

Using Digital Media For Entertainment – The Other Side Of The Digital Divide In India

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Abstract

Digital audio and video content is prolifically generated and consumed in today's media-rich, experience based economy. Despite of the digital divide that prevails in the developing regions, the present study showed that digital media has made its way to the everyday media consumption practices of economically challenged, urban consumers in India. In line with previous research, television and cinematic media traditions continue to constitute important aspects of media use. However, alongside television, digital media platforms, mobile phone and DVD player, in particular, have also become popular. The paper describes media use practices that were observed in this qualitative, exploratory study and highlights affordable digital media design opportunities based on the key findings. The notion of digital media acting as contributor to bridging the digital divide is discussed. However, future research is needed to establish the validity of this argument.

1. Introduction

Mobile phone penetration is increasing rapidly in India as well as other developing countries. In India alone, the operators registered 15 million new customers in the month of January 2009, with the total number of wireless subscriptions being at 360 million [22]. As opposed to mobile phone uptake, the growth in the use of Internet has been stagnant. According to a recent estimate, India had 45.3 million active fixed Internet users in September 2008, of which 42 million were from the urban community. The large discrepancy in the use of PCs versus mobile phones indicates that an increasing proportion of individuals in India are leapfrogging directly to the mobile age, without prior familiarity in computer use. Moreover, while uptake of the PC has been modest, mobile telephony is rapidly becoming innate to daily life in India for an increasingly large proportion of the population. While it is likely that uptake of

mobile telephony started from the higher income segments, as the penetration grows, an increasingly large proportion of the mobile phone owners are likely to come from economically challenged consumer segments. It could hence be argued that the mobile phone has great potential in terms of bridging the Digital Divide.

India and the Digital Divide are often mentioned together. However, it is essential to understand what we mean by this. Keniston [10] refers to four kinds of digital divides. The first exists in every country and separates the rich or the educated, that have access to information and communication technologies [ICT], from the poor or the illiterate with no resources. The second is a linguistic divide, which distinguishes the English-speaking elite in a country from the rest, who can only speak and understand the local language/s. The third divide segregates the so-called economically developed nations from the rest. A final distinction is that which exists within the educated workforce of high-growth markets. These are ICT professionals with high purchasing powers, as compared to their counterparts in traditional sectors. We refer to the first two kinds of divide in this paper.

Understanding media use is relevant in India, where experiencing visual and aural media (especially movies) is integral to leisure activities. Appadurai [1] asserts that modern India has two main passions – cricket and films. Kazmi [7] maintains that cinema is the most vital and effectual mass media in India. In fact, Kellner and Durham [8] consider media and culture as synonymous and also critical to understand any country's cultural milieu. It reveals mindsets and ways of life, but also posits how identities like gender, class and roles are shaped by media icons. Media is one of the many ways by which cultural capital is created. People interact with cultural capital and its artifacts everyday. Kellner and Durham question whether we really appreciate the nature and consequence of this interaction. We attempt this through our paper on content consumption practices of the urban masses – the poor.

Our underlying assumption is that if ICT is found to shape media related experiences amongst this segment, technology use can potentially empower the user by providing cultural significance. This can facilitate integration of economically challenged segments to the society as a whole.

Our focus therefore is on how digital media is presently used by those on the other side of the digital divide – especially for leisure activities. Examination of this phenomenon is critical not only to economic empowerment, but more intrinsically to social and psychological well-being. It is because social, cultural and psychological factors of a community, determines how digital media is experienced and consumed. An in-depth understanding of media experiences can thereby facilitate better solutions for low-cost media use, which in turn can emancipate these user segments from their present deprivation. For now, this argument should be taken with a grain of salt. We will return to this issue in greater detail in the discussion section.

