

An Evaluation of Social Media Literacy among Paniya Tribes

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Abstract

The social media literacy demands the various practices that allow people to access, critically evaluate and create media. It includes a set of skills that indicates a high level of understanding and interaction with the technology. Along with sharing festival-related, cultural, educational and job-related information, these social media spaces promote internet-based activism and legitimize issues related to basic human rights. The paper tries to throw some light into the exposure of Paniya tribes to Social media. The younger generation among the tribes is leaning towards technology and social media. They use it for education, entertainment and communication with others. The footages of traditional programmes using thudi and kuzhal are captured and shared by them within their community and outside. The less educated ones use different methods such as using symbols, sending voice messages in their own tribal dialects etc. to communicate with others. The community radio stations use this media to educate the tribes and to create awareness among them on various issues like Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD). Quantitative method is used to evaluate the Social media literacy level among Tribes in Wayanad District using Purposive sampling.

Introduction

The English word tribe has come from the Latin word ‘tribus’ which signifies a particular type of common and political organization which is alive in all these societies. The name ‘tribe’

refers to a category of people and designates a step of development in human society. As a type of society the term signifies a set of typical features and as a point of advancement it connotes a definite form of social organization (Behura, 1990). Tribal population is found in almost all parts of India. Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal claim to be leading tribal states in the country. About 68 million people of India are members of Scheduled Tribes.

The social media is playing a major role in bringing changes in the life style of the people in any society. In the process of communication, the people know about the things happening around them. It is needful to the human society to improve knowledge and for knowing the new innovations and modern technology. Lakshmana Rao (1966) has explained that the “influence of communication as a significant factor in development”. Schramm (1964) speaks of communication and economy as the means of development process. The development of the social media enables the people to go the necessary information and make them to participate in the national system. Golding pointed out “the theories of exogenously induced change relevant to media theory, suggest that static societies are brought to life by outside influences, technical aid, knowledge, resources and financial assistance and by the diffusion of ideas” (1974: 43).

The media theorists assumed that social action can be understood mainly in terms of individual beliefs and attitudes, the ways in which attitudes may be the product rather than the cause of economic conditions and power relationships and this is crucial problem in understanding the role of media in any society. Long (1977) explained that developed economy is characterized as a highly differentiated structure and an underdeveloped one as relatively lacking in differentiation. Hence, change centres on the process of differentiation itself. This seems occurring in several different spheres: in the economy, the family, the political system and religious institution (1977: 9-10).

The aim of the paper is to discuss the social media literacy level among the Paniya tribes of Wayanad District of Kerala. The study was conducted in the Paniya tribal villages. These villages are deprived of basic facilities like road, drinking water, electricity and many other basic facilities. This study would be highlighting their communication using social media among the tribes and to outside people.

Research Problem

It is being widely seen today that the traditional features of tribal life are gradually changing from being deeply ingrained in tribal customs and traditions to something that is more modernized, in a developmental sense, due to adaptation of modern ways of living and altered life-style pattern. In the modern process of change, Social media has brought a new change in more or less all localities of tribal of Wayanad District. Anthropologists are mostly concentrating to understand the cultures of different human groups, in holistic perspective. And also they are trying to examine the levels of development and change in the lives of different human groups due to acculturation, innovation and diffusion of new ideas through the process of communication. The role of social media on the lives of rural people in India is obviously an important study as it has become a part of their life. There is no significant study on this problem in Tribal communities of India. The present study contributes to the problem and fills the gap.

Objectives

The objectives of the present study are the following:

- To evaluate the social media literacy among the Paniya tribes
- To examine the influence of technology in the Paniya tribal lifestyle

- To study the sharing of their traditional skills within their community and outside

Significance of the Study

Significance of the study arises from the fact that tribal cultures and traditions need to be preserved. These are our indigenous cultures and traditions and if we do not take the effort to preserve them then we would lose a life that was once an integral part of our everyday existence. The goals should be to see how social media can help the tribes to develop along the lines of their own ingenuity and avoid imposing anything on them and to encourage their traditional art and culture, their land and forests respected to the maximum. Tribal people should be allowed to administer themselves and avoid entry of too many outsiders into tribal area in the name of administration, without overwhelming them with too many schemes and work in cooperation with their own social and cultural institutions. The development factor should be judged according to the perceived indices of actual level of human development seen in the context. The influence and effects of social media in their lifestyle and other aspects is not negligible.

The study is concentrated on the villages of Wayanad District of Kerala and cannot be generalized for other such townships as the socio-economic conditions could be different for other towns. The unwritten literary world of the tribal community, the unavailability of documented sources to study the characteristics of tribes of Paniya in the present scenario is one of the major hindrances to study the impact of social media on tribes of Wayanad district of Kerala. The comparison of educated and uneducated is a tedious process as uneducated members are a few users was in number.

