

Engagement with New Media for News: A Critical Analysis of Youth in Darjeeling

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To

Sikkim University



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Degree of Master of Philosophy

By

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(भारत के संसद के अधिनियम द्वारा वर्ष २००७ में स्थापित और नेक (एनएएसी) द्वारा वर्ष २०१५ में प्रत्ययित केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)
(A central university established by an Act of Parliament of India in 2007 and accredited by NAAC in 2015)

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation titled “**Engagement with New Media for News: A Critical Analysis of Youth in Darjeeling**” is submitted in partial fulfilment of the **Degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil)** in Mass Communication, to the School of Professional Studies, Sikkim University, Gangtok, Sikkim. This is my original work and the dissertation or parts thereof has not been submitted for any award, degree or diploma, fellowship, or any other similar title or prizes at this or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “**Engagement with New Media for News: A Critical Analysis of Youth in Darjeeling**” submitted by Mrinalini Sharma for the award of the Degree of **Master of Philosophy (M.Phil)** in Mass Communication is a record of research carried out under my supervision and guidance in the Department of Mass Communication, Sikkim University.

The dissertation or parts thereof has not been submitted for any degree or diploma at this or any other university.

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Right after completion of MS in Mass Communication, I chose to be a journalist rather than pursue an academic path. During my nine-year span as a journo, I gained a lot of experience in the field but my academic knowledge had faded over time. When I got admitted to the course in June 2018, I knew I had to start from the scratch. However, it would not have been possible without the support of my family, friends and faculty members of the department. I owe heartfelt gratitude to many people who helped me in the completion of my MPhil dissertation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CNN: Cable News Network

SMO: Social Movement Organization

E-movement: Electronic movement

e-books: Electronic books

SM: Social Media

FB: Facebook

RQ: Research Question

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ENGAGEMENT WITH NEW MEDIA FOR NEWS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF YOUTH IN DARJEELING

1.1. Introduction

The media scenario has undergone a vast change ever since Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable type printing press in the 15th century. The printing press made possible the production of large quantities of print material for distribution among the masses. This enabled thousands of books to be circulated and subsequently led to printing of newspapers from the 17th century. From that time onwards, the notion of mass media — the process of transmission of information to the masses through books, newspapers, television and radio — has gained prevalence.

As technology developed, non-print forms of mass media namely films and radio came into the scenario in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the invention of television post World War II brought drastic changes in mass media communication. Finally, came the Internet age or the new media age as we know it today that has revolutionized the media scenario and is continuing to do so. The introduction of every innovative media technology has led to significant cultural and lifestyle changes among the masses. Since the past two decades, the new media also known as digital media has become predominant and online has become the main mode of communication.

The new media has opened up new avenues for the researchers to conduct different studies about its influence on society. It has pervaded everyday practices like socializing, making purchases and payments, getting education and health services, travel and tourism, recreation and entertainment and daily dose of news and information. This research study focuses on the engagement of the youth on Internet-driven new media for reading news online.

With advent of every media form, there have been inhibitions about the detrimental effects it has on the people especially the young users. Similarly, there are concerns regarding negative influences that the digital media has on the youth. Internet-addiction, exposure to offensive content, withdrawal from the real world are some of the many apprehensions that are associated with new media. On the other hand, there are positive aspects too like how the youth is using digital media for reading news online, becoming updated about the civic, political, social and environmental issues around the world and raising their voice in online forums to bring about constructive changes.

This study examines the features of the digital media that attracts young users to use it to get news, the changing habits for seeking, consuming, sharing and producing news through online platforms. If the ubiquitous nature of online news has affected its audience, the latter too is bound to affect the new technology. Hence, this study also focuses on the new trends that have emerged in the online news system to cater to the audience. Such changes in the digital news environment have brought about alterations in the way young audiences view news because they no longer have to depend solely on printed newspapers, television and radio to acquire it. So, this research has also tried to analyse the changing interpretation of news among the youth.

