

Health and Development Communication in the Digital Age: Examining Societal Disparities Through New Media

Rajashekar D¹, Ashish Rambachan Dubey², Swetha K³

¹ Assistant Professor, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Yeshwanthpur Campus, Nagasandra, Bengaluru-560073, India.

² Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Parul Institute of Liberal Arts, Parul University, Vadodara, Gujarat, India.

³ Research Scholar, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Yeshwanthpur Campus, Nagasandra, Bengaluru-560073, India.

Corresponding Author:

Rajashekar D^{1*}

Abstract: Asia and Africa have long had, at least textually, a tenuous historical, cultural, and linguistic relationship. But interactions and cooperation between these two largest continents are much less than those between them and the other regions of the world. The rich potential in the socio-cultural similarity of Asia and Africa will thus remain an exciting context for multidimensional research endeavours across myriad fields. The early hope for mainstream media as an engine of development quickly gave way, however, to the emergence of transnational media and later privatisation, leading to what has come to be known as a phase of rapid commercialisation. This evolution distorted priorities, shifting them from resolving local problems to profit-oriented schemes. This resulted in marginalised communities experiencing further alienation, as they were locked out of the media, which widened the already existing disparity in society. Although the emergence of new media seems like an effective way out, as it is decentralised and unregulated, its effects cannot be fully realised due to various barriers to entry, such as cost and accessibility. Hence, the main thrust of this research will be to analyse the discrepancies between the utilisation of new media and its ability to meet society's demands. In this context, one of the main elements of this research will be the examination of how the new media can function as a mechanism for resolving the discrepancy between the existence of something in reality and its depiction in the media. This can be done by conducting a theoretical analysis which is grounded in a critical perspective on the relationship between new media and society...

Keywords: Asia, Africa, socio-cultural similarities, mainstream media, transnational media, privatisation.

INTRODUCTION

Development and health go hand in hand, where a healthy nation is an important ingredient in terms of development at the state and personal levels. Development, whether of the whole state or its population, results in greater well-being and health in general. Being among the largest continents in the world and sharing many social, economic, and educational issues, health communication plays a significant role in advancing progress. Sociocultural similarity between the two continents, such as rich history, great population size, lifestyle, and linguistic diversity, can help in examining the problem of health and development as a result of communication.

To begin with, both Asian and African nations are dominated by rural areas, which makes it hard to spread information and resources concerning health and development. The community-oriented

cultures of Asia and Africa, and the poor intercommunication among diverse communities, make mass communication problematic. Still, some success stories can be seen in these aspects: technological invasion of China (Asian continent) and South Africa (African continent).

In this paper, the analysis of the communication landscape with respect to health and development is done in the context of Indian society. To do so, the operational definitions of the different forms of new media technology would have to be established first. One kind of new media technology is computer-mediated communication, which uses collaborative mass media and involves two types of processes: one-to-many and many-to-many communication. The various kinds of new media technology include the internet, multimedia, portal, mobile phone, gaming, and animation, among others.

Some new social media, like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, can serve as means for network formation and the exchange of information and communication. Another form of communication through new media technology involves young people using mobile phones to build social networks. Finally, digital culture, in terms of animation and gaming, has been shown to be beneficial for cognitive health.

The technologies of new media have the potential to promote development and aid health communication in countries like India. In examining the roles of new media in the two spheres of application and their effectiveness, this research aims to gain further insight into the contribution of new media in bridging gaps to achieve developmental goals.

In modern times, development is seen not just as economic development but as holistic, sustainable development, which is not easy to achieve. Different theories have been developed regarding development and tested across societies worldwide. Studies in development have gained momentum since the World Wars era of the last century, when sociologists, experts, reformers, and the general populace devoted much attention to developing their countries.

Developmental indicators that could be used to gauge success other than GDP and GNP were invented in the later parts of the 20th century. At present, several development indices exist, such as the Happiness Index and the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI). More importantly, over 15 nations worldwide have included these indicators in their respective development frameworks.

