

MOBILE PHONE, ENTERTAINMENT AND TRIBAL LIFE

(A study of the significance of mobile phones as means of entertainment in the lives of tribals of Anuppur District, Madhya Pradesh)

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Abstract

The unprecedented growth of mobile phones in the country can be attributed to development of wide network and varied services of mobile phones bestowed upon consumers from all walks of life. The enormous success of mobile phone revolution can be understood from its growing density and remotest reach, where even exist no roads to reach or people struggling for basic healthcare facilities.

With 47.9% of scheduled tribal population (census 2011), the northeastern district of Anuppur, Madhya Pradesh, has the 7th largest population of tribals in the state. The district is characterised by underdevelopment in both urban and rural quarters. The people of the district earn their livelihood largely from cultivation and labour works in agricultural and household industries. Although, affected by several developmental constraints such as low literacy, poor healthcare facilities, low per capita income, high poverty, etc., the district of Anuppur stands as one of the poorest district of the state of Madhya Pradesh but mobile phone has emerged an important source of entertainment for the tribal population in the recent times.

The tribal communities, consisting of Gond, Baiga, Panika and Kol, are mainly scattered in the far flung areas of the district. In spite of low television density, poor radio signals owing to difficult geographical terrain and no theatres for watching films, the tribesmen of the place stay connected to entertainment via mobile phones. Mobile phones amuse them with Bollywood and Chhattisgarhi music, films and traditional folk music. It acts like a magic box of enormous entertainment for them and fulfilling their previously unmet needs. The paper will focus on the entertainment needs of mobile phones that brought in the lives of the tribal people living in the remote corners of Anuppur district, Madhya Pradesh. The study will consist of analysis of data collected from a reasonable sample size of tribal population of the district.

Keywords: Mobile Phone, Tribal life, Entertainment, Remote India.

Introduction

Ever since India's big leap from landline phone to mobile phone, in the sun setting years of the last millennium, the communication and entertainment quotient in the country went mayfold. The globe-wide spread of mobile telephony has been described as the most rapid and ubiquitous instance of technology transfer in modern human history (Economist, 2009).

The unprecedented growth of mobile telephony, in terms of technology, network and subscriber base, has already established India as one of the vibrant markets for wireless communication in the world. The big thrust of the government of India to expand smartphone user base and encourage citizens for pursuing digital environment have made the market more dynamic than ever in the recent times. The factor that most influences

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the increase in smartphone usage is the functionality that helps users in their daily life especially business people and students of universities and colleges (Jacob and Isaac, 2008). With several mobile service providers elevating their services to high speed 4G network and stiff market competitions have compelled the market of mobile phone communication and data services customer friendly and cheaper.

In a survey report-'Capturing the Gains', by Balwant Singh Mehta, that explores the socio-economic impact of mobile phone usage in rural areas, reveals several significant benefits that mobile phones users reaping in rural India. Mobile users benefit by obtaining timely information on a variety of subjects, including on employment opportunities and higher education for their children, by transferring funds and even by calling family members during emergencies. (Mehta, 2013)

Of late, mobile phone, especially smartphone, has been emerging as one portable entertainment device that capable of providing wide ranges of entertainment services such as downloading and uploading music and videos of films and albums, games, cameras, FM radio, etc. In fact, the time spent for enjoying entertainment content on mobile phone by users found to be many times higher than voice calls and other activities.

The high rates of call tariff and mobile handsets, low customer base, inadequate network, developing infrastructure were the initial hiccups in the process of the growth of mobile telephony in the country in 1990s and early 2000s. The subsequent changes of government policies for mobile telephony for all sections of the society and participation of several service providers from the dawn of the new millennium have change the communication scenario of the country

abruptly.

According to a press release of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), issued on 25th November 2016, India has 585.89 million mobile phone users in urban and 442.99 million in rural areas, a total mounting to 1.28 billion mobile phone users by 31st August 2016. Although, the tele density of urban India (146.84) is nearly 3 times more than rural India (50.50), but near saturation of urban penetration and high potential for rural growth of mobile telephony make mobile service providers to go rural.

Mobile phone has been facilitating the need-based and user-centric information and services at such a low cost that even the rural population can easily afford it. It is seen as a device that has the potential to break the rural-urban developmental gap by delivering information on a variety of economic and social issues (Aker and Mbiti 2010). In reality, the enormous success of mobile phone revolution can be understood from its remotest reach, where even exist no roads to reach or people struggling to avail essential healthcare facilities or no school for basic education.