The youth has been chosen as the sample population for this research as they easily take on new technology and will help to understand the future trends in new media. A UNICEF (2018) study states that in countries with relatively high levels of connectivity, 15 to 24-year-olds typically outnumber the overall online population. Youth (ages 15–24) is the most connected age group. Worldwide, 71 per cent are online compared with 48 per cent of the total population (UNICEF, 2018).

1.1.1. The Traditional Media

Traditional media or legacy media are the forms of mass communication that dominated the scene before digital media. They comprise newspapers, radio, television, books and magazines that immediately predated digital technology. However, traditional media goes back to the fourth century when documents were written by hand in order to record information regarding laws, philosophy, business and religion. These documents were known as manuscripts and the time during which they flourished was termed as the manuscript age. The manuscripts were written by hand and it was difficult to produce several copies owing to the cumbersome process.

This practice of recording information paved the way for invention of movable type printing press by Johannes Guttenberg in 1450. Guttenberg's press brought about a revolution in the printing scenario as books could be produced in large numbers and distributed among the people. Books ranging from religious, philosophy, literary and history were mass produced at cheaper costs and distributed among a wide audience. This marked the beginning of mass media and the communication that followed came to be known as mass communication. When a source disseminates a large amount of information via technology to a large audience, mass communication is said to have taken place through mass media.

The advent of newspapers in 17th century marked the beginning of the use of mass media in distributing news. It provided an account of daily, bi-weekly, weekly happenings in our immediate surroundings, nation and around the globe. Thereafter started the publication of magazines — periodical publications — in the mid-17th century. These were issued fortnightly, monthly or quarterly basis and the genres comprised lifestyle, health, business, fashion and politics. Subsequently, the introduction of radio in the early 20th century heralded the beginning of broadcast media. This novel medium of

audio communication became the main source of news, information, entertainment and recreation until television came into the scenario in the 1940's.

The audio-visual media emerged as an important tool as audiences were able to watch major happenings on their TV screens. In the coming decades, production of TV sets increased making it affordable to the common man and it became an important household item. The 1980's saw the introduction of satellite technology where TV signals were transmitted through satellite which ensured better picture quality. Digital technology in television came into the picture in the 1990's and is predominant in contemporary times. TV signals were transmitted in digital form rather than analog and this has ensured high picture and sound quality. Through direct-to-home technology audiences have wider choice of channels and can control what they want to view.

Even though the traditional forms of media are still followed, the arrival of Internet-driven new media in the new millennium has shown that legacy media isn't the only source of news, information and entertainment for the audiences. Online is the new catchword and as time has progressed, daily activities like reading/viewing news, shopping and socializing are being carried out through the Internet. The coming together of the Internet with digital media devices like smartphone, laptop, tablet have led to surge in online platforms like social media, websites and apps.

1.1.2. The New Media

New media has become something of a catchall term used to describe any and all emerging and evolving digital technologies, mostly the result of the last two decades of innovations in personal computing, the Internet, and cellular telephony (Zemmel, 2012).

New media or digital media refers to all forms of digital technologies that emerged towards the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. The advent of computers

and subsequently the Internet has brought about revolution in the ways people communicate and share information with one another.

It is noteworthy that technological advancement has led to acceleration in the invention of new media forms. Digital devices like computer, laptop, smartphone, tablet et al came in rapid succession unlike traditional media like books, newspapers, TV and radio that came in a gap of a couple of centuries.

Ours is a brand-new world of all-at-onceness. Time has ceased, space has vanished. We now live in a global village, a simultaneous happening (McLuhan, 1967). McLuhan (1967) had used the term global village where the instant electronic media creates a technology-driven, interconnected world. Although it was hard to even imagine such a technology at the time McLuhan predicted it, such transformation came only four decades later with the arrival of the digital media.

