

# Teenagers' Usage of Social Networking Media in a South Indian State

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## Abstract

Teenagers are becoming more and more media dependent as years pass by. If it was radio or television in the past, it is the time for internet and social networking media today. This study is an attempt to analyze the media (including the traditional media) habits of teenagers in terms of the time spent for it, place and medium of accessing internet and the motivations for the usage of these media. The study was conducted in the city of Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala. The respondents were high school and higher secondary students of class 8<sup>th</sup> to class 12<sup>th</sup>. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain data from 556 students from Government and Private schools. 292 boys and 264 girls participated in the survey. Results show that the favourite activity for the Kerala teenagers even today in the Social Networking Era is watching television when they are alone at home. More time in internet is spent on Social Networking sites compared to the time they spend for educational needs. The gratifications obtained from the usage of social networking sites are factor analyzed to a four factor structure, namely Communication, Connectivity, Relaxation and User friendliness.

**Key Words:** Teenage, Internet, Social Networking Media, Gratification Structure

## I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The usage of Internet among teenagers is on an upward direction these days in India. Teenagers use it for different purposes. Like other age groups, today's teenagers have been affected by the multimedia technology to a greater extent. Teens are spending increasing amounts of time, using internet and cell phones. Teenagers and youth today are unable to think about a day in their life without any of these media (Diamanduros, Jenkins, & Downs, 2007). In 1999, an average American child lived in a house hold with more than 2 TVs, 3 cassette players, 3 radios, 2 VCRs, 2 CD players, 1 video game player and 1 computer with internet connection (Roberts, Foehr, Rideout & Brodie, 1999). In 2004, an American survey found out that 73% of teenagers owned a computer and 44 percent owned a mobile phone. By 2006 this number was found to be increasing with more internet

connections, and by 2009, 75% of American teenagers earned cell phones. It was also found out that the most (almost four hours a day) out of the teenagers' media time is taken by mobile phones for teenagers (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2010).

Now the scenario is different, at least in Indian context, where teenagers are more and more getting addicted to internet. Social Networking sites are now becoming more and more popular among them. The advancement in science and technology are beginning to alter even the way we communicate with each other. Any one of the media devices can easily be blamed for, not only reducing a child's sense of imagination and lack of physical exercise, but also the lack of communicating with others (Peetz-Ballweg, 2010). If it was the advent of the mobile phone which caused greater concern in this regard in the past, now it's the turn of internet and social networking media. There were interview studies and focus group discussions which reported youth and teenagers remember and type facebook id and password almost unknowingly whenever they sit in front of a computer (Young, 2012).

Teens join social networking sites basically to connect with people they already knew. In a 2006 survey by Pew found that 91% of the facebook users keep in touch with friends they see every day and 82% use these sites to connect with friends whom they meet rarely (Lenhart and Madden, 2007). When asked by danah boyd why they are using a particular social media site, many of the teenagers said: "That's where my friends are." Boyd would opine that teens adopt the tools that their friends use and in doing so they influence the people around them (boyd, 2008). Facebook is arguably the most popular social networking site at least among the Indian teenagers because of its user friendly interface, opportunity for relaxation and the chance of maintaining relationships. There are students who log into facebook as their first activity of a day (Varghese & Nivedhitha, 2012). Many of the practicing Psychologists now opine that teenagers who are heavy users of social networking sites seem to be more depressed. They are reported to have interrupted sleep patterns and missed schools and meals. The trend has gone to the extreme that Psychologists now have started asking for the online behaviour of the patients of any sort before they do a full assessment (Shastri, 2011).

The popular ways for the youth of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for interpersonal communication were either face-to-face communication or telephone. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, youth and even teenagers with their ready access to the Internet are generally using computer mediated communication methods. They find these new media technologies as more convenient in terms of time, money and convenience. (Tidwell & Walther, 2002). This popularity explosion of the Social Networking Sites have redefined

interpersonal communication and restructured relationships (Romm, Pliskin, & Clarke, 1997). Boyd defines Social Networking sites as the sites which allow users to present personal information like age, gender, location and interests to the known and like-minded people whose profiles exist in those sites (boyd & Ellison, 2007). This feature encourages people to join these sites and to find their old friends and to get acquainted with new friends. A recent study revealed that the interface and the userfriendliness of these sites appeal more to the youth. In Europe and North America, 54% of those aged 16-24 had social networking profiles. But, the percentage was going lower as the age increased (Zheng, 2008).