Review of Literature

The word ‘tribe’ means a part of common organization, mainly between primitive people but existing in some present societies, consisting of a group of people claiming a common heritage, usually contributing a common way of life, and originally living together under chief of head-man (Tiwari and Sharma, 1989).

The project submitted by Dr. Pravash Chandra Manna to Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India, is of the view that the tribal development department of the central government has some exact strategies for rehabilitation and growth of the tribal societies. But there was no comparability between what the tribal development department offered and what the tribal community needed, opined M. A. Udaykumar at the 7th international conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR), held at Bangkok during 09-12 July, 2006.

Beck and Mishra (2010) stated that, “Displaced from their natural forest habitats, their economic, social and psychological poverty is steadily increasing. It is in this context, it is essential to look at the quality of life led by the different tribal communities.”

According to Verma (2011), all tribal communities deserve more and special treatment, especially the young generation, “If the youth do not have higher education and communication, how can we think of real and fast development of tribes?”

“The worldview of the tribal groups in India is not a static picture of their universe nor it is closed system; it incorporates the world which, in turn, guides their day-to-day life and culture Saraswati (1991), so the changing perceptions and tastes of the people in the tribal areas are changing the surrounding environment”.

Ghurey (1959) says “the tribes as backward Hindus as according to him, the tribes of central India are neither isolated from the Hindu caste of the plains in the terms distribution and tradition, nor are they true autochthonous in their present habitat”.

Fordham (1998) suggests that because language is a vessel of culture, so its loss can be harmful to the cultural heritage if it is continued. Language loss compromises tribal uniqueness and sovereignty. Moreover, their cultural heritage and identity also gets separated from their children, preventing them from communicating with elders and from participating in their language community.

Acknowledging the contribution of modernity and its evil effects, Longchar (2012) submits that, “Modernity in spite of its positive contributions in many areas of life has created restlessness and identity crisis among the trials.”

Louis (2000) is of the opinion that the indigenous people’s myth, stories, tales, and songs replicate their social, political and cultural organization. Nature, environment and ecology play the most important roles in their lives. They have developed their religious beliefs and practices around these life-giving forces. But ‘modern and literate’ society terms their religious ‘animistic’ a derogative term that looks down upon the tribal religious way of life.

According to Stapp & Buerney (2002), “Cultural properties should be maintained because they are in danger of destruction. The most important threat according to him is development, looting, erosion, and inadvertent impact from recreationists.”

“The pressure of modernization, cultural flow and market forces, most of the traditional practices, as adopted by these tribal communities are still gifted with certain beliefs, values, norms and institutional mechanisms” (Kala 2005, 2009).

Malyadri (2012) is of the opinion that a major problem lies in the fact that even though the tribal readily acknowledge the impact of modernization and the demands of time, but they are not coming forward to bring reforms in their educational status and in their economic standards.

The review of literature reveals that there are both positive aspects and negative aspects of access to Social media. So far there is no particular study regarding Social media and Tribal life in Wayanad. It is relevant to explore different social media practices which are prevalent among the Paniya speaking tribal areas and also evaluate whether social media is linked to their cultural life.

Methodology and Data Collection

The research has been conducted after adapting various analytical techniques, so as to achieve the set objectives of the topic i.e. the level of social media literacy among Paniya tribes of Wayanad District of Kerala. The study was conducted in the Paniya tribal villages scattered in various parts. These villages are deprived of basic facilities like road, drinking water, electricity and many other basic facilities. This study would be highlighting the importance of social media linked to their cultural life.

A total of 50 people were covered during this study. The present study is based on the empirical data, collected from each member, relating to various parameters of social media. The secondary data was collected from newspapers, magazines, online journals etc. Quantitative aspects have been taken into consideration for the study of the researcher. The methodology followed was a questionnaire-based survey among the tribes of the selected localities. The questionnaire consisted of various aspects of social media affecting the tribal religious customs

and traditions, about their involvement with their communities, their views etc. The questionnaire was used as a tool and was filled by the researcher based on their response.

The objective of the study could be achieved by using various tabular techniques to come to a conclusion after analyzing the data. The techniques employed to compute the data are simple calculation through Microsoft excel sheets and column charts.

Anaysis and Discussions

Paniyas give very little importance to education. Most of them are not yet conscious of the benefits of education and consequent economic gains. There is a feeling among the Paniyas that, after education their children will become alienated from their family when they migrate to the towns for taking employment. Moreover, they believe that the educated children are reluctant to take up their traditional occupations. It is found that the problem of illiteracy is acute among the Paniya community. Now-a-days, the drop-out-rate is also high among them.