With every passing generation, the term new media becomes relative to that particular age group and the experience they gather from them. By using the term new, we must recognize that media encompassed by this term are currently new, but always on the verge of growing older (Zemmels, 2012).

Back in time, media forms we now consider traditional like radio and television were at their time of initiation considered new owing to the novel features that set them apart from their precursors. In this study, the term new media has been widely used to refer to the present-day digital media devices, social media, web portals, apps, virtual reality technologies and digital games. Other terms used to refer to them in this study are digital and online media.

However, this research has also taken into account traditional forms like newspapers, television, radio that have adopted digital technologies. In the present times, the newspaper, radio and television industry apart from providing content through their

traditional outlets have branched out into digital platforms like social media, apps on mobile and websites.

The “new” in new media refers to digital communication formats but also to old forms of media reconstituted and redistributed as digital media content over the Internet to personal computers, cellular phones, iPods, and so on (Zemmels, 2012).

What sets digital media apart from the older media forms are easy accessibility, high interactivity, selectivity of content, asynchronous communication and convergence in form and technology. While digital media is online, traditional media is offline. The latter targets a broad audience but digital media targets micro segments of the audience by providing variety in gadgets, content and online platforms to suit different individuals. Traditional is one-way media but digital is two-way facilitating instant feedback from users.

In the 21st Century, a new institution is emerging with some characteristics similar to the Fourth Estate, but with sufficiently distinctive and important features to warrant its recognition as a new Fifth Estate (Dutton, 2009). Dutton (2009) used the term Fifth Estate to describe the non-traditional media that gives ample freedom to individuals to be more than a passive receiver of information.

This being the growing use of the Internet and related information and communication technologies (ICTs) in ways that are enabling ‘networked individuals’ to reconfigure (McLuhan, 1967) access to alternative sources of information, people and other resources (Dutton, 2009).

New media enables the formation of communities irrespective of their geographic proximity (space) and the partaking in discussions simultaneously by many participants. It has done away with time limitations or facilitated asynchronous communication that allows people to send and receive messages via email and text at

different times and read and revert according to their convenience. These features of the new media have gradually lured users especially the youth in its fold. Young people or the digital natives as they are referred to are known for their affinity to the new media.

What should we call these “new” students of today? Some refer to them as the N-[for Net]-gen or D-[for digital]-gen. But the most useful designation I have found for them is Digital Natives (Prensky, 2001).

This study has examined the pattern in which young people use new media for getting news and information. With the convergence of media forms and technology, television and radio programmes, social networking apps, movies, newspaper and magazine content are available in a single device like a smartphone, palmtop and tablet. This has brought about a considerable change in how the youth access news on current affairs, political, sports and entertainment.

1.1.3. News

News is any information or account about events that have happened recently. It can be broadcast through different media forms like print, television and digital media. Change in the media environment has brought about changes in the presentation of news too. A major factor that has led to the evolution of news is the medium through which the message is disseminated.

Journalism is profoundly affected by a changing media environment that has contributed to an ever-increasing pace of innovation and a differentiation of media channels and platforms that simultaneously follows and fosters individualized media use (Kramp & Loosen, 2018).

In the ancient times, knowledge and information was transmitted orally from one generation to the next. In the middle ages, information was stored manually in

handwritten documents and it was with the invention of paper that it came to be stored in the written format. Transformation came with the invention of the printing press. This led to fast printing of books and in great numbers within a short span. Newspapers were the natural progression for dissemination of information from books in the 17th century and they flourished with the invention of the telegraph in the 18th century. Radio and television drastically changed the news scenario in the 20th century. These animated media not only passed information faster, they added an entertainment quotient to it. However, with the advent of digital media in the 21st century mammoth change has come about in the news environment. New trends are coming up in quick succession and these are changing the audiences' habits for seeking, reading/viewing, sharing and creation of news.