Based on previous research in the field of media use in India, we expect our study to reveal the following two media related use patterns: (1) importance of film as media content and (2) prevalence of television as media consumption platform. In fact, film viewing among the urban poor, has transcended entertainment, passion and passive consumption, according to Dickey [4] in her study on movie-watching in South India. She argues that it is a dynamic process of cultural capital creation and socio-cultural empowerment. An in-depth knowledge of people's culture, norms and beliefs is indispensable. Basu [2] insists that it can pave the way for policy makers to design and implement administrative policies for national development. We believe that values or beliefs can be unearthed with socio-cultural capital, which is generated through people's entertainment habits, including cinema consumption.

In the sphere of entertainment and media consumption, television plays a dominant and nearly unchallenged role, at the expense of e.g., cinematic experiences in movie halls [12]. Rajgopal [13] explores how the Indian government in the 1960s and private players in the 1980s, have tried to shape public opinion by reaching out to the masses through this medium. Johnson [6] claims that television, through its serials, soaps and movies, has a very powerful, cultural influence on masses. Munshi [9] mentions that television grows at a pace of 20% and is the fastest growing medium. India alone accounts for more than 100 million households with television. Besides, 85% of urban and 45% of rural population

in the country have access to television. She also states that the media entertainment market, especially through television, is one of the biggest worldwide.

To sum up, it is against the backdrop of the importance of cinematic culture and television that we turn to investigate the topic of media consumption among the urban poor in India. We are particularly interested in studying the extent to which digital media consumption habits are observed among our sample, alongside traditional channels, specifically the television. Given that mobile phone is rapidly becoming adopted by the masses, has this technology started to mediate media related user experiences among the urban poor in India? What type of digital content and services are adopted by these users and moreover, what other platforms of digital media, in addition to the mobile phone, are used?

This paper considers how digital media facilitates and even drives entertainment or leisure among low-income, urban users. We believe that an inquiry in this regard has the potential of bridging the digital divide. To this end, we shall highlight some aspects from the research findings on digital media usage for a discussion of certain design implications, which can lead to social and psychological empowerment.

2. The study

This section discusses the research questions, data collection techniques and methodology that were used. The initial assumption was that content consumption and exchange are fundamental to entertainment or leisure activities of people. That it is both the cause and consequence of social interaction within a community of users. Our research findings corroborated this.

2.1. Research questions and sample

We try to answer the following questions about media and entertainment, among the third socio-economic category of users, who are economically challenged, i.e. the SEC-C in urban India.

- (a) What are the main forms of media related experiences among urban poor, entailing media content, media platforms and use contexts?
- (b) What is the relationship of emerging, digital media against the traditional forms of media consumption, especially the television?

For this, a field study was conducted on 42 respondents from first, second and third tier cities in north and south India. At least 7 respondents were interviewed in Delhi, Varanasi and Unnao in the

north of India as a first, second and third tier city respectively. Similarly, interviewees were chosen in Bangalore, Ramnagaram and Chikkatirupathi in the south as the first, second and third tier city respectively. Our sample had 30 men and 12 women.

All respondents were above 18 years, were economically challenged and had limited education. Male and female respondents were not chosen in equal numbers, since they were hired according to their willingness to participate. In each city, there was 1 primary respondent with 5 members of his/her social network. Besides this, 1 content provider (like shopkeepers of DVD/VCD shops; video rental libraries; mobile phone shops / downloading centres) was interviewed from each city.

2.2. Research technique

A combination of purposive random and snowball sampling was undertaken for choosing participants. Purposive random sampling aided selection of primary respondents, who named close members of their social circle. Snowballing facilitated access to this core group. Researchers met them only after primary respondents were interviewed, so that trust was built.

It is worth mentioning that the snowball method can be considered faulty, since it leads to groups of people with similar media habits. However, the method was used here alongside stratified random sampling and for a specific purpose. It was to learn how users consumed media individually and collectively. This would have been difficult without involving social networks of users through snowballing.

For the main data gathering exercise, an open-ended interview schedule was used. Questions in this session sought details on people's favourite leisure pursuits; how, when and why they consumed content from movies / songs; how they shared or exchanged it; and how they used their mobile devices.