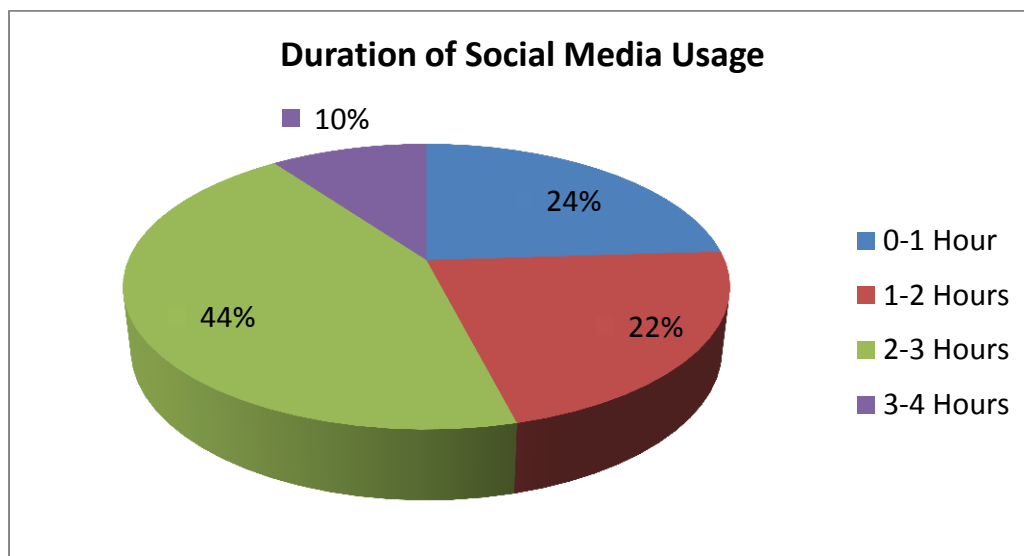


Fig.1: Duration (in Hours) of Social Media Usage

In Fig.1, the time duration of the respondents using social media is evaluated. 24% use the media below one hour. The persons using it between one and two hours are 22%. The majority uses it between two to three hours (44%). 10% of them are heavy users for more than three hours.

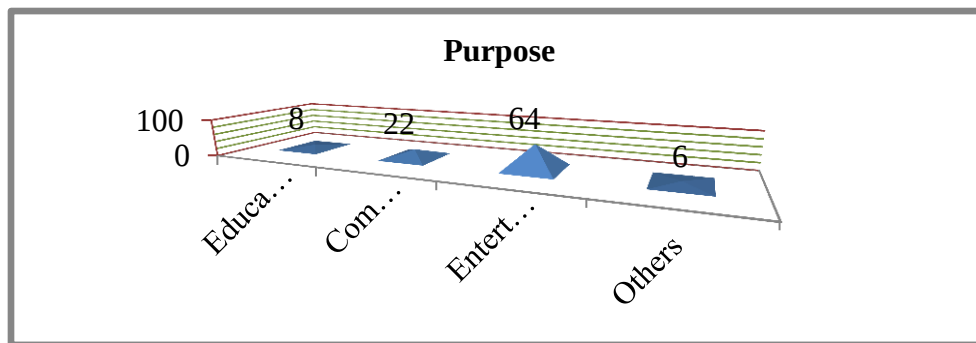


Fig.2 : Purpose of using social media

In Fig.2, the purpose of using social media is evaluated. They mainly use it for entertainment, communication with others, education etc. Most of them use it for entertainment purpose (64%). They also wish to communicate with people within their community and outside (22%). A few students use it for aiding their school works. The rest of them use it rarely to get some important information.