The concept of health is an essential component of contemporary society for millions of people across the planet, given the complexity and advances of the modern era. Being healthy now does not only entail being physically healthy, but mentally and spiritually healthy as well. Numerous health associations from around the world, such as the WHO, which was founded by the United Nations, have contributed immensely in promoting global health concerns through the years.

The New Media Technologies are yet another dimension of traditional media in terms of print and electronic media, but with a complete change in behaviour by both the communicator and receiver in mass communication. It has completely changed the perspective on communication, particularly in India, and has, in fact, created a paradigm shift in the whole concept of communication.

In the first place, it must be noted that any health and development activity will always involve a bottom-up process, in which community health plays a crucial role in development communication practices. Many approaches have been followed, ranging from the top-down approach through family planning programs introduced in the 1950s and 1960s to the establishment of PHUs. In democratic India, there has been more stress laid on private healthcare facilities due to globalisation.

The newly published statistics have shown the success experienced in the health industry in

India. According to statistics released by the WHO, India has managed to make very significant progress in the area of health of its population in terms of various indices. For example, India has reduced the maternal mortality ratio to 113 deaths per 100,000 live births during 2016-2018, compared to 254 deaths per 100,000 live births recorded in 2004-2006. Similarly, India managed to reduce the under-five mortality rates from 74 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2005 to 34 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019.

Despite these achievements, some inequalities persist, particularly in underserved and rural areas. According to the National Health Profile 2020 released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, there is a higher risk of health-related problems in urban areas than in rural areas in India. This inequality exists mainly because of a lack of healthcare infrastructure and inadequate medical professionals in rural areas.

In all this, the importance of media usage in communicating correct health information emerges. People both from professional quarters and among laymen understand the significance of the media in matters of health. However, the issue that requires consideration is the participation of the public in using media as a channel for promoting the quick transmission of information on health facilities in remote areas. Through this process, India will go a long way toward ensuring integration between healthcare delivery and development.

Media consumerism addresses the health condition of individuals in relation to their membership in society and as citizens of the country. The community operates at the regional level and does not extend beyond this. Media is gaining ground in the region owing to its greater significance in contributing to the psychological well-being of people compared to national media.

Table - 01

(Source: AdEx India -WARC's forecast for Global ADEX in 2024)

Medium	2022 (₹ Cr)	Share	2023 (₹ Cr)	Share	Growth 2023/22	2024 For (₹ Cr)	Share	Growth 2024/23	India Growth	Global Market Share (WARC)	Global Growth (WARC)
TV	30,662	34%	32,886	33%	7%	35,575	32%	8%	7%	16%	4%
Print	18,470	21%	19,250	19%	4%	20,613	19%	7%	2%	3%	-4%
Radio	2,032	2%	2,272	2%	12%	2,549	2%	12%	4%	3%	2%
Cinema	568	0.6%	776	0.8%	36%	1,047	0.9%	35%	13%	0.3%	5%
Outdoor	3,666	4%	4,140	4%	13%	4,761	4%	15%	15%	3%	3%
Traditional	55,399	62%	59,324	60%	7%	64,545	58%	9%	6%	25%	2%
Digital	34,405	38%	39,714	40%	15%	46,565*	42%	17%	19%	75%	10%
Total	89,803	100%	99,038	100%	10%	111,110	100%	11%	11%	100%	8%

As one of the components of the New Media, social media is an interactive medium characterised by individual communication without intermediation. The push for the use of social media by

development organisations is essential to ensure comprehension of health concepts. Nevertheless, although there are several advantages to adopting the development approach proposed by Daniel Lerner in his book 'Passing of the Traditional Society', development activities fail to reach many rural people due to the lack of effective exploitation of the fundamental media.