Along with the guided interview session, there was also field immersion at the domestic space of interviewees. Researchers watched respondents' favourite movies and television serials with them, to learn how they consumed content individually and collectively. Subsequently, 'soft artifact' interview sessions took place. For this, users were shown a video clipping from a popular Hindi (in the north) or Kannada (in the south) movie and asked whether they would like to experience visual matter on mobile devices and how it would be shared. No formal interview schedule was used for content purveyors in the market, because the physical context was not conducive to extended, interactive sessions.

Data was analyzed to reveal six important issues. First, what content was specifically 'pushed' or provided by content providers in the market; what content was in demand; what was the specific audio and video content that was consumed and shared among SEC-C users; how did collective and individual content consumption occur; how did content travel within social networks; what was the experience of users in consuming content through various platforms (television, movie halls and the mobile).

For data analysis, the affinity or cluster approach [3] was followed. Raw data was grouped together to generate a hierarchy of themes. This was done by sticking notes (with field observations and respondents' quotes) together, and arranging them in terms of notes that went together, or had 'affinity' with each other. Every cluster was named, according to what best described all items under it. This became a first level theme. Subsequently, clusters with similar themes were placed together to build second-level themes, from which final themes were developed.

Themes were picked by first putting all sticky notes together and then arranging and re-arranging them in clusters, in terms of quotes or sticky notes that went together. Each cluster was then given a name, according to what best described all items and contents under it. This exercise is similar to Ryan and Bernard's theory on theme identification [14]. A first level theme emerged from the marking of various clusters of sticky notes. For e.g. there were certain notes with quotes from respondents about problems they faced in trying to view video content on their mobile phones. They mentioned that the small screen of the mobile phone made it difficult for group viewing, which was however not a problem when viewing video on television screens. Such sticky notes were grouped together to generate two first level themes, namely 'mobile video not conducive for group or collective consumption' and 'television enables group experience of content consumption, than the mobile platform'. Care was taken to avoid a general title like 'Constraints in collective consumption of content', since that was reserved for next level of abstraction of themes.

Higher level themes were further compared to identify how each theme related to the other. This was used to identify (a) specific content that was consumed and exchanged for entertainment (b) means and media used to exchange, or to experience it individually, and (c) motivations for sharing audio and visual matter.

3. Study findings

We discuss our research findings here, which are based on high level themes that emerged from affinity analysis. There were factors that determined the nature of content that was consumed, as well as means for consuming it personally and collectively. We firstly show how content was provided by sellers from the market place, followed by users' individual and collective experiences, along with a description of their economic background. Finally, we explain what platforms and media interactions were preferred and how context influenced these preferences.



Figure 1. Users' wish-list

3.1. The market

This was the space that was occupied by grey market dealers and content sellers. It was from here that all respondents purchased their audio and video material. Most content sellers in the north and south of India claimed that there was a greater demand for VCDs, rather than audio CDs. The demand for 'Bollywood' movies and songs was more in the north, than in the south, where regional movies were popular.

Petty, audio and video CD shops sourced their CDs at a lower price from wholesale markets in the nearest big urban centre and re-sold for a higher price. There were no price standards. For instance, audio CDs were sold to customers between the price ranges of Rs 10 – 100, while video CDs were sold between Rs. 30 – 200.

To meet growing demands of their customers, content sellers provided songs for mobile phones in downloading centers; sold extra memory sticks to clients; and even organized songs in separate folders according to the genre of audio tracks. One content seller in Varanasi said, "Customers came to downloading centers with a wish-list of specific audio tracks or genres to be loaded to their mobile phone (written in small chits of paper). Some even ask for download of games and other applications to their phones." The cost of 2 GB mobile content varied between Rs. 50 – 200.

Seasons affected content sellers, especially videographers / photographers, who took footages of weddings, naming ceremonies, the sacred thread ceremony and other such events. A videographer in Unnao had this to say, "We have better business during certain months that are considered auspicious for holding sacred rituals." Business for him peaked in winter, while the summer brought in lesser business.