The district of Anuppur was carved out erstwhile district of Shahdol in 2003. With Anuppur as the administrative headquarters of the district, it is divided into 4 Tehsils, 04 Janpads and 282 Gram Panchayats. There exist 04 Municipalities and 02 Nagar Panchayats and 7 Census Towns in the district. As per the Census 2011, the total number of villages in the district is 571, out of which 562 are inhabited and 9 are uninhabited villages.

Anuppur district of Madhya Pradesh, a northeastern district with 47.9% of scheduled tribal population (census 2011), has the 7th largest population of tribals in the state. The



district is characterised by underdevelopment in both urban and rural quarters. Most of the people of the district earn their livelihood largely from cultivation and labour works in agricultural and household industries.

Although, affected by several developmental constraints, such as low literacy, poor healthcare facilities, low per capita income, high poverty, etc., the district of Anuppur is recognized as one of the underdeveloped districts of Madhya Pradesh, but the growth of mobile phone users in the district is noticeable. However, the growth of mobile phones in the urban areas of the district may be in little higher side, but the mobile phone penetration in the rural areas of the district is growing leaps and bounds in recent times. The government employment guarantee schemes of MGNREGA, growth of rural micro financing facilities, growth of self help groups, etc. have been instrumental in changing livelihood and penetration of mobile phones in the district to a certain extent.

The tribal communities, consisting of Gond, Baiga, Panika and Kol, are mainly scattered in far flung areas of the district. Despite of low television density, poor radio signals owing to difficult geographical terrain and no theatres for screening films, the

tribesmen of the place stay connected to entertainment via mobile phones. With the popularity and functions offered in the smart phones, there has been an increase in demand (Park and Chen, 2007). Smartphones amuse tribal population with Bollywood and Chhattisgarhi music videos, films and audios of traditional folk music. It has been acting as magic box of enormous entertainment, fulfilling their previously unmet needs.

This paper focuses on the entertainment needs that mobile phones brought in the lives of the tribal people of Anuppur district. The study will chiefly concentrate to understand the consumption pattern of entertainment content, modes of access to entertainment content, changing flavours of entertainment and expenses of procuring such entertainment content for enjoying on mobile phone handset among the users of tribal communities of Anuppur district.

Statement of the Research Problem

The transformation in the socio-economic situations of the rural areas of Anuppur district, owing to the factors mentioned earlier, made some changes in the needs of their lives. There may be several needs that they developed, but the growing penetration of mobile phones and signal networks are held largely responsible to bring some significant changes in the entertainment needs of the tribal areas of the district. It is believed that mobile phone has changed their idea and meaning of entertainment, which television and radio failed over the years due to low television household density and poor signal quality of radio in the district. The statement of the research problem for the current paper has been framed as “to study and assess the sources of entertainment content, consumption pattern and impact of

entertainment enjoyed on mobile handset by the tribal population of Anuppur district, Madhya Pradesh” As a whole, this study can be looked as an effort to understand the significance and impact of mobile phones as means of entertainment in the lives of tribal population of Anuppur District, Madhya Pradesh.

Objectives

This is a fact that some significant changes observed in the entertainment needs of the tribal population of the district of Anuppur over the last decade. It is believed that the striking rise in mobile phone density and improved signal network played major roles behind changing entertainment needs of the tribals of the district. It has been already mentioned that the significance and impact of entertainment enjoyed over mobile phones by the tribals of the district will be studied in this research paper. The objectives of the study have been summarised to the followings. To

1. study the growth of mobile phone as medium of entertainment among the tribal population of Anuppur district, Madhya Pradesh.

2. assess the sources and modes of procurement of digital entertainment contents enjoyed over mobile phones by the tribal population of the district.

3. comprehend their consumption patterns, choices for mobile entertainment content and expenses occurs in procuring them.

4. understand the significance of mobile digital entertainment in the lives of tribals of the district.

Hypothesis

The pre survey assumptions made on the basis of preliminary studies, personal observations, views of peer groups and experts, informal interactions with the target group and review of related literature are as

follows.

1. The growth of mobile phone as affordable medium of entertainment among the tribal population has gone manifold in the recent times.

2. The majority of the tribal population prefer to procure digital entertainment contents from local vendors rather than downloading or sharing to enjoy on mobile phone handsets.

3. The lack of awareness to internet, availability of need based and cheaper price of digital entertainment content in the locality make the tribal population to buy them from local vendors.

4. The mobile phone users of tribal population spend regularly a good amount of their income to buy digital entertainment content to enjoy on their handsets.

5. The digital entertainment content enjoyed on mobile has been playing significant roles in transforming lives of the tribal population.

