cultural texts (both representational and lived) are a part of the gender

regime in the various institutional settings (Gilbert & Taylor, 1991). The notions of femininity and masculinity are constructed in everyday social practices within institutions, and they are represented at the symbolic level in the mass media as the cultural ideals. The versions promoted serve to provide the basis of women's subordination. Connell (1987) suggests that the forms of femininity and masculinity that are constructed at the ideological level rest on the premise of the global dominance of men over women.

Makekar (1999) examined the role of Indian tele-serials in the ideological construction of identity, womanhood, nation, and citizenship. An analysis of the narratives revealed that ideal womanhood was signified by the attributes of compliance, modesty, and self-sacrifice. And it was suggested that women identify themselves with these tele-serials and use it as a means for interpreting their own lives.

Das(2000) examined gender-role portrayals in Indian magazine advertisements. Advertisements from the time periods of 1987, 1990, 1994, were collected and analyzed across different product types. The results revealed that although the portrayals of men and women were changing over time, that they were still being portrayed in stereotypical roles; and that role portrayals were influenced by the type of product that was being advertised.

Roy (1998) examined the symbols that were used in the representation of women as housewives/mothers in Indian Television commercials. Commercials were recorded at random for one week during December 1995, and attention was paid to codes of appearance, manner, and the activity of female characters. Results indicated that domesticity was the dominant ideological message of the commercials; and in keeping with the patriarchal ideology, that marriage and domesticity was the ideal goal for a woman.

The contemporary Indian advertising in the 21st century presents women in professional roles requiring decision making on items or topics other than household, hygiene or beauty products and sometimes they are portrayed as independent and equal to their male counterparts.

The 2013 commercial of Pond's Dream Flower is a takeoff from a real incident that happened in Delhi (case of Nisha Rao¹) regarding dowry. This advertisement projects an upcoming urban woman who doesn't want to bow down to the age old practices of the dowry system. The studies mentioned here have supported those advertisements that reflect local cultural values are indeed more convincing than those that ignore them. For example, advertisement of ICICI Prudential

Life Insurance (2012) pictures the transformation of the *sindoor* (vermilion) of women into company's logo. This shows the advertiser's obsession with protecting 'sindoor' i.e. a married woman.

The modern wife is portrayed as being independent. However, while she is depicted as being modern, she is in fact upholding the feminine ideal of domesticity as her place is still essentially located within the domain of the kitchen - a place that symbolises the provision of food. In this context, even the modern wife is still perennially and transcendently a homemaker (Roy, 1998).

The review of literature here suggests the basis for the examination of a more current portrayal of women in television advertisements.

Semiotics

Semiotics provides us with a conceptual framework and a set of methods and terms for use across the full range of signifying practices, which include gesture, posture, dress, writing, speech, photography, film, television and radio. Semiotics can help to make us aware of what we take for granted in representing the world, reminding us that we are always dealing with signs, not with an unmediated objective reality, and that sign systems are involved in the construction of meaning (Chandler, 2001). In advertising, verbal and non-verbal signs are used to produce meaning, which leads to the creation of social relationships, systems of knowledge, and cultural identity (Bezuidenhout, 1998).

Williamson (1978), Dyer (1982), and Leiss, Kline and Jhally (1990) all recommend the application of semiotics as an appropriate tool in the examination of meaning making in the critical analysis of advertising. Barthes' work in particular has focused on messages and image relations - with regards to the visual media and advertising (Seiler, 2005).

Semiotic analysis always involves ideological analysis as there are no ideology neutral sign systems (Chandler, 2001). This study attempts to explicate the ideological and mythical messages underlying Indian advertisements and to show how Indian women are positioned as "subjects" of such advertising messages.