Thus, it can be deduced that firstly, video content for entertainment was more popular than audio. Secondly, popular media moved from first to second tier cities and influenced trend of digital content. Finally, content sellers adapted their business to suit client needs, ranging from selling content for mobile media, to re-creating video content.

3.2. Media culture

There have been changes in the way India has consumed entertainment material over the years. Previously, television and nationalized channels were the only sources for video content. Today there are cable networks, private / regional television channels, mobile content, the Cineplex and other avenues.

However, the television experience, through movies, serials and soap operas, has been significant to the country's entertainment culture. This was also emphasized by our participants. The television as a symbol of entertainment and media was the principal object in the domestic space. Yet, people preferred to watch movies based on recommendation from members of their social network. Young participants actively consumed movies and songs. They even internalized their experiences in their mindsets, fashion trends, and everyday conversation.

Apart from age group of users, their regional antecedents influenced consumption. People from the north of India had migrated to the south and vice versa. This regional diaspora maintained its regional

identity by watching movies in their languages and forming fan clubs. A Tamil migrant in Delhi explained, “We watch Tamil movies, listen to Tamil songs and sing Tamil songs on our festivals. We are all Tamilians and have lived together, since our grandparents came to Delhi.”

Hence, television is innate to people’s entertainment culture. Its importance has transcended the boundaries of a media experience, to physically occupying prime, domestic space. Secondly, popular culture though shaped by mass media, is really upheld by the youth. Finally, media and content are critical determinants of regional identity and kinship.

3.3. Content in demand

There were mixed responses from people on what they liked to experience. It varied from new, Bollywood and regional movies to older movies. However, most respondents mentioned having liked a movie, because of its theme. Such themes were based on family values, love, social issues or even humour. Often movies were favored for its actors. Such preferences even translated itself into predilection for specific television serials, programmes and channels. Serials that were family based were popular among our interviewees in north and south India, as were reality shows that were based on Bollywood movies (singing, dancing or acting contests).

Participants were finicky about content. They rejected movies, movie stars and even audio / video CDs if it did not meet their requirements. Such tendencies were particularly displayed by those, who functioned as ‘media pushers’ within their social circle.

Thus, content became popular when it appealed to users, both emotionally and ‘sensorially’. It was not just the theme of a movie or song, but also the ‘face’ of content, i.e. popular stars and actors who were associated with it.

3.4. Infrastructure of users

This category of users typically faced infrastructure challenges like electricity and water shortage problems, apart from limited spending power. Nonetheless, they attempted to circumvent economic constraints by resorting to alternate, collective social activities, including content consumption. These included face-to-face interaction for pursuit of hobbies (cricket, game of cards, gossiping). Besides, they managed to listen to songs from their favourite radio stations through devices that did not require powered networks like, battery

operated radios and FM channels on mobile phones. Some even hacked television cables from neighbouring areas to view their favourite television programmes with friends. Hence, despite limited purchasing power, people maximized their consumption through various media.

3.5. Profiles and practices

All respondents belonged to the lower socio-economic category and consequently had modest professions, along with small living spaces. Some were drivers (of public and private vehicles), while others were daily wage labourers. Some were priests that officiated rituals. Consequently, educational qualifications were low. All of them worked long hours, but had found ways to incorporate leisure activities like watching movies and listening to songs into their daily or weekly routine.

Religious content consumption was a quotidian activity for many people. In fact, religious programmes and channels on television were as much in demand as audio and video CDs that were dedicated to Hindu deities or Muslim places of worship.

An interesting trend was replacement of active, religious rituals to passive consumption of audio and video content. In fact, interviewees in the north of India mentioned that previously, they actively chanted prayers and offered worship. Now, they found it easier to listen to audio CDs or tapes with religious chants. Similarly, the practice of offering worship on death anniversaries had changed. A respondent in Ramnagaram revealed, “Until few years back, we used to invite priests and religious bards to perform worship. Today, we rent televisions and DVD players and watch regional movies all night with our friends and family, after the initial worship.” Thus, the social experience of religious gatherings though preserved, had become increasingly media centric.