The Pew Internet and American Life Project study in 2007 reported that 91% Social Networking teenagers use the sites to be in touch with their regular friends whom they meet very often. 82% use these sites to get the news from their distant friends whom they meet very rarely and 72% make use of these sites to arrange holiday plans with their friends. Only 49% use these social networking sites to make new friends (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Another study in UK found out that though teenagers have lots of friends in social networking sites, the actual number of close friends was almost the same as their real life friends. Teenagers in this study reported that 90% of their contacts in social networking sites are people whom they have already met and only 10% will be strangers (Smith, 2007).

Around 3000 customers in the age group of 18 – 54 from more than 14 countries were surveyed online in 2010. More than 90% of them were aware of the social networking sites and at least 72% were members in any of the social networking sites. The average Number of friends was 195 and generally they log in to social networking sites more than once a day (Tay, 2010). Social networking sites were found more popular among the young women in the age group 18 – 29 and 69% of them log in to these sites at least once a day (Madden & Zickuhr, 2011). Facebook is regarded as the second most often visited website and 38.4% of the internet users were found to have accessed facebook in the three months period from 19 October 2010 to 19 January 2011 (Fuchs, 2011). Internet causes time displacement in people's television viewing reports the earlier studies on Displacement Effects of Internet (Kaye, 1998). Later there were many studies done on this regard and many of the studies confirmed the position of the earlier studies underlining the fact that the more time people spend on internet the less they watched television (Nie & Erbring, 2000).

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present research was conducted to find out the time spend by teenagers for different media, where they use it and what do they like to do online etc. The more precise objectives are the following.

1. What do the teenagers generally do when they are alone at home?
2. What are their media and internet habits?
3. What are their social media habits?
4. What are the reasons/motivations behind their social networking media usage?

## III.METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the capital city of a southern Indian state.

### Selection of Schools

The city was first divided into three zones; south, north and central. Schools, public (government) and private, were selected from each of the three zones. Three government schools (out of 6) and three private schools (out of 6) were randomly selected from the north zone. Four government schools (out of 8) and four private schools (out of 9) were selected randomly from the central zone. Similarly, three government schools (out of 5) and three private schools (out of 7) were randomly selected from the south zone. Permission to administer questionnaire to school students was obtained from the school managements prior to the study. During the course of the study 2 more government schools were added in order to increase the number of respondents from government schools. Overall, 12 government and nine private schools were selected from the city.

### Selection of Respondents

556 teenagers (292 male & 264 female) from classes 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> were the participants in the study. The questionnaire was administered to all the students in a class who use Social Networking Media. Table 1 shows the number of students selected from two types of schools and classes (VIII to XII) for the study.

**Table 1: Class wise distribution of respondents**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Government School</b>	<b>Private School</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>VIII</b>	5	16	21
<b>IX</b>	23	72	95
<b>X</b>	104	60	164
<b>XI</b>	49	58	107
<b>XII</b>	72	97	169
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>556</b>

### **Study Design and Tool**

A survey method using a structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire had different sections.

1. Demographics
2. Internet Usage
3. Social Networking Media Usage Motivation Scale

The first section of the questionnaire consists of questions related to the demographic details like age, class, gender, type of school etc,. The second section includes questions pertaining to the internet usage patterns of teenagers. Questions like preferred activity online, time spent online daily, time spent online for education, time spent for social networking media etc, were included in this section. Third section consists of a scale to understand the structure of motivation of teenagers' social networking media usage.

## **IV. RESULTS & ANALYSIS**

### **Demographic Analysis**

### 1. About their Parents

27% of the fathers of the respondents are well educated. Their education level is PG or above. 34.4% are graduates. 36% are below class 12 and 2% are not educated. 23.6% of mothers are well educated (PG or above). 38.7% are graduates. 34.5% are having class 12 education and 2.7% are not educated. Although the education levels of both fathers and mothers are almost the same there was a huge difference seen in the case of their work status. 93.9% of the fathers of the respondents are working whereas only 44.4% of the mothers are working.

### 2. Places of going Online

More than 66% of the students go online from home. 12 % go online from internet cafes. Almost 8% each check internet either from school or from friends' house. 6% go online elsewhere.

### 3. Medium through which they go online

Almost 71% of the teenagers go online through the Desktop, just above 40% use mobile phones to go online, 24% use laptops for going online and 7% use other gadgets to go online. More female students are found to be using laptop to go online compared to the boys. A comparatively larger amount of boys uses mobile to access internet.