The evaluation of the impact of mass media as opposed to each other highlights the emergence of new media as a response to certain inadequacies in previous media types. In this regard, it is necessary to note that various mass media, ranging from complex to the most primitive, can coexist and cater to different sectors of the economy and society. Technological pluralism must be understood as one of the twenty-first century's biggest challenges.

However, convergence leads to many outcomes that are highly important and influence various aspects of life, whereas some of them may be positive, such as improved interconnectivity and availability of information; others, particularly in relation to culture, should be examined. Media convergence has many implications in regard to the process of urbanisation and industrialisation.

The introduction of commercial internet services in India in 1995, as well as the establishment of private ISPs in 1998, resulted in the growth of internet penetration that amounted to over 42%. Such development is characterised by the increased number of internet cafes and users in educational establishments and companies. The forecasts for the New Media industry in India, together with other kinds of media, prove this fact.

India: Media Segments (Source: KPMG-FICCI Report 2024)

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2025E		CAGR 2022 2024
TELEVISION		787	685	720	709	727	795		3.9%
DIGITAL MEDIA		308	326	437	571	671	862		14.7%
PRINT		296	190	227	250	262	279		3.7%
FILM		191	72	93	172	194	228		9.8%
ONLINE GAMING		65	79	101	135	167	231		19.5%
ANIMATION AND VFX		95	53	83	107	133	190		21.1%
LIVE EVENT		83	27	32	73	95	134		22.2%
OUT OF HOME MEDIA		39	16	20	37	41	53		12.8%
MUSIC		15	15	19	22	25	33		14.7%
RADIO		31	14	16	21	22	26		7.5%
TOTAL		1,910	1,476	1,750	2,098	2,339	2,832		10.5%
GROWTH			23.2%	19.3%	19.9%	15.3%			

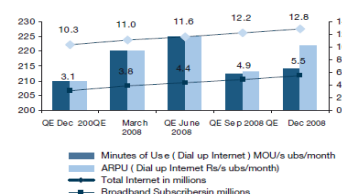
Health and Development Communication in the Digital Age: Examining Societal Disparities Through New Media

From the above table, it is observed that the investment in New Media Communications is quite low, yet its CAGR is very high, indicating an immense Return-On-Value.

Uses Galore

Many studies reveal facts about its use, which continues to expand rapidly, with hundreds of systems adopting New Media standards every year. According to Rajan Anandan, VP, Sales, Google India, “India has the third largest market of internet users (after China and the USA) with over 10 million net users”. Joining the internet is the mighty Social Media, and when combined, the two become a lethal team. According to Arvind Singhal and Everett Rogers (2001) ‘No other nation like India provides a better example of the role of the new communication media in the development process through which a country moves from being an agriculture-based economy towards becoming an information society’.

Chart 6.3: Broadband subscribers



Source: TRAI

As a whole, there is a silent revolution in New Media. It is widely used by professionals, corporations, domestic service providers, Internet users, observers, specialists, and even the general public. The New Media's impact along the news value chain has affected the way professionals work.

Several significant studies worldwide during the turn of the new millennium on the impact of new media reveal many interesting facts. A study indicates that Internet use contributes positively to scholarly productivity. Another study on instruction in higher education found that students demonstrated higher-order reasoning and thinking skills in these courses (Bloom's taxonomy). Studies conducted to assess the feasibility of researching on the Internet recommend the need for widespread computer accessibility, instruction in Internet use and information evaluation, faculty involvement, and faculty-librarian collaboration to promote responsible, informed, and appropriate use of the Internet as a research option.