3.6. Content as social exchange

Movies and songs were consumed as a social and collective occurrence, rather than individual or personal. It was often a shared experience. The first way of exchanging content was to view soap operas, movies and specific television programmes with family members and neighbours in the domestic space. Therefore, it became a social experience. Echoing the views of many others, this female respondent in Bangalore said, “I must watch the television with my friends. That is also the time when

we catch up on joke and laugh. I do not like to watch alone, because I am bored and I fall asleep in front of the television...”



Figure 2. Television viewing – a social experience

Content was shared in yet another way. This was when respondents exchanged videos of movies or movie songs for free, as an indication of their social bond. Often, physical means like audio and video CDs were used. At other times, exchange happened through mobile phones, like a youth in Bangalore said, “On evenings and weekends, my friends and I transfer songs to each other’s phones by Bluetooth or Infrared. There are songs that someone will want and we always get it like this...” Thus mobile repositories were built as part of social capital. At such times, the person who transferred content to others and took the initiative of creating this repository, also became the media pusher and was respected by others in the social network. Usually preferences of media pushers determined what went into mobile ‘storehouses’ and even influenced tastes of others in the social circle.

Sometimes, content was exchanged for a price. But this was only between a seller and his clientele, whereby the former became the ‘go-to’ person for customers. Despite its monetary nature, this transaction had elements of trust and familiarity that grew gradually between a seller and his patrons.

Therefore, content was exchanged as a social capital, including mobile repositories among our respondents and their social networks in the domestic realm. Moreover, discrete nuclear families in a low-income neighbourhood, tended to function as a large social unit due to collective, content experiences.

3.7. Platform and experience

Despite economic challenges, nearly all our participants accessed television. Yet, the most common device owned by all was the mobile phone.

In fact, mobile phones and television sets, apart from CD players, were cited as the most valuable purchases by them. Among these, mobile phones were the most prolifically used. People even had preferences for features on their phones, like multi media functionality. “Unbranded Chinese phones are more popular, than any fancy Motorola or Nokia phone,” said an interviewee in a major market area of Delhi. The primary reasons for this were ease of use, multi-media experience and easy affordability.

We learnt that people liked the visual experience on television, rather than the big screen of movie halls, or the small screen of mobile phones. A participant in Bangalore stated why he preferred the television. “I can watch it (television) with my family and friends whenever I want to, without any effort. I am free to watch what I want and how I want. I surf channels, adjust brightness, colour, contrast and most importantly, volume. There in the movie halls, it is too loud.” Besides, they also had the luxury of experiencing content in domestic comfort.

Watching movies on a big-screen in movie halls was deferred to special events, like weekend plans / socializing with friends outside home / celebrating an occasion. On the other hand, video consumption on the mobile platform was not as popular as either television or the movie hall. This was because the small screen did not cater to the ‘sociality’ of collective consumption. Still, the mobile platform was preferred for audio. Not only were songs from popular movies downloaded by mobile phone shopkeepers onto users’ phones, but users themselves exchanged audio tracks.

Hence, content could be consumed from a multitude of platforms. But, the choice of platform was determined by the need for social experience and a preference for accessing content effortlessly.

3.8. Content consumption context

People were inclined towards experiencing video content on their television in their domestic space. Songs and FM radio stations were heard on mobile phones or MP3 players when in transit. Although many users appeared to like the idea of watching video on the mobile phone when on-the-move, they also stressed that “it would not allow group viewing”, as pointed out by an interviewee in Chikkatirupathi.

Users were also adept at switching between devices. They preferred television when at home during evenings. However, the radio was used early in the morning by those with no immediate access to a television. Similarly, the landline was used to make calls by those with access to mobile phones,

depending on the urgency for communication and physical context of people receiving calls.

People watched movies, serials, TV programmes and heard songs during their leisure hours, when they were away from work. This was on weekday evenings, late nights and often during weekends. Respondents mentioned watching movies on television; going to the movies with friends; and hiring movie CDs.