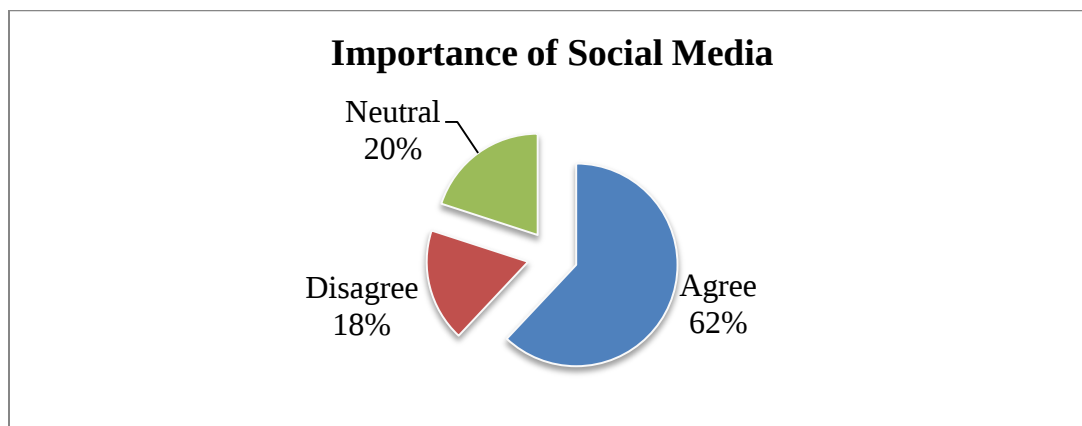


Fig. 3: Evaluation of role of social media in the society

In Fig.3, an evaluation of the role of social media in the society is done using the question “Do you agree that social media has an important role in the society? (Agree, disagree, neutral).” The question was asked to the persons, the data has been collected which is shown graphically. This data collection reveals that majority of them (62%) agree with the opinion that the social media is important among them. 20% are in the category of neutral answer. They do not say that the social media plays important role in their society. 36% of the respondents disagree with this opinion.

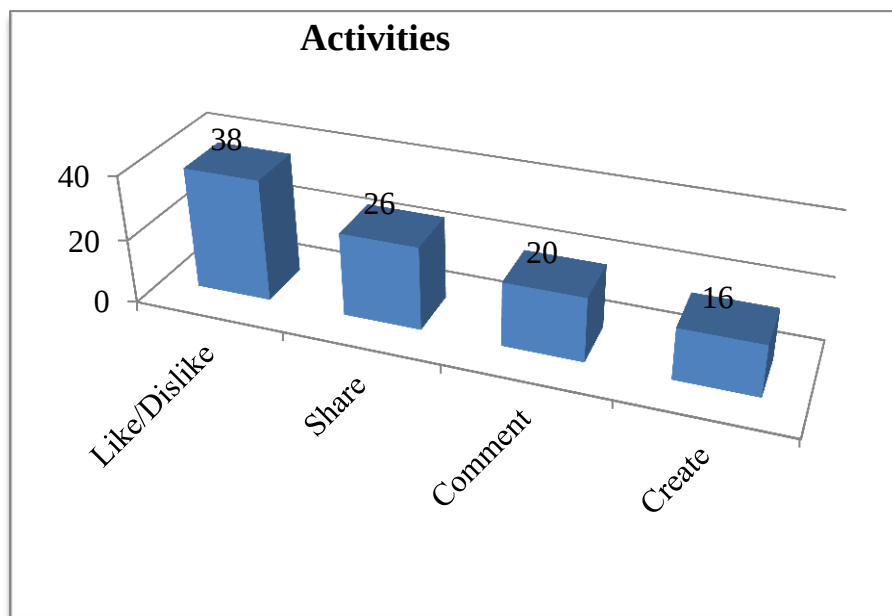


Fig.4: Evaluation of social media literacy level

In Fig.4, the evaluation of social media literacy level is such that some support or disapprove (38%) with the views of others. Some (26%) are interested to share the posts or images and footages of others. Few comment their own views (20%). About 16% create media content which includes the traditional programmes also.

Conclusion

Social media is the most powerful equipment for communication to everywhere. But sometimes, the over exploration of the social media deprive the importance of other media. The majority of the respondents have a great idea about the social media. But the usage of these media is varying person by person. Many of the respondents do not have the access to subscribe newspaper, television, and radio. But then also some of them have taken initiation to use the new media. Cultural life and social media gets linked. In this aspect they agree that the folk media is promoted by the social media platforms like whatsapp, facebook etc. The worth and value of their cultural arts is made known to others through the modern media.

The social media also supports the community radio stations in the tribal development process. The public service advertisements on health are spread in the tribal dialects through social media. The extension agents, the village leaders, the political leaders etc. have to take up this challenging task in order to elevate them into the equals than being kept aside. The interior tribals should be brought into the mainstream instead of keeping them in isolation. Majority of the tribes are still ignorant about the government's development programmes because lack of information and proper motivation. Education media can help a lot for the Tribal Development and change.

Recommendations

On the basis of the recent research findings, the following recommendations are made to other researchers, scholars, academicians, administrators and policy makers:

- The younger generation among the tribes is leaning towards social media and attempt should be made such that enough support should also be given to them to use the social media effectively and the traditional values should not be lost in the fast progress of social media.
- It is the moral responsibility of the youth group that they must know the importance of social media in continuing education and technology up gradation and help others in using the technological advancements.

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