

SHOULD THERE BE REASONABLE RESTRICTIONS ON TIME SPENT ON THE INTERNET?

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Abstract: This article seeks to study and explain the effects of Internet on economy, human life and society. Since the invention of internet in 1983, the world has seen rapid growth in business and globalisation, and with markets opening up, the competition in the field resulted in providing Internet access to everyone across the globe. This article initially focuses on different use of Internet, how it has changed the course of politics, marketing, education etc. Lack of regulations in this field has already proved fatal to countries with leak of private data and meddling in election campaigns, spread of fake news, to name a few. This article then tries to develop understanding and create awareness about psychological and health problems arising out of excess, unchecked use of Internet. Various noted psychologist have tried to explain how the Internet not only deteriorated the thinking process but has also changed the way of our thinking and is negatively shaping our interpersonal relationships. Lastly, it recommends some guidelines and structure to be followed while making appropriate guidelines in this field.

Keywords: Internet; Compulsive Internet Use; Excessive Internet Use Internet Regulations; Internet Service Providers; Data Price Impact; Internet In Politics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The central point for India's fast development of the economy stays overlooked till date. As of late, the nation has seen humungous development in Internet-based applications in all sectors, be it Health, Food, Delivery suppliers, Travel applications, Door-to-Door specialist co-ops, Online payment merchant, or media outlets. What helped the development of all these forthcoming organizations entering the market is, the Internet, by making their effort to focused groups simple. The Internet opened entirely new and different markets and a consistently extending world, full of new opportunities; a 75-year-old woman in the far remote region of India can now upload videos of her about-to-be lost food recipes and keep them alive. Online video streaming applications have benefited the most and India became one of their largest markets. The Internet's contribution to country's GDP accounted for 5.6% in 2015-16 and Internet-based applications in India have the potential to contribute Rs18 trillion to India's gross domestic product (GDP) by 2020, according to study released by the New Delhi-based International Council for Research in International Economic Relations (ICRIER) and telecom lobby group Broadband India Forum.ⁱ

Indian market provides the cheapest mobile data in the world with 1GB costing Rs.18.5 (0.26 USD) compared to the global average of Rs. 600/GBⁱⁱ. It has been well known since the seminal work of Hotelling (1929) that the competitive effects are weakened when consumers have diverse preferences toward different firms' productsⁱⁱⁱ. Since the launch of 'Jio' by Indian Billionaire Mr Mukesh Ambani, the telecom business confronted a hyper-aggressive market, constraining them to bring down the costs so as to continue themselves. Jio, on one hand, helped Mr Ambani jump six positions on the Forbes World's Billionaire list to rank 13th in the world, on the other hand, it led to enormous reduction in prices by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) whose total count currently stands at 389 licensed ISPs out of which Top 20 account for 98% of Internet subscriber base . 34% of these providers are suffering losses and generating negative Return on Investments (ROI)^{iv}.

Table of Internet Data Prices in Different Countries Around the World

| S.No | Country | Prices (USD) |
|------|--------------------|--------------|
| 1. | India | 0.26 |
| 2. | Russia | 0.91 |
| 3. | Italy | 1.73 |
| 4. | Nigeria | 2.22 |
| 5. | Australia | 2.47 |
| 6. | France | 2.99 |
| 7. | Brazil | 3.50 |
| 8. | Spain | 3.79 |
| 9. | The United Kingdom | 6.66 |
| 10. | Germany | 6.96 |

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The Primary use of the Internet can be categorised under four heads: Information Access, Entertainment, Communication and Networking and Access to services. Low Prices in India have led to penetration of necessity to learn about smart phones and internet down till the lowest strata in our society, moreover owing to the reasons abovementioned Internet is now accessible unrestricted to everyone in the country. Though it provides several benefits such as Quick dissemination of Information, Easy communication, Increase in Internet-Based service providers, Online banking activities and other similar products, there is no such thing as a free supper.

Internet has changed the course of Politics around the globe, politicians have taken up social media to connect with the public and spread their manifesto, collection of data and analysing online behavioural patterns, moreover with easy access to target audience and data lending firms, any political agenda can now be spread across the country within a matter of hours and lack of policy framework leads information go unchecked and the result is people finding it difficult to distinguish between Genuine news and Fake news. Big political parties in India are using dedicated IT cell experts, who work relentlessly to flood internet-based life and national T.V. houses with substance explicitly intended to advance their agenda and alter the procedure of thought, in a covert manner. The biggest political scandal is one where a company failed to secure data of 87m users which was used in the 2016 Presidential Campaign, 'The Facebook and Cambridge Analytica scandal'. The unchecked flow of contents online prompts false data infiltrating in and promoting different cultural, social and national problems. The nation's hot debate in today's time is tied in with handling counterfeit news. As of late T.V Journalist Ravish Kumar in his most recent meeting with The Wire^{vi} asked the gathering of people to quit viewing T.V for a time period of 2 months, which will prompt decline in group of onlookers of T.V channels and exiting of firms which are making a decent attempt to remain in the market while dramatizing each snippet of data and furthermore mutilating the actualities.