The digitalization of news media has enabled changes in news production as well as in news consumption, both on the level of individual practices and of organizational and social structures (Kramp & Loosen, 2018). In the digital age, news is broadcast as soon as an event occurs and updated immediately. Features like interactivity enables users to give quick feedback to the news producers.

This study has focussed on the youth and their interest in news, the media through which they seek information, share and produce it in the digital age. Young people, especially those born towards the end of the 20th century and in the new millennium, are contemporaries of digital technology. Raised in an age replete with digital media, they are more likely to be influenced by it in all spheres of life including being informed through news.

This interactivity has been successful to some extent in weaning away younger audiences from the traditional mass media to new digital media (Gangopadhyay, 2014).

In order to attract young audiences with news, millennial news media strive to engage them with it. In doing so, they adopt various prevalent and emerging forms of communication that are used by adolescents and young adults and adapt their reporting to these communicative forms: from, for instance, interpersonal messaging to posting personal pictures and videos to circulating internet memes through peer networks (Kramp & Loosen, 2018).

1.1.4. The Youth

Youth is generally considered the time in any individual's life that begins from being an adolescent to middle-age and its main determinant is age. There are different definitions of youth that have been adopted by different agencies, both national and international. The United Nations has categorized young people around the world in age group between 15 and 24 as youth. However, National Youth Policy of India in 2014 has described that any person falling between 15 to 29 years of age is youth. The African Youth Charter describes the youth as individuals who come in the age group of 15 to 35 years.

According to the definition of youth by different organizations and the age bracket they fall under, it is apparent that young people were born into the digital age and have a wider exposure to the new media of the present day.

Youth are the first to grab on to new technologies and apply them to their daily lives. Internet-based communications via social media are today's driving force for youth to get their voices out into their communities, cities, countries, and around the world (Baikie, 2015).

Almost 4.57 billion people were active internet users as of April 2020, encompassing 59 percent of the global population. China, India and the United States rank ahead all other countries in terms of internet users (Statista, 2020).

India's internet user base has grown rapidly in recent years, propelled by the decreasing cost and increasing availability of smartphones and high-speed connectivity, and is now one of the largest in the world. The country had 560 million subscribers in September 2018, second in the world only to China (Kaka, et al., 2019).

Around 54 percent of the Indian internet user base was between 20 and 39 years old in early 2019. People over the age of 40 formed the lowest share, while youngsters in the age group of 12 to 15 years made up a good 14 percent share of the total internet user base (Statista, 2019).

In the digital generation, the internet is flooded with free news and information online. This creates an atmosphere of fierce competition among message producers who are constantly adapting to the challenges of providing online news and information to their young audiences.

According to CNET, Mobile users spent an average of 7 hours engaging in Mobile Applications on Facebook. After cheaper data plans provided by Reliance Jio, Social Media sites gained an outrageous amount of Indian users (Bhati, Bansal, & Villa, 2019).

News portals, social media like Facebook and Twitter and news apps have become popular sources for accessing, seeking and sharing news. This study has focussed on online news is its capacity to inform young audiences and how being informed through online news encourages them in civic engagement and democratic participation.

Bennet et al. (2012) has focused on mobilizing the potential of social media through the lens of how young people are connecting to politics of various sorts through emerging information technologies.

Digital media citizens not only consume information differently, but in the process, they also participate in its production (Bennet, Freelon, Hussain, & Wells, 2012).

Democratization brought about by new media not only informs the youth but also allows them to participate and provide feedback instantly through interactive media in the digital age.

A participatory culture is one which embraces the values of diversity and democracy through every aspect of our interactions with each other—one which assumes that we are capable of making decisions, collectively and individually, and that we should have the capacity to express ourselves through a broad range of different forms and practices (Jenkins, Ito, & boyd, 2015).

Ordinary individuals are emerging as news producers. Unlike earlier times when only the message producer controlled the content and message delivery was basically top-down, in the new media it is participatory. Users are not passive receivers but actively engage in collection, dissemination, analysis of information.