Television Advertising

Television advertising is a complex rhetorical medium, which employs strategies to persuade viewers through dimensions such as, the rhetoric of the camera, and text, which include aspects of lighting, sound effects, voice-overs and editing (Roy, 1998). Graham (1989, p.158) has suggested that pedagogically we could benefit

from the fact that 'there are many alternative frameworks or positions from which it is possible to interpret a text, and that different interpretations exist for the same set of images.' Furthermore, as any critical analysis involving television will extend itself to divergent views and interpretations, this would therefore make it almost impossible to say everything about a critical piece (Roy, 1998). Hence, this study will focus on aspects of a semiotic analysis of the Nirma advertisement.

Images of Women in Advertising

Advertising has been a prime target of attack and scrutiny (Deckard, 1975, p. 380). The basic explanation for the critical focus on gender-role portrayal in advertising lies in the close relationship which exists between advertising, the consumer goods industry, and the crucial economic role of women as consumers. As a result, a large portion of commercial messages envisage women as their primary target audience (Faulder, 1977, p. 37). Advertising effectiveness largely depends on the manipulation of the consumer's self-image (Weibel, 1977, p. 142). Since women are perceived to be the major consumers, advertising manipulates the female image in order to persuade women to buy. The major vehicles for advertising consumer products include commercial television and magazines, particularly those addressing a female audience. Television depicts the traditional division of work in marriage. Not only were women more often than men portrayed in marital roles in the study conducted by McNeil (1975, pp. 259-271), but the percentage of employed characters differed significantly according to sex. Of the overall male TV-population, almost three quarters were gainfully employed, while less than half of the females held jobs. Among married characters, the disparity was even greater. Few married women, and fewer mothers were portrayed as employed. Working wives typically appeared in comedies, but their employment status was never substantially portrayed. These findings lead McNeil to conclude that television remains virtually unaffected by the feminist re-examination of marital roles.

Advertising and Domesticity

Gender categorization into masculinity and femininity is socially constructed and maintained in everyday life through major social institutions (Clark & Page, 2003; Mackie, 1994). Advertising – as an aspect of mass media is a major social and economic institution through which notions of masculinity and femininity are promoted at a symbolic level (Gilbert & Taylor, 1991; Goldman, 1992). It is suggested that the role of advertising is to maintain cultural hegemony through providing us with socially constructed ways of viewing and making sense of our world (Goldman, 1992). The versions of masculinity and femininity promoted serve to provide the basis for women's subordination (Gilbert & Taylor, 1991) – this view is reflected in the opportunities for education offered to boys and girls (Oakley, 1972).

Female Domesticity

The principal division between the roles of women and men has concerned women's association with children and the home and men's association with paid work and public activity (Zaretsky 1976; Tilly & Scott 1978; Degler 1980). Economic development dramatically changed the work people had to do, both within the home and in the economy (Chafe 1972; Kessler-Harris 1982; Cowan 1983). The society has witnessed the changing roles played by women. A modern woman is not confined to the home but has come out of it and is empowered enough to have a place of her own in society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study sets out to investigate the research question of how television advertisements in India portray women. The old and new Nirma advertisements were obtained from the YouTube archive. Women and domesticity have always been the key elements of Nirma advertisements and this was the reason for its selection as the representative sample.

Nirma's story is an example of the success of Indian entrepreneurship in the face of stiff competition. From a humble beginning in 1969, Karsanbhai Patel, a chemist at the Gujarat Government's Department of Mining and Geology manufactured phosphate free synthetic detergent powder, and started selling it locally. Patel named the powder 'Nirma', after his daughter Nirupama. The new yellow powder was priced at Rs. 3.50 per kg, at a time when HLL's Surf was priced at Rs 15. Soon, there was a huge demand for Nirma in Kishnapur (Gujarat), Patel's hometown. By 1985, Nirma washing powder had become one of the most popular detergent brands in many parts of the country. The detergent brands by Nirma in India are Nirma Washing Powder, Super Nirma Washing Powder and Nirma Popular Detergent Powder (Agarwal et al., 2012).

