FACEBOOK USAGE PATTERNOF INDIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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This exploratory descriptive study describes the Facebook use by selected Indian Facebook users. This study was conducted as a pilot study of the larger multi-city study on Facebook use in India.The sample of 199 respondents was selected through convenient sampling from six Indian cities from six different states: Kolkata (West Bengal), Vadodara (Gujarat), Pune (Maharashtra), Bangalore (Karnataka), Jaipur (Rajasthan), and Berhampur (Odisha). The study concluded that sending/checking messages, commenting/sharing/liking posts on the news feed, chatting and uploading photos are some of the popular activities that Indian Facebook users perform on Facebook. Gender of a person is an important factor for some users while making friends on Facebook. Users spend average 4.6 hours every day on Internet out of which 2.4 hours they spend on Facebook. Girls spend 2.37 hours on Facebook daily whereas boys spend 2.46 hours.

Facebook has always been in news for one or the other reason. Users use it for making new contacts, being in touch and also for entertainment. Being on Facebook has become a new social trend especially among students. Their virtual presence on Facebook has become important for them in their real life. The rapid spread of the site in India shows its immense popularity. Recent issues such as Delhi gang rape, anti-corruption movement and Lokpal movement witnessed the mobilizing power of this social networking site. Arrest of a girl in Mumbai over posting an insulting comment about a dead political leader triggered a controversy about legal implications of the use of Facebook. There have been many cases where information posted on Facebook has been used both for good purpose or misused in some cases (Kincheloe, Weed, & Lack, 2010; Facebook editing function raises concern over misuse, 2013).

Since its inception, in 2004, by Mark Zhukarberg, Facebook has been gaining popularity all over the world. 'Orkut' was already there when Facebook came in. But, Facebook became very popular because of new features and user friendliness. India has a large chunk of youth population which adds scope for Facebook's growth. According to the Facebook's recent global friendships map, India is one of the countries that come under the category of 'densest use' countries, where Facebook is used the most to make friendships across the world (India among 'densest use' countries in Facebook's updated global friendships map, 2013).

As per the FICCI-KPMG 2013 report Facebook had 71 million monthly active users in India in December 2012. This number had observed the growth of 81 percent as compared to its previous year. At the same time the worldwide growth of Facebook was 25 percent (FICCI-KPMG, 2013). The Indian figure rose to 82 million monthly active users during the period of April-June 2013 (Facebook users in India up by 5%, 2013).

I. Review of Literature

Facebook's newness and rapid growth have attracted the attention of social researchers worldwide. Various studies have been conducted on Facebook, from various perspectives including identity, psychology of users, gratifications etc. Few academic studies have been conducted on Facebook in the Indian context.

One of the studies conducted by Avani Maniar (2011) on Indian Teenagers found that the teenagers mostly use internet to access social networking sites. They use Facebook to be in touch with their family members, socializing with friends and sometimes they access Facebook because it is a social status symbol. Facebook influences the academic work, socializing and communication pattern of the student users. Influence on communication pattern was related to the activities they do on Facebook. Those who perform more activities have more influence when compared to those who perform fewer activities.

Gadekar, Krishnatray and Gaur (2012) conducted a study on selected college going Facebook users. It found that

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students start using internet since their teenage. They spend on an average of 1.6 hours a day on Facebook. Girls are selective in accepting friend requests compared to boys. These students use Facebook to maintain their relationship with friends and family members and to remain in touch with old friends. User-friendly interface is another important virtue that makes users use Facebook. Social interaction is another important reason of Facebook use. Users' use it to socially connect themselves with their relatives, friends and colleagues. They develop new contacts. Social networking seems to be the most popular activity of youth while online. This can be achieved through photo or video sharing, sending messages, sending birthday wishes etc. One of the major limitations of these studies was the nature of sample. Maniar (2011) studied a group of teenagers from a particular city and Gadekar et al (2012) studied a group of post graduate students of an institute.

II. Research Design & Methods

The study aims to describe the overall profile of Facebook users and other aspects such as privacy and identity. The study was done across six cities in six states namely Vadodara (Gujarat), Kolkata (West Bengal), Pune (Maharashtra), Bangalore (Karnataka), Jaipur (Rajasthan), Berhampur (Odisha) with 199 undergraduate and postgraduate students

The study investigates the following research questions:

1. What type of Internet connection users generally access Internet?

2. Where do users generally access Facebook?

3. What activities Facebook users perform on Facebook?

4. What are the popular activities?

5. How much time users spend on Internet and Facebook every day?

6. How is users' friendship behavior on Facebook?

6.1 - On an average, how many Facebook friends' users have in their account?

6.2 - On an average, how many Facebook friends' users have in their close friends' list?

6.3 - On an average, how many female friends' users have on Facebook?

6.4 - On an average, how many male friends' users have on Facebook?

6.5 - Does gender of a person matters to Facebook users while making friends on Facebook?

7. What language users generally use to post comments/

content on Facebook?

8. What is the relationship between users' income and their Internet and Facebook use in terms of time spent?

9. What is the relationship between users' education and their Internet and Facebook use in terms of time spent?

10. What is the relationship between number of Facebook friends and use of Facebook in terms of performing various activities?

Before administration of the survey tool, field investigators visited the academic institutions, selected possible respondents and took their consent. Contact details were uploaded on the online survey program and online invitations of survey questionnaire were sent to their respective email ids. This was not a time bound questionnaire.