Accredited journalists of big media organizations with professional training fall in the traditional category of qualified gatekeepers. However, with advanced digital technology new types of gatekeepers are emerging. In the current times, ordinary individuals equipped with portable media like smartphones that have all-in-one features turn into news producers acting as citizen journalists and news aggregators.

Bennet et al. (2102) has examined the shift from mass distribution of information to multiplying sources and channels, often selected through personal preferences, recommendation algorithms and friend networks.

Users can source their own information, independent of any single institution, using the capabilities provided by search and social media. Also, users can create content in many forms like blogs, email, tweets, comments on websites – that provide even greater independence from other institutions and offer a mechanism whereby public opinion can be directly expressed. It is composed of the distributed activities of many

individuals acting largely on their own in a more decentralized, networked fashion (Newman, Dutton, & Blank, 2012).

1.2. Theoretical Overview

1.2.1. Uses and Gratification Theory

The theoretical framework for the current study lies in the uses and gratification theory and the diffusion of innovation theory.

Audience-centric research started in the latter half of the 20th century with the introduction of television and radio. It was triggered by the curiosity among researchers who wanted to know what audiences were doing with these new media forms and the content they generated. Similar curiosity arose when new media or digital media was introduced and several studies have been carried out to that end in the past decade.

The uses and gratification theory departs from the media effects theory like the hypodermic needle theory that considers the audience as passive receivers of content generated by powerful media forms like television, radio and newspapers.

Uses and gratification theory has an audience-centric perspective that takes the audience as actively choosing different media forms and contents to meet their desires and needs to achieve gratification. Herta Herzog is credited with having introduced the uses and gratification approach although she did not give a name to it. She had conducted a study on why women listened to a particular radio programme and what needs the radio listening activity satisfied.

Uses describes how the people use different media forms to fulfil their needs and gratification is the satisfaction that they receive after using them. The Uses and Gratification theory assumes that audiences willingly expose themselves to different media and media content of their choice. Hence, it stresses on the fact that people cannot be manipulated by media or content that is of no use to them.

However, the uses and gratification theory has been criticized for being individualistic to the point of ignoring the influence of bigger social and cultural contexts. In the same way, the assumption that audiences are active while using media has been criticized as some people tend to become passive while watching television. In spite of these criticisms, uses and gratification theory is widely used because it helps provide a view of how individual motives differ in use of media and gratification received.

Elihu Katz and Jay Blumler further developed the theory to substantiate the idea that people play an active role in choosing and using the media. The reasons that audiences use the different types of media is for five types of need gratification that are cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs and escapist needs.

Cognitive needs include acquiring news, information and knowledge through different media in order to better understand the environment and happenings around the world.

Affective needs refer to the gratification of entertainment and pleasure-seeking needs through media; in the context of this study, it is acquired through entertainment news.

Personal integrative needs are essential for an individual's self-esteem while social integrative need fulfils the want to affiliate and socially connect to particular social groups. Lastly, escapist need fulfils desire to escape from the daily stress and tensions through diversions provided by the media.

With the advent of digital technology in the new millennium, the uses and gratification has gained a new perspective. Innovative features of the new media have led researchers to come up with new concepts in this theory.

In his study, Thomas Ruggiero has come up with three concepts related to uses and gratification in digital technology. First is high interactivity of the new media which he states "strengthens the core uses and gratification notion of the active user". Second is demassification that allows the user to select from a wide variety of media forms and

content. Third is the asynchronous communication that allows users to send, receive and revert messages in their own time.

For this study, the researcher has focused on the cognitive, affective (emotional), personal integrative needs and social integrative needs of the user. It has tried to explore what forms of new media are chosen by young people, how and why they use it and what satisfaction they obtain from their use of the digital media. Cognitive need refers to the quest for news in order to strengthen an individual's reasoning ability. Affective (emotional) need shows how the media provides pleasure through entertainment news. Personal integrative need explains how news acquired through different media platforms enhances self-confidence and boosts credibility and status of an individual. Finally, social integrative need is when individuals want to share news and information with friends, family and acquaintances through social media.