### 4. About their free time Activity

For 37.4% of the teenagers even today the most preferred activity when they are alone at home is to watch TV. 32.7% of the teenagers have moved to Facebook as their favourite time-pass. 18% prefer to play games. Almost 6% each will go doing their home work or talk to friends on phone.

## **Time spent by Teenagers for Media**

### 1. Mobile Phone

51% of the teenagers in Trivandrum City own a mobile phone. 12% of the students do not use mobile phone at all whereas 39.4% use mobile for 15 minutes or less. 22.7% use it up to 30 minutes and 20.3% use it from half an hour to 2 hours. 5.6% spend more than 2 hours on mobile every day. There are students who use mobile phone for more than 5 or 6 hours daily. Among the 283 students with mobile phones 64% are boys. Among those who use mobile phones for more than two hours 71% are boys.

### 2. Television

Only 6% of the teenagers are not using TV at all. 24% use it for less than 30 minutes a day. 32% use it for 30 minutes to 1 hour. 25% use it for 1 to 2 hours. 13.3 % use it for more than 2 hours. There are students who use it for more than 4 hours daily.

### 3. Newspaper

12.2 % of the teenagers of the city are not reading newspapers at all. 32 % spend 10 minutes for Newspaper. 25.4 % spend up to 20 minutes. 19% spend maximum half an hour and only 10% spend more than 30 minutes for Newspaper.

### 4. Radio

41.5% of the teenagers in the city do not use radio. Only 25% spend 15 minutes or less for Radio. 20% spend up to 30 minutes and 8.8% spend 1 hour and only 5% spend more than 1 hour for Radio daily. Among those who are not using Radio at all, more than 60% are boys.

## **Time spent by Teenagers for Internet**

### 1. Internet in General

38.3% spend less than 1 hour for internet daily. 20% spend 1 to 2 hours. 15.6% spend 2 to 3 hours. 10% each spend 3 to 4 hours and 4 to 5 hours daily. Almost 4.5% spend more than 5 hours for internet daily.

### 2. Internet for Education Purpose

67% of the teenagers spend less than an hour per day in internet for education purpose. 25% spend 1 to 2 hours on internet daily for education. Less than 8% of the teenagers only spend more than 2 hours daily on internet for education purpose.

### 3. Preferred Online Activity

For almost half of the respondents (46.4%) Social Networking Media is the most preferred activity online. For 23 % Education is the most preferred activity while 20% use internet mainly for entertainment purpose. 8.3% use internet to play games. Again in the second most preferred activity too, 31.8% rated Social Networking Media as the top priority whereas a close second position is entertainment with 31.1%. Education went down to the third position with just 21.9%. There is a considerable change in the third most preferred activity as entertainment gets the first position with 34% and Social Networking Media second with 29.3 and education is third again at 20.3%. A very significant difference is seen between boys and girls in their preferred online activities. 32% of girls prefer Education online compared to the 15% of boys and 56% of boys prefer social networking compared to the 36% of girls.

### 4. Social Networking Media

Around 35% of the students use more than 2 hours on internet for Social Networking Sites. 46.6% spend less than an hour for Social Networking Sites. 18.2% use it for 1 to 2 hours. 13.3%

spend 2 to 3 hours. 9.2% spend 3 to 4 hours. 9.5% use social networking sites for 4 to 5 hours and 3% for more than 5 hours. There is a significant difference seen between boys and girls in their social networking site usage. 15.5% of Girls spend more than 4 hours daily for Social Networking sites whereas only 10.6% of Boys spend more than 4 hours in these sites. Almost 40% of the teenagers are very new to the Social Networking world as they have been using these sites for less than a year. 21.6% use it for 1 to 2 years. 14.6% for 2 to 3 years. 9.2 % for 3 to 4 years. 7% each are using it for either 4 to 5 years or more than 5 years. Around 31% of the teenagers log into their favourite social media sites more than once a day (32.3% of Girls & 29.6 % of Boys).

### Activities in Social Networking Media

Facebook is rated as the most preferred Social Networking Media almost unanimously with 81.5% preferring it over the other social networking sites. YouTube is at a distant second position with just 7% of teenagers preferring it. Google + is preferred by 4% of the teenagers. 67 % of the teenagers have less than 400 friends in Social Networking Media. 20% have 400 to 800 friends. 7% have 800 to 1200 friends. 6% have more than 1200 friends.