Therefore, the use of media for its experience was according to respondents' social, physical and emotional context. Depending on the time of day; availability of leisure and inclination, people chose devices / media for its content.

4. Discussion

In this section we initially summarize our research findings. This is followed by considering certain design implications for products, services and applications that can be inferred from the study results.

4.1. Study outcome and relevance to research questions

To briefly recapitulate, we had two research questions. The first was on media experiences, media content and media platforms of users. From the study findings it is seen that video content was experienced collectively and as a group, i.e. with friends and family. Music and other audio content were consumed both individually and collectively.

As far as specific content went, people favoured movie-based content. Besides this, regional antecedents, personal and peer preferences influenced content consumption. For instance, migrants from cities in the south of India maintained their regional and communal identity by watching movies from their region and celebrating region-specific festivals.

Apart from movies, there was a strong demand for religious content, but this was more among interviewees from temple towns like Varanasi in the north of India and Chikkatirupathi in the south. In other cities, the need for experiencing religious content was high during festivals and religious events. It was experienced aurally and as a collective experience.

Speaking of platforms for media experience, people preferred those that suited their physical and social contexts. Although mobile phones were used ubiquitously, it was more for communication and accessing audio content. Here, the mobile phone had complemented (though not yet supplanted), the

original radio or transistor. Few respondents had mobile phones with video content. But, by and large, mobile phones were preferred as a personal communication device and not as a personal multimedia device. Television was popular among our participants for viewing video content, collectively. Besides, it also gave autonomy and freedom to users in experiencing content.

Our second research question dealt with emerging forms of digital media and its relation to traditional means, especially the television. Traditionally, video cassettes and audio tapes had been popular, but had now been replaced by audio and video CDs, including DVDs. In all this, the television played a critical role in the past and even today was the most preferred platform for consumption of video content.

4.2. Design opportunities – empowering economically challenged users through digital media

The study indicates that digital entertainment has permeated to the “other side of the digital divide”, despite financial constraints experienced by this particular segment. Digital media is integral to the lives of low income Indians, where cinematic and religious video content is consumed through television (using the DVD player) and mobile phones provide a platform for audio content. In this section, we return to the ‘empowering media’ argument set forth in the Introduction. Through our findings, are there signs of digital media having an empowering effect on users? Can media use facilitate the wellbeing of an economically challenged individual?

An analysis of key research findings reveals the following themes, which we believe supports the ‘empowering media’ argument: (1) Collocated media use; (2) Emergence of mobile media repositories; (3) Maintaining cultural identity. The subsections below describe these themes while highlighting future design opportunities for the respective areas. The key question is: how to develop these themes to design new media experiences that can facilitate the wellbeing of an economically challenged user?

4.2.1. Collocated media use. A preference for consuming media as part of a large group was observed. In all study locations, it was common for several households to gather in a home which had a television. Such social forms of media use were partially because not every household owned a television. It was clear, however, that people also enjoyed this collocated form of media consumption, due to enriched social experiences. For instance,

collective viewing of soap operas or movies on television at a neighbour's place was innate to socialization activities. Users mentioned visual experiences being much more enjoyable when undertaken alongside meeting and catching up with friends. Thus, interaction with media was concurrent with social interaction with friends and neighbours. This accentuated people's 'feel good' factor during leisure. Denying the importance of television-viewing as a critical leisure pursuit with social implications, Unnikrishnan and Bajpai declare that it is a silent or sleep-inducing activity. Instead, our study shows that this was an interactive experience for the SEC-C participants, along with their family and neighbours. Thus, a potentially passive practice was turned dynamic and enjoyable by them.

Here, we build further upon Gladwell's postulation that social interaction and intermingling with friends and peers in fact improves people's lifestyle and longevity [6]. His case study was that of a small town called Rosetta in the USA, where most inhabitants had migrated from a small village in Italy by the same name. The life span of people here was longer than that of their counterparts in neighboring provinces. One of the primary reasons was frequent socialization and 'hanging out' with friends.