In all, the uses and gratification theory will help understand the motivational dynamics behind an individual's use of digital media for news. Uses and gratifications theory provides a framework for understanding individuals' motives for using communication technology, needs, and consequences of media adoption and use behavior (Atkin, Hunt, & Lin, 2015).

1.2.2. Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Everett Rogers in 1962 combined the information flow research findings with studies of flow of information and the personal influence that message disseminator exerts on the message receiver. He applied this mechanism to multiple disciplines including anthropology, sociology and rural agriculture. This came to be known as the information diffusion theory which when applied to a new innovation came to be known as the innovation diffusion theory. When applied to mass communication this theory

explores which factors encourage individuals to adopt innovations or new ideas through communication networks.

According to the innovation diffusion theory when new innovation is introduced it goes through several stages before being adopted by the people. First are the innovators or risk takers who are youngsters, usually a small group. They are curious about new things and prompt to adopt them. Next are the early adopters whose number is higher than the innovators. They too comprise the younger generation and don't mind taking risks. This category takes on the role of opinion leaders as they have sufficient information about new technology and help in spreading awareness about it to other people. The late majority are the opinion followers who are influenced by the opinion leaders. Their number is significantly large and they adopt the new technology only after being completely assured that it is not a bad investment. The laggards comprise the last category and they cling on to old traditions resisting anything that is new.

Rogers has identified five characteristics of innovation diffusion that are relative advantage, compatibility/simplicity, complexity, trialability and observability. Relative advantage is the degree to which innovation is better than existing technologies. The notion that an innovation is better than its predecessor is considered a relative advantage (Atkin, Hunt, & Lin, 2015). The notion that an innovation is better than its predecessor is considered a relative advantage.

Compatibility is how easily one can adapt to using the new technology. When an innovation is consistent with needs, values, and experiences of the adopter, this characteristic is known as the compatibility (Atkin, Hunt, & Lin, 2015).

Complexity/simplicity is how simple or complex is the innovation in terms of use. The complexity characteristic addresses the level of difficulty for using an innovation (Atkin, Hunt, & Lin, 2015).

Trialability facilitates users to try out the innovation before adopting it. The trialability characteristic describes the limited basis in which a potential adopter can experiment with an innovation (Atkin, Hunt, & Lin, 2015). Observability is the extent to which the benefits of using the new technology is visible in order to persuade more people to adopt it. The observability characteristic involves the degree to which the results of adopting an innovation can be seen by others (Atkin, Hunt, & Lin, 2015).

Critics of the theory however feel that it is simplified to the extent that the theory focuses only on the innovation while not taking into account the societal, cultural and economic factors that lead people to adopt an innovation.

In this study, the characteristics of relative advantage focuses on the ease with which the digital media can be used to get news as compared to the older media forms. The complexity characteristic seeks to explain whether the young users face challenges in using the constantly evolving digital media. Through the compatibility feature, the researcher has tried to explain how innovative features like speed and interactivity of new media have been easily adopted by the youth. This theory will help in studying the reasons as to how and why young users adopt and use digital platforms for obtaining news. It will provide an insight into the relationship between an innovation and its user— in this study, the varied online news platforms and the youth.

1.3. Statement of Problem

There have been studies about the harmful effects of new media on young people since they have grown up in the digitally networked society. Research studies have focussed on the extreme use of the internet among the youth with the result that they have become dependent on it. From internet addiction to isolation and withdrawal from the real world, studies have mostly been carried out on the negative effects of new media.

However, there has not been much study on their use of digital media for accessing news.