It is suggested that the role of advertising is to maintain cultural hegemony through providing us with socially constructed ways of viewing and making sense of our world (Goldman, 1992). Furthermore, it has been remarked that students may be learning more social science from television advertisements than from any other formal or informal educational setting (Langrehr, 2003).

A selection of key questions adapted from the work of Jib Fowles (1996) was employed as a guide for the analysis of data :

1. What actually is being advertised?

2. Where it is set, who are the participants and what are they doing?
3. What part is played by words (choice of words, voice-over)?
4. What part is played by sound/light?
5. What inferences must the viewers make to make sense of the advertisement?
6. How else does the advertisement seek the viewer's involvement?
7. What does the advertisement seem to suggest about gender roles, class/status, age, and ethnicity?
8. What cultural assumptions and values are involved?
9. What is the most likely/preferred interpretation offered in the advertisement?

Research Questions

The guiding questions for this study were as follows:

1. Does the comparison of both the advertisements show that women have come out of the boundaries of the home and now challenge men rather than only assisting them?
2. Does the comparison of both the advertisements shows the changing gender roles and cultural assumptions in society?
3. Does the comparison of both the advertisements show changing preferences of women?
4. Does the comparison of both the advertisements show that portrayals of women in advertisements have undergone a complete transformation?

Brand: Nirma

*“Washing powder Nirma, washing powder Nirma
Dudh si safedi, Nirma se aaye | Rangeen kapda bhi khil khil jaye
Sabki pasand Nirma | Washing powder Nirma
Nirma”*

*(Washing powder Nirma, washing powder Nirma/Nirma gives milk like
whiteness/even coloured cloths become brighter/everyone likes Nirma/
washing powder Nirma)*

This is the iconic Nirma jingle. This was first aired in 1982, when the first Nirma advertisement was made.

Nirma Advertisement (1982)

Nirma's story is a classic example of the success of Indian entrepreneurship in the face of stiff competition. Nirma took on the might of giant multinationals and wrote a new chapter in the Indian corporate history.

Domesticity was the dominant ideological theme of this commercial as it emphasized the traditional role of women as a housewife and mother (Vestergaard & Shroder, 1985) such as tending to the garden and the needs of the child-thereby, upholding a feminine ideal of domesticity.

In the beginning, the Nirma packet featured a lady washing a garment. Later, however, the design was changed and an image of the daughter of Karsanbhai Patel, who is the founder of the brand, was featured on the pack. The white dancing girl, featured in Nirma's television advertising, is perhaps the most enduring image of the brand.

The simple and catchy jingle – '*dudh si safedi Nirma se aye, rangeen kapda bhi khil khil jaye*' (even colored clothes become brighter/everyone likes Nirma/washing powder Nirma) has continued to echo in the drawing rooms of middle-class Indian homes through the decades. While the jingle stresses on the product, it also salutes the savvy and budget-conscious Indian housewife.

Nirma Advertisement (2012)

Nirma's new advertisement is labeled as 'empowering women'. The new Nirma detergent's advertisement shows some women getting their hands filthy while pushing out an ambulance trapped in a pit while the men are watching. Few men are just watching, few of them are taking photographs and few are aghast at the sight of the filth. Four women named Hema, Rekha, Jaya and Sushma who are in spotless, crisp and clean dresses are stepping into the pit to drive the ambulance out. The famous jingle runs in the air. The women, Hema, Rekha, Jaya and Sushma, are not afraid of getting into the dirt and doing the 'masculine job' of moving a vehicle.

Analysis of Advertisements

Table 1 highlights the content analysis of the new Nirma advertisement, showing that women are unafraid to do something earlier assumed to be the job of men. In both the advertisements mostly iconic signs are used. Women power is empowered by the brand. It captures today's societal trend in which women are seen as being more than equal to men. Be it at home management, ensuring kids do well in academics and extracurricular activities, planning vacations, designing homes, entertaining friends, being fitter, and obviously being star performers at work, women have become stronger.