Table 02

Rank	Sub-industries	Visits share [in Per cent]
	Search engines	24.59
	Social networking and forums	57.5
	Email services	64.96
	Portal frontpages	6.56
	Multimedia	12.76
	Software	15.44
	Games	19.21
	Telecommunications	10.95
	Reference – education	9.90

	Banks and financial institutions	12.89
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Top categories of websites searched in India [ranked on their share of visits] as on 1st January, 2011;

Source: Experian Hitwise

Looking at health and development in a broader context of technology use, they remain primary aspects of human daily life. 'Daily life is often affected by the actions of other countries' (Grieg, 2000), from places such as Paris, London, Milan, New York or even through the internet in cyberspace. 'Global communication reaches far and wide and in doing so many kinds of relationships occur globally' (Cairncross, 2001). 'Romances occur on the internet without physical or visual contact' (Wiseman, 1998). People communicate with friends and relatives via technology. There is a sense of close connection to distant people and places, yet also a sense of isolation. (Wiseman, 1998)

Communication relationships are no longer restricted to *place*; they are distributed across *space*. For adolescents, mobile phones offer the possibility of transgressing parental and other authority (Fortunati, 2002), of demonstrating maturity (Steggles and Jarvis, 2003 cited in May and Hearn, 2005), a means of negotiating spatial and parental boundaries (Liccoppe, 2004; Williams & Williams, 2005), and avoiding parental surveillance (Thompson & Cupples, 2008) which, is assumed to be less likely for young adults who have left home. In 1995, cell phones arrived in India, with a target to increase their numbers fivefold in five years. By October 2005, India had 68 million cell phone users.

On the role of development, the site *Tehelka.com* of India exposed corruption in the political and military establishments by capturing on video, defence officials accepting bribes for arms contracts– a great example of online investigative journalism. The Indian IT Act 2000 covers cyber laws, including digital certificates and the use of digital documents.

Social media is sought after by the common person for psychological soothing; somebody to cry on; somebody to share with, but not to commit to anything more, no other relationship. Interpersonal communication networks are primarily an attribute of social media. The function of mass media is to deliver messages en masse to the masses. However, in social media, communication is one-to-one. If the same is conceived as mass communication, then it is the Voice of the People, where mutual concern is given vent to pent-up emotions. It is evident from the women's prominent social media communication. Inherent in them, women love to share as a secret or a hush-hush, about the I-pill, pregnancy matters and so on.

The bottom-up approach, though not 2-way, could be termed a Ver. 1.5 way of communication!

The Darker Side

Though new media appear to be a boon compared to conventional media in terms of their non-top-down, unregulated nature, the very factors of affordability, access, reach, and literacy are major hindrances to its success in the media milieu. While the access to the internet itself is high only in urban areas and to a lesser extent in rural areas, the percentage of usage, as per the tables below, showing high usage including its peripheral sectors, will not match with reality unless it is lopsided with urban centricity and not representative of the rest of India.

Health and Development Communication in the
Digital Age: Examining Societal Disparities
Through New Media

Table 03

Purpose of Internet Access	%
E-mail	91%
General Information Search	76%
Educational Information Search	77%
Text Chat	46%
Online Gaming	46%
Online Jobsites	37%
Financial Information Search	31%
Book railway tickets on the Internet	45%
Online banking	67%
Online news	72%
Internet Telephony/video chat / Voice chat	74%

Usage of Internet access in India (Source: I-cube 2008, IAMAI)

Table 04-a

Global E&M Internet Market by Segment (US\$ Millions) (Source: KPMG-FICCI Report)

Segment	2008	2009	2010p	2011f	2012f	2013f	CAGR 2011-13
Internet Access: Wired and Mobile % change	214,601 12.7%	226,221 5.4%	238,450 5.4%	262,360 10.0%	296,387 13.0%	333,628 12.6%	11.08%
Internet Advertising" Wired and Mobile % change	59,873 15.6%	58,717 -1.9%	60,241 2.6%	65,654 9.0%	74,972 14.2%	86,728 15.7%	12.9%

Table 04-b

Rs. Billion	2020	2021	2022	2023f	2024f	CAGR 2020-24
Mobile Gaming % change	2.5 67.6%	3.0 19.3%	4.5 51.5%	6.0 33.0%	10.1 66.4%	46. %
Animation Industry % change	15.6 20%	18.5 18.6%	23.0 24.3%	27.6 20.0%	33.6 21.7%	41..2%

Projected growth of the Indian Animation and Gaming Industry 2009-13

(Source: KPMG-FICCI Report)

New media communication is born out of significant investments; hence, return on investment is both compulsory and radical. In any communication exercise here, money-back guarantees dominate message-serving, raising consumers' aspirations but mostly leading to frustration.