Research Design

From the population of mobile phone users belonging to the tribal communities of Anuppur district, a total number of 600 respondents were randomly selected for the current study from both urban and rural areas of the district. Equally dividing the sample size between urban and rural, *i.e.* 300 respondents each, the questionnaires were filled from the respondents having mobile phones and selected through simple random sampling from the tribal population of the 4 subdivisions *i.e.* Kotma, Anuppur, Jaithari and Pushprajgarh.

From the 4 subdivisions, 75 respondents from each subdivisions belonging to tribal communities and having mobile phones were selected for data collections. The selection of villages and respondents were done purely through simple

random sampling. From Kotma subdivision, 15 respondents each from five villages-Bargawan, Silpur, Jharokha, Nigwani and Kamran Tola were requested to fill the questionnaire. A total of 75 respondents, 15 each from Pakariha Tola, Baherhatola, Deogawan, Reula and Khodari village, which come under Anuppur division, filled the questionnaire. Similarly, the five villages-Payari, Daikhal, Khanda, Manpur, Dongara Tola, under Jaithari subdivision with 15 respondents from each village filled the questionnaire. Likewise, a total of 75 respondents, 15 each from Tummi Badi, Chhirpani, Sital Pani, Sarai and Kumhani village of Pushprajgarh subdivision, the fourth subdivision of Anuppur district, were requested to fill the questionnaire. For urban data, 75 questionnaire were distributed in each subdivision to collect data of a total of 300 respondents from the urban tribal population.

A questionnaire with reasonable number questions was prepared to collect data on the topic of the research. The questionnaire was pretested to understand the efficacy of each question to the subject of the study.

Statistical Analysis

The primary data collected from the filled questionnaire distributed to the defined target group was coded, tabulated and analyzed statistically to draw meaningful interpretation of the study. The standard statistical methods such as percentage analysis, cross tabulation, etc. were carried out in the process.

Finding of the Study

When structured and pre-tested questionnaire were asked to fill up by the randomly picked tribal population of both

urban and rural areas of the district, several interesting facts were noticed in the analysis of the collected data. It was not a deliberate, still while tabulation of the data, it has been observed that 342 of the respondents out of 600, who filled questionnaires, were in the age bracket of 16-20 years. A total of 122 of them in the age group of 21-25 years, 118 in the age bracket of 26-30 years and only 18 respondents above 30 years filled the questionnaire, when they were picked randomly. Of the sample size of 600, a total of 189 and 411 were female and male respondents respectively. The findings of the collected data with inferences are furnished underneath-

□ From the study it has been observed that 24.34% use normal bar phones, whereas 74.16% of total respondents use smartphones. A negligible percentage of respondents, *i.e.* 1.5%, have both smartphones and tabs.

□ Out of the total respondents, 19.33% were school students. A total of 37.17% of them were found studying in local colleges or university or technical institutes and 21.5% of them were dependent on daily wage work in construction sites, MNREGA or agriculture. There were 5.67% of the total respondents earning their livelihood from business. The rest, 8% and 8.33% of total respondents were found to be job holders working in government or private offices and unemployed respectively.

□ Out of the 600 respondents, the number of single SIM mobile phone users was 18.67%. 1.83% of the total respondents have mobiles phones with more than 2 SIM facilities and the rest, *i.e.* 79.5%, has mobile phones with provision for dual SIM. 14% of total respondents were found using Chinese

cheaper price range mobile phones, whereas reputed Indian and international mobile phone users were found to be 54.66% and 31.34% respectively.

□ 27.5% and 29.5% of the respondents use mobile phones with price ranges between Rs. 1000-3999 and Rs. 4000 -6999 respectively, whereas 37.5% of the mobile phones users spent price between Rs. 7000-9999 for buying their phones. The users having mobile phones costing rupees 10,000 and above is found to be 5.5%.

□ Majority of the respondents (64.5%) spend between Rs. 100-399 monthly on mobile tariff voucher, 28.5% of them spend mobile tariff monthly voucher between rupees 400-699. The percentage of users spending between rupees 700-999 was 6% and only 1% of the total respondents were found spending rupees 1000 and above for their monthly mobile tariff voucher.

□ Most of the users (34.5%) have been using mobile phones for more than 2 years but less than 3 years, whereas 33% of the users were found using mobile phones for more than a year. The percentage of mobile phone users with duration of using for more than 3 years but less than 4 years is 19.5%. The percentage of respondents using mobile phones for more than 4 years but less than 5 years is found to be 8.5%, whereas users of mobile phones above 5 years are 4.5%.