Table 1 : Coding Sheet of Nirma Advertisement (1982 and 2012) Analysis

| Coding | Nirma washing powder television advertisement (old) | Nirma washing powder television advertisement (new) |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Time | 1982 | 2012 |
| Location | Home setup | Public setup, on road |
| Format | Jingle based advertising of detergent product | Story based advertising of detergent product |
| Participants | Females assisting male | Females challenging male |
| Sound | Suggesting domestic reference | Suggesting roadside sound |
| Music | Rhythmic | Inspirational |
| Gender roles | Women characters are glamorous and shown to be involved in domestic chores | Women characters are showing courage and possessing leadership traits and ready to stand out in crowd |
| Cultural assumptions | Women stays in four walls of home and are involved in only domestic affairs | Empowered women is at par with men and challenges masculine power play |
| Interpretation | Women enjoy the domestic work and the detergent assists them to keep their clothes clean and white | Glorification of changing role of women challenging masculine power and the detergent giving them courage that their clothes will be brighter even after getting muddy and helping people stuck on road |

To compare both the advertisements one has to flash backwards to spotless white sari-clad happy mothers with detergent packs in their hands, and frock-clad girls. The previous trusting housewife and loving mother, who was largely concerned with domestic duties, has transformed into a strong, confident woman. The advertisement aims to portray how women have evolved from what they were back in 1980's. Women today are much stronger and are contributing immeasurably to society in different spheres.

Measurement

To determine the changing portrayal of women in advertisements and study the

research questions, six measures were employed in this research: 1. Women in advertisements and home, 2. Women in advertisements and challenging men, 3. Women in advertisements and gender roles, 4. Women in advertisements and cultural assumptions, 5. Women in advertisements and preferences, and 6. Women in advertisements and portrayal. These measures will contribute to examine the changing portrayal of women in Indian advertisements. To test the validity of these measures chi square test was conducted.

HYPOTHESIS

In order to analyze the changing portrayal of women in Indian advertisements, correlation analysis was done to test the relationship between measures. Three sets of hypotheses were formed to test the relationships of variables on respondents. These variables were the three positioning parameters of online video advertising; i.e., Challenging Men (Variable A), Gender roles (Variable B), Home (Variable C), preferences (Variable D), cultural assumptions (Variable E), and portrayal (Variable F). The hypotheses are:

- H1: On respondents, Variable A has a positive influence on Variable B.
- H2: On respondents Variable C has a positive influence on Variable D.
- H 3: On respondents Variable E has a positive influence on Variable F.

Method

The study was designed to analyze the changing portrayal of women in advertising and for this purpose the survey was conducted on diverse population of Lucknow. The sampling frame comprised of 100 people who came from diverse fields such as house wives, working professionals, senior citizens, and youth. The random sampling technique was used to draw the samples.

The quantitative methods were used to explore the research questions which judge the recognitions of changing portrayal of women in advertisements by the respondents. All participants were asked questions regarding their assessment of the representation of women in the advertisements and stereotypes attached with them. Respondents were shown two Nirma advertisements of 1982 and 2012 and they were then asked to fill the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The Likert Scale results are listed in frequency tables that demonstrate the responses to the six questions. Ordinal-level data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation and Mode). Chi-square analysis was conducted on each of these measures to determine if there was a significant relationship between specific measures and respondent preference.