Historically, there is a miniaturization of platforms for visual consumption of media. A reduction is observed from big-screens of movie halls to televisions, followed by computer screens and mobile devices. Small screens enable personal media experiences. The increasingly personal technology, alongside a shift of social interaction to cyber networks led Putnam [11] to conclude that the West has individualization of leisure time. Interestingly, this "Bowling Alone" argument is contrary to a preference for sociality among our economically challenged Indian consumers.

Television acted as social glue among our study participants, while mobile phone lent itself to personal media use experiences. Given the potentially empowering effect of collocated media use, a design challenge arises here: would it be possible to take a step back in the miniaturization trend and consider the extent to which mobile devices could be enablers or mediators of big screen viewing and more collective user experiences? The popularity of SMS voting in television shows such as Idols, even in developing countries like India, indicates that the television, while being an important form of media output, is also becoming more interactive and personalized. Individual viewers' choices are expressed through the mobile phone simply through an SMS. Perhaps, in the future, mobile technology could provide even more control over what media we

consume through television and how it is used. Thus studying the juxtaposition of the two popular platforms, television and mobile phone, is an opportunity even for affordable technologies. We assume that making television viewing an interactive and personalized experience may further facilitate positive user experiences for shared and collocated media use.

4.2.2. Emergence of mobile media repositories. No household owned a computer. This is in contrast to consumers from higher income groups, for whom the computer becomes a media hub. That is, digital content is downloaded and saved on to the computer from the Internet and physical media such as DVDs and CDs. The computer assumes the role of a media repository, representing the taste and preferences of its owner. Despite lack of computer access, content did migrate to mobile phones of our respondents. An interesting pattern observed in several locations was to write lists of songs as a wish-list to the local dealer, who would transfer these songs to mobile phones of individuals. Hence content residing originally on the Internet and computer was stored on a mobile device with a middle-man's support. A certain kind of leapfrogging is observed, wherein mobile phones of low-income users become media repositories, allowing storage and consumption of digital content.

Access to such mobile media repositories may have an empowering impact on an individual. Prevalence of affordable mobile phones, which allow storage and consumption of multimedia content, can support democratization of access to and control over media. The design opportunity is naturally related to further facilitating this trend. Hence, how can one identify low cost, computer-agnostic solutions for expressing one's media related desires and subsequently accessing / storing such content? The low literacy level of this segment is particularly relevant. How can song and artist names be entered to the mobile device with minimal use of the key pad? Would voice-based user interfaces be the future, and if so, can such technologies be provided at low cost?

Another design opportunity that can further contribute to the mobile device acting as a media hub is related to enabling content sharing in a peer-to-peer manner. Many participants acquired digital content from dealers. Yet, once content was purchased, it was lent / shared with one's social network, free of cost. Songs and film clippings were transmitted between mobile phones through Bluetooth, while DVDs were lent to friends and relatives. Digital content that had entered a social network through financial transaction thus migrated

within the network through socially mediated forms. Though this pattern can be also observed among other consumer segments and geographies, it is likely that economic constraints of this particular consumer group engendered strong motivation for P2P sharing. Challenges associated with digital rights management and rampant piracy aside, the particular design implication here is that of harnessing low cost sharing solutions in low price-point mobile phones. Several examples of Bluetooth based sharing were identified in the course of the study. This suggests that wireless file transmission that is free of cost, such as Bluetooth, is likely to be an important feature for media hungry, economically challenged users. However, it is also the case that most low-end mobile phones are typically not Bluetooth-enabled, which, in turn, prevents users from freely exchanging content. In sum, low-cost sharing solutions may further facilitate role of mobile phones as media hubs, contributing to a sense of control and ownership amongst the users.

4.2.3. Maintaining cultural identity. It was seen that digital content pertaining to one's geographic origin was widely used. For instance, migrants from Tamil Nadu, but living in New Delhi could obtain Tamil content (DVDs, audio CDs, etc.) from Delhi's local market place. As Indian languages and religions vary widely between its regions, the fact that content relevant to origins of migrant communities is available also in the destination city could be considered important for maintaining one's cultural identity. Festivals and religious events, for instance, may be specific to a certain region, but digital media pertaining to one's roots provides a personalized and culturally relevant way for migrant families to preserve traditions of their home-state.