The priority of New Media for health communication is more for monetary ventures than for public service. The lure of advertorial practices, coupled with the concept of paid news and sponsorships in New Media, has made it less credible as a primary source of information towards developmental goals. Many efforts by New Media to propagate developmental messages, including those for health, have proved futile. The statistics indicate a healthy reach and access, while the technical measurement of message reach is a gross mismatch. Also, the issues touched by new media seldom touch the grassroots.

In light of the above facts, this study has the **scope** to analyse the disconnect between the new media applications and the actual societal aspirations. The **objective** here is to induce corrective measures in the content and practices of new media communication. The **significance** of this study lies in bridging the gap between social realities and unreasonable projections through new media.

The **methodology** adopted here is of theoretical studies with a **critical** perspective. The incompatibilities between New Media practices and societal expectations are examined in the findings before drawing inferences and conclusions. Suitable recommendations are made based on the study's findings.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The role of mainstream media in India, viz., print, electronic, and oral media, as a catalyst in the process of development, was very short-lived. In fact, within two decades of independence, the print media in India was forced to go commercial, thereby contradicting societal development, paving the way for alternative journalism. Even amid powerful development efforts by the print media in the latter half of the 20th century, just before the fruits of it could be reaped, the entry of transnational media led to privatisation, resulting in extreme commercialisation. This further distorted the content's priorities, which became incoherent with the local ethos and problems. Activities in Community Journalism or Development Communication could not take off well due to the looming problems of illiteracy, poverty, and other complex socio-economic issues. As a whole, most mainstream media communication exercises made people go *Out Of Reach* rather than provide stronger access and utility. This theory of OOR is the crux of the argument under this study. Again, resorting to technology for the solution.

The theory of Out-Of-Reach

Any communication process will be complete only when there is comprehensive feedback. The message's reach to the target audience is very important. There are three types of targets-

Jurisdictional reach, i.e., by geography, such as rural or urban or a region;

Reach for a particular community;

Reach an individual with a specific purpose.

Most communicators misinterpret reach as jurisdictional, rather than targeted to a person or community. In terms of jurisdictional reach, it would amount to purely one-way communication. In

such one-way communication, credit can be given only to the communicator, who does not even digest the message; they merely process it and pass it along to the audience. The information explosion in the media has forced the formulation of a very important theory called OOR.

Web page: By the time a page is opened, the number of advertisements, insertions, colour photos, scrolls, flashes, animations, etc., will ensure the user forgets the original message. Similarly, on the 24-hour news channels, no one is in a position to watch the moving scroll of news of all kinds, with another icon on the left, an animated interruption on the right, and so on. All these make any consumer go OUT of the intended message. Most of the time, even the Cognitive Dissonance theory may contribute to the potential of the OOR theory.

When the penetration, impact, and adverse effects of New Media on the large rural populace are explored, it is clear that villagers have no access to these Media, leaving them *Out-of-Reach* of the mainstream. As of now, even marginalised groups fall under the OOR category. The government's intentions may be honest; however, at the planning and implementation levels, most failures occur. For instance, in equipment purchases, the procurement of hardware appears successful from the stage of purchasing imported gadgets to installing them in community centres, schools, etc. However, managing the gadgets, the lack of supporting factors like power supply, maintenance, and repair responsibility, are simply missing; they then become mere empty boxes with no use, so the OOR syndrome is a developmental process.