In order to analyze the relationship between the portrayal of women and people's perception of the changing roles of women in society, correlation analysis was done to test the relationship between the measures and how they contribute to understanding the changing roles of women in society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Frequency distribution of the ratings on statements on portrayal of women in advertisements by respondents (n=100)

| Sr. | Statements | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-----|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | Comparison of both the advertisements shows that women have come out of the boundaries of home. | 2 | 2 | 14 | 39 | 43 |
| 2 | Comparison of both the advertisements shows that the women can now challenge men rather than only assisting them. | 4 | 5 | 12 | 30 | 49 |
| 3 | Comparison of both the advertisements shows the changing gender roles in society. | 7 | 21 | 17 | 36 | 19 |
| 4 | Comparison of both the advertisements shows that the cultural assumptions of the society have changed now. | 10 | 17 | 15 | 40 | 18 |
| 5 | Comparison of both the advertisements shows glorification of changing preferences of women. | 6 | 5 | 13 | 21 | 55 |
| 6 | Comparison of both the advertisements shows that portrayals of women in advertisements have undergone complete transformation. | 2 | 6 | 23 | 28 | 41 |

Measures

1. *Women in advertisements and home*

Frequency of Response: “comparison of both the advertisements shows that women have come out of the boundaries of the home.” The responses for this measure have a mean of 4.1 (SD = 0.89). The mode for this statement is 5. The P value is less than 0.0001 (Chi square(X²) =78.7, Df=4, P value=0.0), this difference is considered to be extremely significant statistically. Hence the majority of respondents opined that comparison of old and new advertisements of Nirma highlights the fact that women who were earlier confined to the boundaries of home have come out and are exploring their identity. This one had over a 80 percent agreement rate (those who preferred agree or strongly agree).

2. *Women in advertisements and challenging men*

Frequency of Response: “comparison of both the advertisements shows that the women can now challenge men rather than only assisting them.” The responses for this measure have a mean of 4.1 (SD = 1.02). The mode for this statement is 5. The P value is less than 0.0001 (Chi square(X²) =74.3, Df=4, P value=0.0), this difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant. Hence the majority of the respondents were of the view that women apart from assisting men are now in a position to challenge them, which was earlier missing. This one had 79 percent agreement rate (those who preferred agree or strongly agree).

3. *Women in advertisements and gender roles*

Frequency of Response: “comparison of both the advertisements shows the changing gender roles in society.” The responses for this measure have a mean of 3.39 (SD = 1.21). The mode for this statement is 4. The P value is less than 0.0001 (Chi square(X²) =21.8, Df=4, P value=0.0), this difference is considered to be extremely significant statistically. Hence respondents were of the opinion that women who were earlier involved in domestic chores only, are now showing leadership traits and are courageous enough to stand out in the crowd. More than 50 % (agree and strongly agree) of the respondents appreciated the fact that gender roles are changing in society.

4. *Women in advertisements & cultural assumptions*

Frequency of Response: “comparison of both the advertisements shows that the cultural assumptions of the society have changed now.” The responses for this measure have a mean of 3.39 (SD = 1.24). The mode for this statement is 4. The P value is less than 0.0001 (Chi square(X²) =26.9, Df=4, P value=0.0), this

difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant. Hence majority of respondents were of the view that the cultural assumptions of society have changed now. Earlier the role of women was only to look after their families but now the empowered women are strong enough to challenge the masculine power play. This research question had agreement rate of over 55%, so society is gradually accepting the empowered women.

5. *Women in advertisements and preferences*

Frequency of Response: “comparison of both the advertisements shows the glorification of the changing preferences of women.” The responses for this measure have a mean of 4.14 (SD = 1.18). The mode for this statement is 5. The P value is less than 0.0001 (Chi square(X2) =84.8, Df=4, P value=0.0), this difference is considered to be extremely significant statistically. Hence the majority of the respondents opined that the preferences of women have changed. Earlier they used to enjoy only house hold chores but now they are ready to come out and explore the world outside. Since the majority of respondents agreed with this statement (over 75%), it appears that women’s preferences have undergone a massive change.