Humans are social animals and the Internet has made worry of individuals, their online companions as opposed to their real neighbours, this has changed the society and thanks to technology, compiled all of one's known persons in one small device which easily fits in your pocket. Youth has been the principal market of the Internet, and India has the highest population of it in the world. Increased hours of using the internet have led to various health problems and created a gap between families, and to some extent dissolved the Indian culture. Many families have complained of reduced time of interaction and change in behavioural patterns in their children. Increased exposure to harmful Radio Frequency or Microwave Radiation from these devices leads to health problems like acoustic neuroma or brain tumour (long haul use) and so forth^{vii}. On the off chance that the expansion in Internet utilization develops at the same rate, social orders will before long be transformed into Robotic Societies, who interfaces just to the online world and disregard the genuine and pragmatic part of life and natural change. Internet not only provides information to think but also shapes the process of thinking. Recent Developments and change in the societal structure such as a desire to communicate online can serve as an object of Compulsive use. Individual's Compulsive Internet Use (CIU) refers to their inability to control, reduce or stop their online behaviour, while Excessive Internet Use (EIU) is the degree to which an individual feels that he or she spends an excessive amount of time online or even loses track of time when using the Internet. For people who cannot control their usage on the internet, time spent online produces undesirable results such as loneliness, depression, social

anxiety and other psychological disorders¹. Carnegie Mellon University conducted pioneering research back in 1998 which showed a strong correlation between internet use and an increase in loneliness^{viii}, which have come to be known as the ‘internet paradox’. Excessive use of informational resources on the internet without the basic knowledge of the best method to use technologies is making societies physically and mentally unfit. Even though the internet provides a platform to express emotions and thoughts, it can never completely substitute physical interaction. “Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways – Sigmund Freud”.

Review a situation where you sent a text to your friend on WhatsApp and the friend read it but didn’t reply. There is no telling if the silence meant deliberation, disengagement, nonchalance, or simply because the person is busy at that moment to reply immediately. Your brain might have started to make assumptions about the worst scenarios and anxiety and impatience kicks in. Digital communications have rendered emotions irrelevant and reduced them to trivialized expressions of pragmatic particles, cute emojis, memes and GIFs. MIT professor in her book ‘Alone Together’ raised the concern as to how technology is negatively reshaping interpersonal relationships.²

Award Winning Social psychologist and Author Johnathan Haidt, in his book *The Happiness Hypothesis*, says, ‘We live in a time where society perceives emotions as weakness and rationality as strength. That is misguided thinking, perhaps studies suggest a symbiotic relationship between the two human attributes, that thought shapes emotion and emotion in turn shapes thought. Human rationality depends critically on sophisticated emotionality. It is only because our emotional brain works so well that our reasoning can work at all.’

Journalist Nicholas Carr in her controversial Article “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”^{ix} mentioned how provocative visual imagery causes primitive parts of our brains to deteriorate our abilities to think deeply and contemplate. Memes, Emojis and 10- second videos grasp our attention in a short span, but at the same time, cut down the time span to think what the content is about. Moreover, because social media makes communication easier and faster, it’s not as meaningful. Content is created through thumbs, not real conversations thus creating an illusion of intimacy.

Government at this stage ought to meddle and outline arrangements towards the utilization of the Internet and manage its market. Rising teenage depression is very likely to be the result of the unregulated and increased time of internet usage. Just like Article 19 of our constitution has reasonable restrictions, time spent on the Internet should have too. Many expected a tight regulation over the internet after Snowden revelations about the extent of techno-infiltrations into our personal lives. The big reason for policy formulation delay in this field in India is the fact that the state itself has an extraordinary control-oriented interest. This very factor alone sets Internet policies as a domain very different from other policy areas. Rushing in this aspect may lead to a state’s policy, law and enforcement systems which are not based upon public interest. Another problem in dealing with policy formulations is the speed of change in this field. Internet-induced social changes are simply too rapid for most policy systems to be able to cope with them well and that these policies will hardly shackle any positive change. The policy-making should be coherent with measures such as the process be build over solid knowledge system, should be open and participative, suggestions from different sphere of society should be taken into consideration, should genuinely serve public interest, all possible checks and management should be maintained with respect to the state’s problematic relationship with society’s digital information space, policies and legal principles should be made in a manner that they can be applied flexibly as and when required to different situations rather than micro-legislating for everything thus avoiding quick obsolescence, it should contain proper implementation mechanism and government should not rely on private agents for carrying out the state’s legitimate role of implementation and it should be in terms with global realities. The time may not be far when each country will have a separate ministry dedicated towards the working and regulation of Internet which will work in connection with an International Organisation dedicated to, policy, regulation, research, development, and Internet-based disputes between countries.³

¹ See “*The Negative Effects of Internet Use*, Clemson University, October 9, 2012.”

² See TECHNOLOGY MADE EMOTIONS IRRELEVANT, *A Glimpse into the Technological Erosions of Emotions*. December 21,2016 <https://blog.mooder.com/technology-made-emotions-irrelevant-2f700dace1fe>

³ See *INTERNET AND INTERNET POLICY MAKING* <https://itforchange.net/sites/default/files/Internet%20and%20Internet%20policies%20in%20India.pdf>

2. CONCLUSION

If the multinational organisations led to globalisation of trade and development of International Trade Laws and Investment Treaties, Internet has similarly made significant contribution to ease the spread of technological know-how, enabled live time communication, helped budding enterprises target their audience, Internet has contributed in almost every sphere of life. It has very quickly entered our daily routine and now plays a very important and significant role which is almost irreversible. It is because of this sudden surprise influx that we did not practiced caution and because we have never earlier met with such kind of subject matter. It is now that we are able to see the problems ascribed with Internet, such as data privacy loss, excessive use of Internet and addiction, psychological problem, health conditions, and thus it calls upon the government to interfere and start framing rules and laws of the Internet. The objective to be attained through these laws is primarily three fold; Curtail the spread of Fake News, Protect the data of citizens from illegal use and reduce the time spent by citizens, particularly in the age group 12-45 years. Proper training in schools should be given with respect to method and mode of using the internet. 'Technology is a useful servant, but a dangerous master' – Christian Louis Lange.

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