More instances to elucidate the above theory are hereunder. Though concerns about new media thriving are genuine, such as realising the Vision-2020 document's dreams, concerns about its implementation are questionable. The policymakers responsible for implementation do not understand exactly what is happening at the receiving end. While implementing, even after spending a lot of money, there would be many hurdles, a lack of facilities, and a lack of trained technicians to manage. Also, in certain developing nations, the technology gadgets are often not even opened. In India, about 40-45% of the purchased modern technology gadgets are opened only to find that the technology is already obsolete. The most user-friendly technology would go to waste. Even if implemented, the receiving end is not equipped. People can't understand the message or are not used to technology. In fact, most activities are done manually rather than using tools or technology, except perhaps in urban settings. At all times, a communication expert should bear in mind that urban centres like metros do not represent India, as they are merely influenced by westernisation. A major part of India is totally different. It is a fact that the governments intend to exploit new media for education, communication and many other crucial sectors of the economy. However, the unfortunate part is that people remain very distant from technology, feeling alienated. Because of the enormous population, the distribution of technology is extremely unequal. Because the persons in charge of gadgets are accountable to a higher authority, the concern is equipment damage, bureaucratic restrictions, or higher-ups preventing the in-charge from allowing the commoner to touch the gadgets. Hence, the whole technology exercise becomes redundant. People should be educated to cultivate open-mindedness and adapt to technology-related activities.

Social implications, social compulsions and social beliefs are also major hurdles to health communication. Animals, birds, and nature play vital roles in these beliefs, which are all interrelated with humans, however irrational or unscientific they may seem. Whatever may be the opinion of a dozen specialists, it is a rural deity, a stone idol decorated with flowers, that gives the judgment as far as social hazards are concerned. People believe that the he-god or she-God pronounces judgment by the fall of a flower to the left or the right, indicating acceptance or denial of the prayers. Fasting, starving, or remaining a vegan for a span of time to attain their wish. Still, they survive intact. Despite the best inventions and capabilities to cure diseases, social factors within a community, as well as other avenues, also open up, such as god-fearing, performing rituals and ceremonies, or banking on planetary

positions, and so on. These mindsets get in the way of successful technology implementation.

Also, the content of programmes on TV channels is riddled with conservative, traditional, and many times irrational ideas, devoid of scientific, rational messages. However, the TRP ratings of such programmes will be very high compared to any other programme. Astrology and numerology programmes on some regional channels rate well above those on any other channel, such a push of content by producers forces even the educated to mute acceptance.

When health communication is considered, it is not confined to mere physical health but to holistic health that includes mental and psychological health, social health, political health and so on. Physical health today is being provided as a service, but only through the private medical care system, which is extremely commercialised. Psychological health has gone for a toss through large quantities of content of crime and politics, coupled with lopsided sports stories of Cricket and extremely violent content-ridden Bollywood movies.

Social health is marred by market-oriented media inputs on Animation and Games, leaving children deprived of human-to-human and family interactions. The media's fast targets of teenagers [example, FM stations targeting the 15-25 age group] with sensationalised, titillating content only for increased TRPs, many times using women as a commodity, is not good for the health of the prime youth.

There are a few instances, like the 'Speak, India Speak' campaign over cell phones that have made the entire Indian lot simply brag and chat trivia rather than any serious, meaningful content. With the Target Audience of the various media of the current times, the entire exercise has boiled down to mere entertainment. The prime purpose with which mass media were realised, to educate the masses, has today taken a back seat. Most surveys on the reach of messages to the audience show that media is consumed mostly for entertainment. Today's media has become a toy.

New Media Communication is born out of high investments. Return-On-Investment is compulsive. In any communication exercise, money-back trumps message serving, so the health sector takes a major beating here. Also, consumers hesitate to participate in such communication. Moreover, public memory is very short. New Media Communication is much more time-consuming than radio, TV, or even print, in terms of access, affordability, and consistency. Advertorial, paid news, and sponsorships are commonplace in New Media. There is no trace of any campaigns on the websites regarding the eradication of leprosy and other dreaded diseases. None of the activities supports social living. They are extremely reliant on commercialisation.