6. *Women in advertisements and portrayal*

Frequency of Response: “comparison of both the advertisements shows that portrayals of women in advertisements have undergone a complete transformation.” The responses for this measure have a mean of 4.0 (SD = 1.03). The mode for this statement is 5. The P value is less than 0.0001 (Chi square(X2) =51.7, Df=4, P value=0.0), this difference is considered to be extremely significant statistically. The results clearly show that the portrayal of women in the advertisements have undergone complete transformation. The advertisements portray women at par with men and sharing the responsibilities equally. Almost as many as 69% respondents were in agreement with the statement (those who agree and strongly agree).

Hypothesis Testing

The Pearson correlation analysis on SPSS16 was done to test the hypothesis.

H1: On respondents, Variable A has a positive influence on Variable B.

Correlations

| | | Challenging Men | Gender-Roles |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Challenging Men | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .883** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 100 | 100 |

| | | | |
|--------------|---------------------|--------|-----|
| Gender-Roles | Pearson Correlation | .883** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 100 | 100 |

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

In the Pearson correlation analysis, the results show that gender roles in society are changing and women are challenging men. It further suggests that now women are strong characters who are courageous and possess leadership traits.

H2: On Respondents Variable C has a positive influence on Variable D.

Correlations

| | | | |
|-------------|---------------------|--------|-------------|
| | | Home | Preferences |
| Home | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .885** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 100 | 100 |
| Preferences | Pearson Correlation | .885** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 100 | 100 |

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

In the Pearson correlation analysis, the results show that women earlier were only confined to the home and now they are challenging masculine power play. This suggests that along with domestic work women are now strong enough to tackle the world outside.

H 3: on respondents Variable E has a positive influence on Variable F.

Correlations

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| | | Cultural Assumptions | Portrayal |
| Cultural Assumptions | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .909** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 100 | 100 |
| Portrayal | Pearson Correlation | .909** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 100 | 100 |

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

In the Pearson correlation analysis, the results show that since the cultural assumptions of society regarding women are changing, the same is reflected in the portrayal of women in the advertisements.

CONCLUSION

Depiction of women in advertisements has changed and it is becoming healthier over time. In most of the advertisements of recent times, a woman is projected as confident, extrovert, dominant and having a go-getting attitude rather than just portraying them stereotypically as being a homemaker washing clothes, utensils, cooking, taking care of family members etc. The study concludes that the portrayal of women in advertising has undergone massive transformation. Earlier women were confined to the home, involved with only domestic chores. But now the cultural assumptions of society regarding women are gradually changing. Women now are at par with men and are empowered enough to challenge the power of men in some instances. The study emphasized the fact that portrayals of women in the advertisements are transforming with changing times in India.

NOTE

- 1 The Ponds TVC was one of the earliest advertisements that took on issues such as dowry and women being looked upon as liabilities. In the advertisement a girl is about to get married, the bride realises that her in-laws are harassing her parents for dowry, and calls off the wedding. The commercial was inspired by the real-life case of *Nisha Sharma*, a woman who had called in the police on her would-be in-laws when they demanded dowry just as she was about to tie the knot.

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Working Media Women

Authors: D.V.R. Murthy & G. Anita

Publication : Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi, 2009;

Hardcover: 163 pages; Price: Rs. 450/-

By the mid 90's India experienced incredible changes due to the mushrooming of Satellite Television channels. The booming of electronic and satellite communication and the rapid technological growth in the communication process witnessed during the recent years have changed the complete profile of media and media personnel in India. Although the number of personnel working for the media organizations has been increasing continuously, in India, only a few studies have been conducted to examine the sociological issues related to these media personnel.

Working Media Women: Profile, Work Environment and Job Satisfaction covers a vast canvas – the profile, work environment and job satisfaction among the working media women in the three selected cities of Andhra Pradesh – Hyderabad; Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam. This book has been authored by Dr. D.V.R. Murthy and Dr. G. Anita. Both the authors have vast Industrial and academic experience.

It is very relevant to recite Manu Dharmashastra in this context. According to *Manusmriti*:

The society that confers respect and dignity to women flourishes with nobility and prosperity. And a society that does not put women on such a high pedestal has to face miseries and failures regardless of the noblest deeds they perform otherwise.

