



EXAMINING THE FACTORS LEADING TO INCREASE IN CONTENT CONSUMPTION ON SMARTPHONE APPS

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ABSTRACT

Today a Smartphone is one's best friend and especially among the youth, Smartphones have taken a special place in their lives, where they are not merely the communication devices, rather have an endearing bond with the users. The purpose of this study is to determine the factors leading to increasing engagement of the users with the Smartphone for media consumption, despite the availability of other media like television, laptop, and tablet etc. Smartphones are being intensely used in a personalized manner by the youngsters and this has many implications on the social and the personal lives of the users. Hence, it is important to analyze the change in the viewing patterns of the users. The researcher has been able to conclude that various factors such as technological convergence, time convenience, interactivity and user generated content etc. have made Smartphone as the first choice, over other media among the users.

KEYWORD - Smartphone, Apps, Media, Video, Content, Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Years ago when the first Smartphone was launched by IBM, it was called the fourth screen, and was considered only after the theatre screen, television screen and the laptop/personal computer screen. Today a Smartphone can fit in one's palm and is the forerunner, in the race to become the first screen among the other media.

The newspapers which made it to the breakfast table of the individuals, a few years ago are now feeble survivors, in the tech-savvy generation. The online media including the e-newspapers have given a huge jolt to the traditional print industry.

Television was considered as a source of family entertainment, which produced programs for general audience, conveniently delivering news, sports, soap operas, comedies all at one platform in the home of the viewer (Grolier, 2004). It was the medium of family integrity, where the members of the family used to sit together and watch the programs. Fixed time slots were booked from the busy schedule of every one's life to match the timing of the telecasted programs. This phenomenon of group viewing, mass viewing and viewing with the family members has been an important attribute associated with the medium of television. Today the television lies deserted in some

nook or corner of the house, sometimes unrepaired and at times without any satellite connection.

The accelerated technological innovations and their rapid diffusion in the world, has led to the evolution of media. The media **theory of domestication** states that the domestic household learns to integrate a new media/technology and then integrates it into their lifestyle [1]. A domesticated technology, once incorporated in one's life, is viewed a useful, reliable and trustworthy. The Smartphones have been well domesticated and have transformed the households and the public spheres. Although, each media demands unique attention from the users in respect to the time and attention spent, (Bogart, Leo) users are spending more time on Smartphone than on any other media (Howarth, J., 2022). The youngsters are anxious to develop an identity for themselves outside their immediate family (Walsh et al., 2006). In such a scenario relying on friends and peers for recommendation provides them a sense of connection and being a part of the community. Hence the recommendations by the friends on the type of the content to watch, gives them a feeling of belongingness and social identification. (Hogg & Abrams, 1988) in her study while discussing about the **social identity theory**, stated that the in-groups who possess a Smartphone are favorably perceived than the out-groups who did not own Smartphone.



SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The engagement of the users with Smartphones has already been the subject of analysis by various research scholars. In the domain of communication studies it is very important to investigate the factors which engage the users with Smartphones. The enormous entertainment apps in the Smartphone, which vary from productivity to lifestyle and entertainment apps, keep the users hooked for hours, a phenomenon which can't be overlooked. In 2021, the data collected on the usage among the Indians showed that consumers spend more than 80% of their time on Smartphone apps (Perez, S. 2021). Smartphone is indeed the most used media among the respondents because of various favorable reasons and a profound analysis of the factors is the main objective of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies by (Muhammad Sarwar et. al, 2013) to find out the impact of Smartphone on society, investigated the positive and the negative impacts of Smartphone on the individuals.

(Krithika et.al, 2013) in their questionnaire survey method on higher secondary students inspected the probable threats among the young adults from the irresponsible use of Smartphone. (Archana T. et al, 2014) while studying about mobile addiction among students found that of the sample selected, 75% students were addicted to mobile phone. The mobile addiction in students was dependent on the education stream chosen by them and was independent of their gender. Examining the factors influencing the Smartphone addiction among students, the results in the study by Munasinge P.G (2016) confirmed that when children are taught to think rationally from very early years, it would help to reduce their levels of Smartphone addiction. The examination of the available literature indicates that Smartphones have many advantages as well as disadvantages. Though the Smartphones are making our lives easy, it is important to evaluate if excessive engagement with Smartphone apps can lead to negative impact on our lives.

METHODOLOGY

The advent of Smartphone in 1992 by IBM, the internet connectivity with the Smartphone in 2000 and the launch of the iPhone in 2007 with advanced battery life and new features changed the lifestyle of people. The internet age has created global citizens living and connecting with each other beyond geographical boundaries. As it is being proven by various studies that youth are spending more and more time to be online on the electronic devices, the time spent by them on Smartphones apps was assessed. A mall intercept survey was conducted on the age group of 15 – 45 year olds. The growing popularity of Smartphone apps was evident as all the

respondents admitted to watch video content on Smartphone apps, sometime or other.