□ 31.5% of the respondents carry mobile phones to listen to music only. For 12.5% of them carry mobile phone mainly to watch video clips, 18.5% of the respondents use mobile phones for both watching video clips and listening to audio. 1% and 4.5% of them use mobile phone only for playing games and calling respectively. 32 % of them use mobile phones for all activities *i.e.* calling, watching video clips, listening to audio, playing games,

internet and other activities.

The poor density of television sets in the villages and urban areas of tribal inhabitants of the regions and weak signal strength of radio due to difficult geographical topography make mobile phone best medium of entertainment for them (98.5%) to watch videos, listen to audios, play games and get connected to internet. 1% and 0.5% of the respondents find television and radio better medium for entertainment respectively.

Majority of the respondent *i.e.* 41.83% were found to be spending an average time 1-5 hours in a week for watching films on their mobile handsets. A total of 39.67% respondents have an average of 6-10 hours weekly film watching habit and 12.66% respondents replied that they have 11-15 hours of weekly film watching schedule. There were 3.17% and 2.67% respondents in the survey who watched films on mobile phone for 16-20 hours and above 20 hours weekly.

A total of 44.5% of total respondents were found purchasing digital music and films content for listening and watching on their mobile handsets from local mobile phone shopkeepers, whereas 37.5% visit weekly market to buy music and film contents from vendors. A total of 12.67% of the total respondents were with the answer that they purchased music and films content for watching on their mobile phones from both local shopkeepers and vendors of weekly market. 5.33% of them were found collecting such materials from free downloading or pirated websites.

Majority of the respondents (57%) were found spending less than Rs 100 per month, whereas 18.33% of them have the monthly mobile phone expenditure between

Rs 100-199 for buying digital film contents to watch on their mobile handset. The monthly expenditures for 14% and 9.67% of the total respondents for buying films were between Rs 200-299 and Rs 300-399 respectively. 1% of them were found spending Rs 400 and above.

Majority of them (38.83%) preferred to watch Chhattisgarhi films on mobile phones, 27% of total respondents chose to watch Hindi films, 4.83% of them even watched any films dubbed to Hindi and 10.33% of them chose to watch films of any language. There were 19% of the total respondents found watching both Chhattisgarhi and Hindi films. Those who watched Hindi, Chhattisgarhi and any other films dubbed to Hindi were found to be only 1.17% and the viewers of both Hindi and any other language films dubbed to Hindi were only 0.5%.

31.17% of total respondents preferred to watch films on their mobile handset after duty time, whereas majority of them (49%) watch during any free time. For 17.5% of the total respondents, the mood decided that their timing of watching films on their mobile handsets. A relatively small number (2.33%) chose to watch after daily works and during free time as well.

Majority of the respondents (63.84%) were found spending less than Rs 100 for buying digital music content to listen on their mobile handsets monthly. The number of those spending between Rs 100-199 for buying music monthly was 18.33%. 11.83% and 6% of the respondents were found spending monthly between Rs 200-299 and Rs 300-399 respectively for buying music content for listening on their mobile handsets.

None found spending above Rs 400 for digital music content.

Nearly 2/3 out of 600 respondents (73.5%) replied that they listened to music for an average of 1-5 hours daily, 16.83% of the total respondents preferred listening to music for 6-10 hours daily and 1.83% of them were found listening to music for even average of 11-15 hours per day. There were 7.84% respondents having no interest in music.

When it comes to listening to music, more than half of the total respondents (58.66%) preferred to listen to Chhattisgarhi songs on mobile phones, 19.5% of total respondents chose to listen to Hindi songs. Only 1.5% and 0.83% of the total respondents were found listening to devotional songs and any music respectively. There were 18.35% of the total respondents found listening to both Chhattisgarhi and Hindi films. Those who listened to Hindi, Chhattisgarhi and any other music were found to be only 1.16%.

A session of interaction with 20 respondents of the sample was arranged to understand the rationale behind some of the interesting and notable findings of survey. The important inferences that the session brought into light are as follows.

□ The study reveals that mobile phone turn out to be the main source of music and dance of Bollywood and Chhattisgarhi films for the tribal people. They play music of Bollywood and Chhattisgarhi movies and dance in the styles of those films in all celebrations like marriages, Navratri, Ganesh Puja, cultural shows and other religious and cultural festivals.

□ The traditional or folk music, dance and culture have taken a back in the socio-cultural lives of the tribals with every passing day in the region. At the same time, they were found

copying the style and dressing senses of Bollywood and Chhattisgarhi films within their meagre income. They quite often found imitating the dialogues and acting styles of actors.

□ The demand of digital mobile phone entertainment content led to the mushrooming of vendors and shopkeepers of such contents in the rural and urban pockets. Both people of tribal and non-tribal communities found earning livelihood from the business of selling digital entertainment content mainly music of Bollywood and Chhattisgarhi films. The devotional and folk music were found mainly in demand during the festival seasons.