The governing bodies of India boast of women's empowerment and equal rights to women. But in actuality, in the contemporary Indian society, even after 67 years of Independence, women are neglected. The book examines the sociological issues of media women varying from print journalists to television anchors and from script writers to radio announcers.

The objectives of this book based on research conducted in the cities of Andhra Pradesh in 2007 are as follows:

- To find out the socio-demographic profile of the working media women in the study sample.
- To find out various family details of working media women such as spouse employment, education, income and so on, apart from its impact on their marital life.

- To examine the levels of satisfaction among the working media women in the sample in relation to childcare arrangements.
- To examine the work setting vis-à-vis professional freedom of the working media women in the study sample.
- To ascertain the professional satisfaction of working media women in the study sample in different media organizations.

This book commences with the argument that very few studies have been conducted in India to examine the sociological issues involved in the career of the media personnel in general, and about media women in particular. The authors further argued that a few earlier studies in India have attempted to study only working media women in print media. With the advent of satellite television channels in India, the number of working women in media in different capacities has increased substantially; and there is a definite need to study the profile, work environment and levels of job satisfaction of these working media women.

The book is well structured and divided into eight chapters. In the first chapter entitled *women and media*, such issues as - women, family and childcare; women and sexual harassment; women and media; women in Indian media; sociological study of gender and work; gender model; job model; women work force in media; etc have been discussed, exhaustively. In this chapter, the following statement of Usha Rai, a noted journalist in India, has been presented to reflect the overall experiences of working media women:

“When I joined the Times of India, Delhi, in 1964, there was no toilet for women on the editorial floor and I had to get to the telephone operators to borrow the key to use their toilet on the ground floor”.

In the second chapter- *Research Methodology*, the authors present the key issues in the research, providing an overview of the research agenda. The third chapter *Working Media Women* gives a detailed back ground to the profile of working media women in the chosen three cities of Andhra Pradesh. Tabulation and Analysis of all the data pertaining to the 127 respondents is the highlight of this chapter.

In the fourth chapter *Working Media Women: Marriage, Spouse and Children*, the authors, Murthy and Anita argue that media women have been facing varied problems especially, problems pertaining their marriage, spouse and childcare. According to the authors, most of the respondents felt that their family life was being adversely affected in many ways. In this chapter many issues varying from age distribution of respondent’s spouse to duration of time spent with the children

in a day have been tabulated for bringing out the information, effectively.

Chapter five entitled *Working Media women and Work Environment* profiles the detailed information on work environment, focusing on many critical issues like work for extra hours; workplace environment; and treatment by male colleagues. In a similar manner, chapter six - *Working Media Women and Job Satisfaction* gives an exhaustive analysis on the levels of satisfaction of working media women for various parameters.

At the heart of this study, in chapter seven a total of four case studies have been presented to focus on the opinions of the respondents. This reviewer would have preferred a more detailed exposition of these case studies in terms of quantity. The last chapter of this book arrives at the conclusion of the entire study. The key finding in this study is that the majority of women are not satisfied with the childcare arrangements. Also, though the women are willing to work in night shifts, the administration is not in a position to provide transport.

In terms of methodology, surveys have been conducted and data thus collected has been analyzed with a clear criterion for analytical categories. The authors recognize the limitations of quantitative research (only 127 working media women have come up for the analysis) that went into this book. They offer a number of findings in the last chapter based on their study.

This book not only makes some thought provoking observations based on the survey but also gives suggestions to improve the working conditions for women journalists. Overall, the book "*Working Media Women: Profile, Work Environment and Job satisfaction*" succeeds in supporting its objectives and advances our understanding of the profile, work environment and job satisfaction of working media women from the three cities of Andhra Pradesh. There is no doubt that the book makes a good reference work for the students of journalism, in particular, those researching on working women in the media. The data gathered provides a useful insight into aspects related to working women in media in Andhra Pradesh. In this way, this book contributes to our knowledge and understanding of the working women in media and their social and cultural impact. This study might be followed up by further studies from all parts of India to include the working media women from all three geographic levels – urban rural and semi-urban.