Assessing the factors for increase in content consumption on Smartphone Apps

CONVERGENCE AND SMARTPHONE

Converge which in simple terms means coming together, has deep implications in the media. According to media theorist Henry Jenkins, convergence can be identified as follows:

- Economic convergence; where a single company expands its interest across various media.
- Cultural convergence; where the readers/users can talk back to culture by using the interactive features of like, comment, and share the stories/content that flows across various media platforms.
- Technological convergence; where the blending and integration of independent technologies take place into one device for diversified services.

He states that the result of all the convergence is organic convergence; a diverse media world, where people are multitasking with multimedia. The medium of Smartphone is the apt example of convergence which is giving economic, cultural and technological benefits to the users, making their life convenient and comfortable.

THE RISE OF THE ONLINE AND ON-DEMAND MEDIA CONTENT

Video cassette recorders (VCR) introduced for TV viewers in 1972, to record and view television programs later, introduced the feature of 'fast-forward' to skip the commercials (Dobrow, 1990). The plastic cassettes of VCR available in different shapes and sizes comprised of magnetic video tape (Calem, 2004). These VCRs introduced more control for the viewers over their television viewing experience, pertaining to entertainment (Alali & Conner, 1999). Later in 2005, a portable media player was introduced by Apple to play video content. Now with the advent of Smartphones apps, the option of watching the online content at time and place of one's choice, has given the control in the hands of the viewers instead of the program producers.

As the ways in which users consume media is undergoing a shift, the appointment viewing - a trend set by the television – to watch a show at the time it is broadcasted on the network, either live or recorded, is undergoing a major change[4]. The ease with which the on demand media is available to the audiences, and the substantial implications that it has on the viewers can't be overlooked (Holahan, 2006). The decline in popularity of watching television has been fulfilled by Smartphone which has made this possible for the consumers to watch the shows that they missed on television, at a time of their own convenience (Streisand, 2007).



It is indeed an engrossing area of research to probe the enigmatic features of Smartphone, in order to understand the factors which are engaging the users to view video content on Smartphone, despite the fact that the screen size of Smartphone is small as compared to other electronic devices like tablets and laptops.

USER GENERATED CONTENT

The YouTube has emerged as the number one content platform preferred by the users. The online platform is streaming content which has revolutionized the viewing experience of the users. The users are involved in an active participation with the content. It has provided the users a novelty which no other platform had given them before; the facility to produce and upload their content. The content which can be uploaded from one's home and can be accessed by anyone sitting in any part of the world has created networked spaces of interests (Van Dijk, 2013). The content on YouTube is diverse, the duration of the content varies from short duration content to long duration content and the content can be easily found on the YouTube search bar. A lot of users are uploading their content and turning entrepreneurs (Ross, H, 2014). It is very convenient for the users to watch anything in YouTube on their Smartphone, by typing in the search bar of the YouTube app.

INTERACTIVITY

The different definitions of Interactivity, as derived by researchers are - interactivity is a dialogue between the users, it is a two way communication, and it is the process of reciprocity (Johnson, Bruner, & Kumar, 2006).

According to (McMillian & Hwang, 2002) interactivity encompasses the subjective perceptions of the users. Yim, Chu, and Sauer (2017) stated that a technologically effective delivery process can enhance interactivity and motivate the individual to communicate. For the current study, on the adoption of Smartphone Apps for media consumption, the definition of interactivity used, has been coined by (Liu & Shrum, 2002, p. 54) as

“The degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium, and on the messages and the degree to which such influences are synchronized”

An interesting observation is that they are not merely viewing the content, they are involved in the multitasking with the content as well (minnesot) Unlink television which is meant of passively absorbing the information, the viewers are today interactively consuming the media on Smartphones. They like to send messages to friends during consuming the content, share the links of the content they liked on the social media platforms, write comments and give feedback of the episodes watched. The feature of interactivity has made it a medium to be enjoyed thoroughly by the users.

CONCLUSION

Factors like organic convergence, availability of the on demand-online media at ease, popularity of the user generated content and the feature of interactivity have enabled the medium of Smartphone to be the primary choice among the users. Despite the limitations like small screen of the Smartphone compared to television and laptop, users prefer to consume media on Smartphone. The low cost of the data and high speed internet connectivity are also the facilitating factors due to which there has been an immense increase in the content consumption among the users.

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