Instances of unhealthy trends

In the subcontinent of India, several instances or case studies reveal interesting dimensions. The New Media failed to propagate the importance of pulse polio or of containing SARS, Dengue, or H1N1. Eg:- Pulse Polio campaign [2010] in Bangalore's top extension of Jayanagar, India. The Government of India, with its Ministry of Health, in coordination with different state governments, harped on the eradication campaign. Along with New Media, the newspapers, e-media, film theatres, print and folk media were used.

A survey was conducted in the residential pocket of Asia's largest residential layout, Jayanagar, to check the effectiveness of the campaign.

Media campaign period: *Three months*

Announcement made: *About the date of administering the drops to kids.*

52% of mothers queried before the campaign: *On the knowledge of where and when the pulse polio*

will be administered in their localities.

The Survey findings: Despite the widespread availability of nursing homes and hospitals in such a sophisticated area, all such mothers found the information about such a campaign completely new and surprising! They all rushed to the nearby drop-off points, administering kiosks only after receiving the information from the researchers. All this, even as New Media was being used for this campaign!

Marketing of medical drugs through the media has already begun. A drug company with overproduction of medicines resorted to propaganda of an illness that does not exist. The new media is also ignoring polio, leprosy and TB. For instance, in a tribal area of Karnataka state, though the government claimed eradication of polio, in the camps, the polio-affected children have been detected.

Irrespective of the media agenda giving priority to women's empowerment, female foeticide has not come down.

In the wake of the rising rate of farmers' suicides, it is evident that the media has miserably failed in propagating messages that convince people to participate in development.

The incident of the Sale of a Girl Child among the Banjara Community in North Karnataka state.

About Vasectomy, when given a search among social networking sites, it is found that those undergoing the surgery are nearly 1:1000. Also, the matter is merely reflected in social media sites. The male in the family getting operated on through a vasectomy after having planned the family is a rarity in India. Also, no trials of this kind on social media at all; in this line, effort and a campaign are needed. Somewhere it should take a head start.

Advertisers are gaining traction in social networking Sites. Popularising Naturopathy and Ayurveda are on the rise. Since the Allopathic side effects are forcing people to look towards native treatment, the networks are banking on the traditional knowledge but making it costly to afford.

a) Quacks making money by giving false promises to the infertile couple. An unquestioning belief among the major community of Hindus in India is that women without a child will never attain salvation. In Bangalore city, a software engineer couple, attracted by a website and wooed by a quack doctor, paid huge sums of money to purchase medical drugs, innocently consumed the drugs for a long time without getting any results and finally found that some sweet liquid with a honey mixture was given as a medicine. To their utter shock, the long consumption of the so-called medicine for infertility resulted in both of them being attacked by Diabetes, which doctors later diagnosed.

b) A chartered accountant identified as a kidney failure patient was wooed by the quacks narrating their dubious success stories; the couple was lured into the net and got into worse health within a very short time.

Beyond this are the added propaganda machinery like the advertisements and hoardings, especially mouth-to-mouth through the grapevine with a host of intermediaries and quacks appointed for the purposes of building stories about curing a patient [of AIDS, kidney failure, cancer, etc.].

In matters of individual and social health, the New Media poses potential dangers, including electronic crimes, pornography, illegal software reproduction, mishandling of electronic systems and their illicit intrusion (hacking), and copyright infringement and electronic plagiarism. 'As global communication on the new media threatens to overtake sex as a pastime, the very future of 'mass media' itself, and of the profession, might be perceived to be in jeopardy. New media has the potential to make us lazy, block social communication, create a separatist society, and prompt fundamental changes in our values. Morality is the culturally transmitted set of rules governing right and wrong conduct. However, the e-communities are part of a global community with mass culture. Therefore, the

aspect of right-hood or wrong-hood itself warrants serious reconsideration. This often creates cognitive dissonance among consumers, which can lead to poorer health.