Urbanization is the megatrend of the 21st Century, particularly in Asia [23]. An increasing proportion of the populations in developing countries will be migrating toward cities in the future. Technologies that can facilitate the maintenance of one's cultural roots could play a surprisingly important role in terms of facilitating the wellbeing of migrant communities. One of the design opportunities here is related to the possibilities of mobile Internet. As an increasingly large proportion of mobile phones become Internet enabled, and as reduction in the cost of data transmission rates for mobile Internet applications is gradually taking place, we may witness a shift to more real-time consumption of locally relevant media even in the SEC-C segment. For instance, the present study showed that FM radio was a popular feature in the mobile phones of the participants. However, in future, perhaps mobile

Internet can be used to access radio stations pertaining to one's origin. This could be a highly relevant feature for a migrant individual struggling to connect to her home region.

5. Summary and conclusions

We briefly touch upon some of the major findings from our research endeavour here. In doing so, we discuss the works of those, who have researched in similar areas. This is to see how far our conclusions validated or differed from that of others.

One of our major observations was that movie watching was a prime leisure activity. But, people were also particular about the theme of movies they watched. Therefore, Rajadhyaksha's contention that a movie's storyline is important to viewers, due to their passion for movies and for the experience of film-watching, is validated. Storyline led respondents to identify and uphold their regional cultures, which even Kellner, Durham and Ninan propose [10].

Both the story line of movies and movie stars were important to our participants. We saw that cinephiles were zealous about film actors, who they perceived as real-life heroes; better reflections of their own selves and compassionate towards the poor. Movie 'stars' influenced fashion trends of young interviewees. Even Dickey's study on media fans in Tamil Nadu's squatter colonies posits the same. Fiske and Hartley [5] call it a global phenomenon.

More significantly, it was seen that television-viewing was not a prerogative of the urban elite. Nor were cinema halls for lower economic viewers, as Dickey and Appadurai postulate. Our respondents preferred television for the freedom and choice of audio-visual experience that it offered, apart from sociality of collective, video consumption. This is also validated in Johnson [17], Unnikrishnan and Bajpai's work on television use in rural and semi-urban India.

Users with television and CD players shared visual experiences with their community. Consequently, there was no privileged access to media information, unlike Johnson's claim. In fact, people preferred to watch television at their neighbours' homes for the collective, video experience and the sociality involved.

There was no negativity attached to movie-watching and listening to film songs among our interviewees, unlike Dickey's observation. Also, Kazmi's argument of a mutual incompatibility of popular culture (disseminated through personal contact) and mass culture (permeated by mass media) stands contested. The migration and creation of social

capital (i.e. aural and visual matter) within communities merges the two cultures. This is because even economically challenged consumers actively create and disseminate content to a larger network.

A critical discovery was media savvy-ness of people. It negates the conventional stereotype of lack of media / technology awareness associated with people from modest economic backgrounds. The lack of purchasing power had not deterred them from obtaining content variously, i.e. through ‘wish lists’ of downloadable songs, from sellers in the market and even exchanging through Bluetooth and Infrared. All this led to creation of mobile repositories. In all this, our inquiry also highlighted an area worth looking for, beyond cinematic traditions, i.e. the role of ICT in supporting religious practices of people.

To conclude, this paper shows that digital media consumption in India is catching up among urban low income consumers alongside traditional media - typically the television. However, the mobile phone also lent itself to media driven experiences, despite its limitations, such as its inability to support socially driven media experiences and the extent to which a low cost mobile phone can be a hub for storing media. Future research is needed to make the study findings more generalisable and to conclusively establish that a connection exists between digital media and increased wellbeing. Nevertheless, our results indicate that the media argument needs further investigation with more people from the wrong side of the digital divide, being able to access digital media on the morrow.

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