Suman Kumar Kasturi
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Media & Modernity: Communications, Women, and the State in India

Author: Robin Jeffrey

Publication : Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2010;

Paperback: 320 pages; Price: Rs.395/-

A 'keen student of Indian history and politics', Robin Jeffrey in his book provides a demographic and anthropological insight of Kerala while linking up the media and development. The book has been divided into two parts – Part one is extensively dedicated to a complete study of Kerala in terms of its socio-political structure and its relationship to literacy and media habits of the state. In part two of the book, the author offers the perspectives on capitalism, newspaper industry in Indian states and communication. In this part also, Jeffrey puts forth the class and caste structure of the society and draws the attention of the readers towards its intricacies pertaining to the media industry. Further, in a different dimension, Jeffrey talks about the Gandhian ideology while discussing the communication and media expansion in India. In two chapters of the second part of the book, the author maps the history of communication and capitalism, growth of media, particularly the print media, its implications and relation to the politics till the present time in Indian context.

Through individual accounts of Keralite women, the author takes the readers towards a deep political discourse. While providing a picturesque beauty of narrative, Jeffrey presents an academic discourse and offers an interesting analysis of how the breakdown of the social system of Malayalis led to the rise of communism in Kerala. From Nambudiri Brahmins and Nairs (Hindu) to Mapillas (Muslims), Christians and poor Iravas, he sketches out a complete caste-class structure in the attempt to show the causal associations between the society, politics, governance, literacy, media and women. In a later chapter, 'Matriliny, Women, Development – and a Typographical Error' he brings readers into the critical discourse to ask why matriliney disintegrated in Kerala in the first half of this century.

The book provides a fresh argument for the 'Kerala model of development'. The author provides a detailed account of the social change, legal framework and its implications on women during the last three decades. According to Jeffrey, 'asked for at least 30 years, the question usually provokes a multi-pronged re-

sponse that includes politicization, maritime and commercial connections, a plural society, social reform groups and their leaders, Christianity and Christian missionaries, communism and communist activists, reform-minded Indian princes, and the position of women’.

The later half of the book presents an all India dialogue in relation to media in general and the newspaper industry in particular. Through institutions such as ABC, RNI and NRS the book strives to show a correlation between the presence and growth of Indian capitalism during and after the 1940s. The chapter identifies the reasons of state interventions in the media sector in the 1950s, and the mushrooming of capitalism and consumerism through the regional media in the 1980s. Another essay discusses the impact of printing technology on the Vernacular press and rapid expansion in its circulation thereafter. It poses the argument of how with the growth of Indian-language press, advertising in India also flourished and discusses that “these processes homogenize regional variation in language, deeply embed India’s ‘official’ languages, and at the same time foster ideas of Indian nationhood”.

Since the book is a compilation of essays published and presented in various academic journals from 1978 to 2009, the essays have been taken carefully to touch upon almost every aspect related to the Indian socio-political structure and media. This is pretty evident in the way Jeffrey includes the question of Dalit representation and participation in whole media debate. While discussing the expansion of media technology and media consumption, problems of media reach and access, he talks about the Nehruvian model of Socialism and Gandhian ideology at length. The last chapter provides an overview including the process, technology, economics, politics, producers, audiences and so on. The author brings in the concepts of print capitalism of Benedict Anderson and Habermasian public sphere to the Indian setting where the country is witnessing the mass media age, particularly through the expansion of electronic media. At the same time, Jeffrey does not lose the thread related to media and tradition of politics in Kerala. The book is certainly a delight for academicians, scholars and students of media and cultural studies, history and politics. The book is equally useful for those who want to read about the socio-politico-economic structure of Kerala.

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