With the new media spreading at such a fast pace, many questions, just for instance, '*Is Illiteracy going to diminish?*' will have to be answered. Consumerism on New Media should be strongly encouraged for Educational purposes. As of now, its utility for any level of education is very low. With its increase, as awareness levels are expected to rise, an equal proportion of people's good health should rise accordingly.

INFERENCES & CONCLUSION

There is an increasing case of *technology obesity* among users. There is a serious need for a Digital Diet today. The rapid growth of new media is too rapid for a subcontinent like India, with other economic, educational, and technological parameters lagging behind the media boom. The behaviour of people, their thinking, the family, the joint family system, and the dress culture have all undergone too many variations in a very short time, becoming a vexation to the spirit of inquiry in homo sapiens. Social networking is simply redefining human communication and relationships. The misuse of MMS, rampant time-wasting chatting, disturbing SMS messages, hacking, porn, plagiarism, and e-mail bombing have all become causes of concern. The dreaded disease of AIDS, despite the campaigns, is simply on the rise. In the Convergence era, the new media, along with their technologies, the internet, and mobile phones, have all entered India with no plan of entry.

The information explosion has resulted in information pollution. ISP regulation in India is confined to authorities such as the TRAI, which has a limited scope and control. It should be expanded to include many of the latest technologies and regulatory mechanisms.

SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

At the conceptual level, the communication policy should be clearly framed, especially in a developing situation. The absence of a communication policy has affected the growth of technology and the maturity of readers, listeners, or viewers. *Regulation, Not Control*, is the need of the hour. The media's primary role is to set the agenda for the next generation. In the absence of a policy, even the country's public health-care system is slowly being dismantled. Also, observation in the absence of a communication policy is that the objectives of one media, while being met to a certain extent, will be eroded by the entry of every other media, thus hampering a smooth transition. As per Wilbur Schramm's dictum, '*No mass media can exist in a cultural vacuum*'. Given India's diversity, a combination of a national policy and regional [state] policies will augur well for the smooth functioning of various media.

There is a need to undertake a SWOT on the impact of new media as a progressive tool of communication in modern society, analyse the contributions of new media for social change, assess the role of new media in development, find out the threats associated with it from a health communication perspective and suggest appropriate measures to use it as an instrument of change for development.

At the group level, for instance, care is yet to be taken to ensure that children accessing the Net in cyber cafes are protected from objectionable content and dangerous characters like child pornography and online paedophiles. Many educators or parents are unaware of how to use software filters on the Net.

A conducive situation for functioning of new media; implementation of new media from primary education compulsorily because it is a vast country with dense population and activities have to be injected from bottom level itself as it takes a lot of time to sustain and activate for the right results;

Visual literacy, formal literacy, media literacy – exposure to new media are all in very nascent stages as on now. It needs a real healing time for all of it to recover and gear up to the situation.

At the mass level, e-globalisation led to a decrease in life-supporting resources from generation to generation. Health is an issue of knowledge transfer across generations. Information from the skies is becoming more of a hindrance than an encouragement to preserving a peaceful life. Comforts have increased, while tranquillity has declined. There is a significant compromise between material comforts and the values that accompany them.

New media has sounded a death knell on local identities. In India, local heroes are vanishing fast. Local herbs, local food, local arts, local literature, and most that is local simmers in front of the giant practices of influences of global culture imitatively imbibed by sensitive but not sensible generations. Indian medicines and medications have huge potential and cannot be neglected or ignored.

Glossary

CAGR - Cumulative Average Growth Rate

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

GNP - Gross National Product

GPI - Genuine Progressive Indicator

ISP - Internet Service Provider

PHU - Primary Health Unit

SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

TRP - Television Rating Points

TRAI - Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of India

UNO - United Nations Organisation

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