Facebook use was measured in terms of time spent on Facebook every day. The frequency of doing various activities related to different features available on Facebook was measured on the five point scale from Always (5) to Never (1). The mean of all of these activities was also used as an indicator of Facebook use. The list of such activities was prepared based on the list of all Facebook features available on Facebook. These features were then clubbed together in various activities. A total of 17 activities were listed on the survey tool. Friendship behavior was measured with the variables such as number of friend users have in their Facebook account and number of friends in their close friends' list.

III. Results & Discussion

The findings reflect the profile of the Indian college going Facebook users. It describes how they use Facebook and for what purpose. Table No 1 indicates type of internet connection the Facebook users use to access internet. Internet data card (43%) is the most preferable way for these users to access Internet, after that comes mobile and Ethernet (both 28%).

Table No 2 shows medium of accessing Facebook. Users prefer to access Facebook on their computer at home (52%) and mobile (46%). 27% users access Facebook on computers of their college labs. Cyber café is not a favorite destination for these users for accessing Facebook. Only 8% users access Facebook in cyber cafe. This shows that the users prefer to access Facebook at private places rather than public places which needs to be investigated further.

Table No 3 indicates users, activities on Facebook. Sending/checking messages, commenting/sharing/liking posts on the news feed, chatting and uploading photos are some of

the popular activities that student Facebook users perform on Facebook. Playing games and using Facebook applications are some of the least popular activities on Facebook.

Table No 4 shows friendship behaviour of users on Facebook. On an average these users have 368 Facebook friends in their Facebook account. Out of those total 368 friends, approximately 175 are females and 185 are males. Every user has approximately 27 friends as his/her close friends in Facebook account. There are considerable numbers of Facebook users (29%) who consider gender of a person as an important factor while making new friends on Facebook.

Users spend an average of 4.6 hours every day on Internet, out of which 2.4 hours they spend on Facebook. This shows that a large number of Internet use is for Facebook. Girls (5 hours) spend more time on Internet daily as compared to boys (4 hours). But this is not the same in case of Facebook use. Girls spend 2.37 hours on Facebook daily whereas boys spend 2.46 hours.

Table No 5 shows language used for posting comments. It was also observed that 48% users use English and their mother tongue to post comments or content on Facebook whereas 35% use only English. Interestingly, only 1% users use only their mother tongue to post content on Facebook. Recently, Facebook has launched its editions in regional languages. But still the data indicates that people prefer mix of English and mother tongue for postings on Facebook. There are very few respondents who use only mother tongue while posting comments/content on Facebook.

The study also shows that monthly household income has significant positive relationships with years of Internet use, hours of Internet use and years of Facebook use. As the monthly household income increases, use of Internet and Facebook also increases. In other words, those who have more household income started using Internet and Facebook much before the low household income users. These users spend more time on Internet as compared to low income users. This finding might have significant implications as it connects the socio-economic variable of income with media consumption. This indicates those are from high income group would have easy access to Internet as compared to low income group. No such relationship was found between monthly household income of users and their everyday Facebook use in hours.

Education is another demographic variable generally used to make distinction among various social classes. Therefore it was anticipated that education might create differences among different social classes in terms of Facebook use. But data shows that level of education of the users does not have any relationship with their media use in terms of Internet and Facebook. Users from different education levels do not differ in terms of Internet and Facebook use. The reasons of this might be attributed to the penetration of the Internet and Facebook to every class of the society and its availability in regional languages.

IV. Conclusion

This study concludes that users prefer to access Facebook at private/personal places such as their homes or on their mobile phones, rather than in public places, work places or cyber café. Sending/checking messages, commenting/sharing/liking posts on the news feed, chatting and uploading photos are the most popular activities of the Facebook users. On an average these users have 368 Facebook friends on their Facebook account. Considerable number of Facebook users (29%) consider gender of a person as an important factor while making new friends on Facebook. Study also shows that those from high income group would have easy access to Internet as compared to low income group. The study will be helpful in carrying out a more advanced and niche study that would investigate more complex theoretical issues pertaining to communication domain.

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Table 1: Type of Internet Connection

	Percent
Internet data card	43
Ethernet LAN/Cable connection	28
Cellular Internet	28
Wi-fi	23

Table 2: Medium of Accessing Facebook

	Percent
Computer at home	52
Mobile	46
Computer at college labs	27
At work place	11
Cyber café	8
Tablet	3

Table 3: Users' Activities on Facebook

	Mean
Send/Check messages	3.78
Comment/share/like on the posts on your newsfeed	3.60
Chat	3.56
Upload photos	3.38
Accepting 'friend requests'	3.14
Status Update	3.08
Update/Edit your profile	3.04
Share links	2.94
Tag photos and videos	2.83
Create photo/video albums	2.79
Sending 'friend requests'	2.56
Create/join Facebook group	2.52
Monitor friend lists (creating new smart lists, adding new friends and deleting friends from lists)	2.42
Create/participate in events	2.37
Use Facebook applications	2.35
Upload videos	1.87
Play games	1.71

Table 4: Friendship Behavior on Facebook

Sr No	Friendship behavior	Mean
6.1	Total Facebook friends in Facebook account	368
6.2	Number of friends in close friends' list	27
6.3	Number of female Facebook friends	175
6.4	Number of male Facebook friends	185

Table 5: Language Used to Post Comments/Content on Facebook

	Percent
Mother tongue	1.0
Mother tongue and other Regional languages	2.5
English	35.2
English and mother tongue	48.2
All English, mother tongue and other Regional languages	13.1