### Motivations for using Social Networking Media

Teenagers use social networking media for a variety of reasons. It can be for finding friends, keeping in touch with existing friends, sharing their thoughts etc. We have administered a 16 item scale developed by Gadekar and Krishnatray (2012) to analyze the structure of motivations behind the teenagers' usage of Social Networking Media. The structure of gratification obtained from social networking media was identified through exploratory factor analysis using SPSS 19.0. A four factors structure was obtained for the general group. These 4 factors explained almost 63% of the variance.

**Table 1: Motivational Structure of Teenagers' Social Media Usage**

Factor	Items	Loading	Reliability
<b>Communication</b>	Contacting Friends away from home	.77	<b>.84</b>
	Getting in touch with old & lost friends	.77	
	Sending Message to friends	.68	
	Chatting with friends	.61	
	Providing continuous updates of people/Events	.53	
	Expressing opinion about issues	.47	



<b>Relaxation</b>	Relieves tension	.82	<b>.84</b>
	Helps me to relax	.81	
	Provides many hours of leisure	.75	
<b>Connectivity</b>	Enables seeing peoples status updates	.74	<b>.75</b>
	Sharing photos/videos with friends	.73	
	Connecting with friends of friends	.55	
	Seeing what my friends are doing	.46	
<b>User friendliness</b>	Doesn't take any extra effort to learn it	.83	<b>.68</b>
	It is easy to use	.69	
	Interface is clean & orderly	.62	
	<b>Total Variance Explained = 63%</b>		

1. Communication: Six items of the motivational scale loading on the factor relate to communication through social networking media. Its Reliability was found to be .84 and it explained 20% of variance.
2. Relaxation: Three items loading on this factor relate to relaxation through social networking media. This factor has a Reliability of .84 and it explained 17% of variance.
3. Connectivity: Four items together formed a third factor called connectivity. Reliability of this factor was .75 and it explained 13% of the total variance.
4. User friendliness: User friendliness is the fourth factor in the motivational structure of teenagers' social media usage. Three items clustered together to form this factor. Reliability for this factor was .68 and 13% of the total variance is explained by this factor too.

**Table 2: Motivational Structure of Teenage Girls' Social Media Usage**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Loading</b>	<b>Reliability</b>
<b>Communication</b>	Sending Message to friends	.78	<b>.86</b>
	Contacting Friends away from home	.75	
	Getting in touch with old & lost friends	.73	
	Chatting with friends	.67	
	Expressing opinion about issues	.54	
	Seeing what my friends are doing	.53	
	Relieves tension	.83	

<b>Relaxation</b>	Helps me to relax	.82	<b>.81</b>
	Provides many hours of leisure	.75	
	Providing continuous updates of people/Events	.46	
<b>User friendliness</b>	It is easy to use	.78	<b>.69</b>
	Doesn't take any extra effort to learn it	.77	
	Interface is clean & orderly	.63	
<b>Connectivity</b>	Enables seeing peoples status updates	.78	<b>.69</b>
	Sharing photos/videos with friends	.69	
	Connecting with friends of friends	.54	
	<b>Total Variance Explained = 63%</b>		

1. Communication: Six items of the motivational scale loading on the factor relate to communication through social networking media. Its Reliability was found to be .86 and it explained 20% of variance.
2. Relaxation: Four items loading on this factor relate to relaxation through social networking media. This factor has a Reliability of .81 and it explained 17% of variance.
3. User friendliness: Three items clustered together to form this factor. Reliability for this factor was .68 and 13% of the total variance is explained by this factor too.
4. Connectivity: Three items together formed a third factor called connectivity. Reliability of this factor was .69 and it explained 13% of the total variance.

**Table 3: Motivational Structure of Teenage Boys' Social Media Usage**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Loading</b>	<b>Reliability</b>
<b>Communication</b>	Providing continuous updates of people/Events	.77	<b>.79</b>
	Sending Message to friends	.69	
	Chatting with friends	.62	
	Expressing opinion about issues	.59	
<b>Relaxation</b>	Relieves tension	.83	<b>.81</b>
	Helps me to relax	.79	
	Provides many hours of leisure	.68	

	Enables seeing peoples status updates	.41	
<b>Connectivity</b>	Sharing photos/videos with friends	.76	<b>.68</b>
	Getting in touch with old & lost friends	.74	
	Contacting Friends away from home	.74	
	Connecting with friends of friends	.47	
<b>User friendliness</b>	Doesn't take any extra effort to learn it	.83	<b>.69</b>
	Interface is clean & orderly	.65	
	It is easy to use	.59	
	Seeing what my friends are doing	.52	
	<b>Total Variance Explained = 63%</b>		