□ Somewhat, it was felt that mobile phone users of the tribal communities, mainly the youngsters, were more inclined towards Bollywood music and films. The interests for the folk and devotional music were found less popular among them. They were found imitating the style and humming the music of Bollywood.

□ The prices of such content are determined by the market demand, availability and newness of the content. In general, the vendors sell content on per GB basis, e.g. Rs 100 for 1 GB data of Bollywood music.

□ Similarly to television households sitting together to watch programmes, the members of many tribal families watch together films, videos of songs, dances and other entertainment content on mobile handset regularly in the evening or during free time.

□ Unlike the specification an urban educated look for while buying a mobile phone, most of the respondents look for screen size, battery backup, size of the memory and intensity of the sound of the

inbuilt speaker while buying a new mobile phone.

□ Most of the respondents buy digital entertainment contents to enjoy on mobile phone from local weekly market. According to them, such markets give variety of options of films, music and dance videos at competitive price.

□ The entertainment contents are sold by vendors not at the rate of numbers of films or music or dance videos, rather in terms of 1GB, 2GB or more GBs of data contents. Bollywood films or music/dance videos are costlier than Chhattisgarhi contents. The prices of digital entertainment contents depend on availability and arrival in the market.

Testing of Hypotheses

From 1995, the beginning of revolutionary changes in telecommunication, the wireless network of mobile phones has come a long way in more than two decades. Starting as status symbol, the mobile phone has established itself not only a medium of communication but also easy and affordable mode of entertainment in the recent times. With facility of listening to radio, watching television channels and videos, enjoying high speed internet, playing games and several activities, mobile phone has eliminate all barriers of enjoying entertainment.

The analysis of the data collected for the current study ascertain the fact that high growth of penetration of mobile phones, availability of better quality of mobile phone network, cheaper rates of mobile phones, easily and economically available mobile digital content have made entertainment no longer away from the reach of the people living in the interior of the country. It establishes that the initial assumption on *the growth of mobile phone as affordable*

medium of entertainment among the tribal population has gone manyfold in the recent times to be true.

The responses of the tribal population surveyed for the current study on the procurement and pattern of consumption of digital content suggest that the entertainment of their choices are available within the financial capacity of them. Of course, not being familiar with internet, majority of the tribal population surveyed do not download their entertainment needs from internet. The availability of entertainment contents of their choice with the local mobile accessory shops, grocery shops, weekly market vendors, etc. make them procure and enjoy them without much effort. This proves the two hypotheses that *majority of the tribal population prefer to procure digital entertainment connects from local vendors rather than downloading or sharing to enjoy on mobile phone handsets and the lack of familiarity with internet, availability of need based and cheaper price of digital entertainment content in the locality make the tribal population to buy them from local vendors to be valid.*

The data of consumption and buying pattern of digital entertainment content among the tribal population in the current study proves the assumptions that *the mobile phone users of tribal population spend regularly a good amount of their income to buy digital entertainment content to enjoy on their handsets and the digital entertainment content enjoyed on mobile has been playing significant roles in transforming lives of the tribal population to be correct.*

Conclusion

The tribal population living in the district of Anuppur, one of the largest tribal dominated districts of Madhya Pradesh, may

be situated in one of the remotest corners of the country, but the penetration of mobile phone network and rise in the density of mobile phones in the region have been playing a pivotal role in fulfilling entertainment needs of the tribal people.

There is no deny of the fact that the process of social and economical developments of Anuppur district is relatively slow, owing to several factors such as poor facilities of primary secondary and higher education, poverty and poor health care facilities, low penetration of DTH, cable TV network and poor television density, difficult geographical topography for receiving radio signals, poor financial conditions of the natives, etc. In spite of all odds, the unprecedented growth of mobile phone networks and availability of mobile phones in cheaper rates have been instrumental in getting tribal people close to Bollywood and Chhattisgarhi film industry. The availability of films and music of Bollywood and Chhattisgarhi industry, audio and video albums of Chhattisgarhi modern and traditional songs within the close vicinity and cheaper rates for availing such contents made the lives of the tribal people more vivacious than before. It's like mobile phone has emerged as a wonder box of enormous entertainment for them and fulfilling their previously unmet needs.

Although, the tribal people of the one of the remotest part of the country may have started reaping the benefits of the telecommunication revolution little later than the developed areas, but for sure the revolution of mobile phones will definitely help them to meet their other sets of need such as social, financial, cultural, etc. and get them closer to the main stream of development.

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