1. Communication: Four items of the motivational scale loading on the factor relate to communication through social networking media. Its Reliability was found to be .79 and it explained 18% of variance.
2. Relaxation: Four items loading on this factor relate to relaxation through social networking media. This factor has a Reliability of .81 and it explained 16% of variance.
3. Connectivity: Four items together formed a third factor called connectivity. Reliability of this factor was .68 and it explained 15% of the total variance.
4. User friendliness: Four items clustered together to form this factor. Reliability for this factor was .69 and 14% of the total variance is explained by this factor too. Total variance explained by these four factors is 63%.

## DISCUSSION

The data show that the teenagers of Kerala still prefer television as their best time pass, as almost 37.4% turn to television while they are alone at home. 32.7% are interested in logging into facebook. Mobile phone was found to be another interesting object for the teenagers. A very significant difference is seen between boys and girls in the case of ownership of mobile phones. Newspapers were found to be of less interest to the teenagers of the City. This may be because of other media taking the charge of disseminating information and current affairs updates. Teenagers may be getting their news updates either through the flash news scrolled in the television sets or from the internet resources. Though there was not much difference in the time spent for Newspaper reading between boys and girls, boys are found to be more in the “not using” category. Even with

the availability of popular FM radio programmes, radio is not much used by students. It points to the findings that radio is largely used by travelers or housewives. Only students who are really interested in any of the programmes of the FM Radio or those who like any particular RJ will tune to their favourite FM channel. A significant difference is seen between boys and girls in their time spent for listening to Radio.

The number of households with internet facility is also very high in the city. More than 66% of the teenagers go online from home. Laptops were used more by girls and mobiles were used more by boys to access internet and social networking media. But a common desktop computer is the most readily available gadget for the teenagers of the city to access internet. But not much difference was seen between boys and girls in their usage of desktops or other gadgets to access internet. There is a slight edge for the girl students over their male counterparts in their time spend for internet especially when it comes to the higher levels of time slots. But the difference was not statistically significant. It must be noted that almost 42% of the teenagers spend more than 2 hours on internet daily and among them only a negligible percentage of students use it for education purpose. There is no significant difference between boys and girls in their usage of internet for education purpose.

When it comes to the social networking media usage, a significant difference is seen between boys and girls in their social networking site usage. Girl students are spending more time on social networking media compared to the boys. Girls log in either very often or less often whereas boys log in to these sites almost on a regular basis. The frequency of logging into social media sites also is more for girls.

The three steps of factor analyses of the motivational structure of teenagers' social networking media usage have found same factors. But the orders of the factors and the items in the factors were different in these three different groups. For the general group and the boys' group the order of factors was the same whereas the items were interchanged. The order of factors in the girls' group was different from the other two groups. The numbers of items in the factors also were different for all the three groups. The variance explained by these four factors was exactly 63% in all the three groups.

## CONCLUSION

The study was an attempt to analyze the time spend by teenagers for different media, where they use it and what do they like to do online etc. Most of the students go online from home and

generally they make use of desktops to access internet and social networking media. The favourite pass time for the Kerala teenagers even today in the Social Networking Era is watching television. This may be because of the easy access they have to television. More than half of the teenagers of the capital city are proud owners of mobile phones. There is a higher percentage of girl students reading Newspapers and listening to radio compared to the boys population.

Internet is used not much for education purpose both by boys and girls. More time in internet is spent on Social Networking sites compared to the time they spend for educational needs. Girls are found to be using internet more for education compared to boys. But boys use it more for social networking. The most preferred activity online is social networking sites for a large number of teenagers of Trivandrum. Another finding is that compared to a negligible percentage (8%) of teenagers who use internet for more than two hours for academic works, 35% of the teenagers are using more than two hours for social networking daily. The number of girls spending more time on social networking sites is much more than that of the boys.

Again it was an attempt to understand the underlying gratification structure derived from social networking media usage of the teenagers. The total variance explained by the four factors (communication, connectivity, relaxation and user friendliness) is 63%. The study was conducted only with teenagers of only one city in the state of Kerala. The study could be taken further to other cities or even to other states and to different age groups of people to have a clear understanding of the gratifications sought by the social networking media usage.

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