This study has tried to explore different aspects of engagement of Darjeeling youth with online news. It has tried to find out if they are interested in using digital media for obtaining news. Whether the new media has replaced traditional media for getting their daily dose of news. If the digital news environment transformed the way the youth seek news, acquire and share it. Whether the advent of digital media and online news formats has changed the definition of news for the young audience. The role of young people in the production of news via user-generated content. In the process, the study has also observed, if after being informed through news the youth get encouraged to participate in social, civic and political issues.

1.4. General Objective

The general objective of the study is to find out how the all-pervasive nature of the Internet and digital media have made an impact in the news-seeking behaviour of young users.

1.4.1. Specific Objectives of Study

1. To explore the importance of the new media in the daily lives of youth.
2. To find out emerging trends in online news.
3. To find out the changing interpretation of news among youth in the digital era.
4. To study the youth's news seeking, consuming and sharing behaviour in digital media.
5. To study the role of digital platforms in disseminating news.
6. To study the participatory role of young people as news producers.

7. To study the youth's involvement in civic, social, environmental and political issues through new media.

1.5. Social Significance of Study

The internet and new media are powerful tools that influence human behaviour and society. The most significant impact of the internet has been in the way it has transformed the lives of young people.

Online communication has brought about new rituals in society that have an impact on how we socialize, communicate and acquire information. Initially, users utilized the media for socializing, networking, gaming and shopping. There was an entertainment quotient attached to new media because these activities are recreational in nature.

However, its utility has gradually encompassed the news and information domain too. In the digital age, the media landscape is changing in leaps and bounds and along with its dissemination, acquisition, sharing and production of news and information.

Keeping in view the current situation, one can foresee that digital technology will be all-encompassing in the coming years making studies like this pertinent and significant. The youth is the future generation and it is important to study their attitudes towards news. The need arises as young people are the future of a nation and ideally, they should follow news from around the globe on a regular basis. As conscious citizens this will enable them to get involved in civic, political and social issues.

The magnitude of information available on the Internet is profound. Hence, it is important to study the young user's perception regarding online news, how they sift news from the vast repository of information i.e. the Internet and the digital platforms they choose to seek out news, share it and also create it. Technology will shape the future. So, emerging trends, patterns and news habits need to be studied as news

producers need to know what appeals to the audiences. They can use digital tools to cater to them accordingly.

Features like interactivity and user-generated content are what distinguish the digital news from traditional news. Audiences are active users who interact and provide feedback to the producers. Better still, they can produce their own news content. This has been labelled as the “alternative news” independent of mainstream news of big media houses. The role of the youth as news producers is a vital aspect that shall be covered in this research. This new trend is proliferating at a rapid pace and future researchers can carry out studies to find out if “alternative news” will override mainstream news in the coming decade.

1.6. Study Universe

Darjeeling district is the northernmost district in the state of Bengal. It comprises Darjeeling, Kurseong, Mirik and Siliguri subdivisions. Darjeeling, the headquarter of the district and popular hill station is located at an elevation of 6700 feet (2000 m). The population of the district is approximately 18 lakhs. The region is famous for its tea and majority of the population depend on tourism as a source of income. The district is an educational hub popular for its missionary schools and colleges. The University of North Bengal is the state public university and provides affiliation to 30 colleges in the district. There are several private and government offices, different businesses running where the youth form a major workforce. In order to conduct the survey, the researcher has selected the university, colleges, offices — both government and private — and business enterprises.

1.7. Chapterisation

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 begins by presenting a background about the development of media and its evolution from traditional forms to the contemporary media. It outlines the definition of new media, the features like interactivity, exposure to unlimited content and instantaneity. A comparison between traditional and digital media forms and the elements that make the latter appealing to its users. In a subsequent manner, the study focuses on how the advent of the Internet has brought about far-reaching changes in the news environment. Emerging news platforms like websites, news apps, and social media are becoming popular among young users to acquire news.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The next chapter presents an overview of the research work that has already been done in the field of new media and youth engagement. The literature review comprises studies that show the importance that digital media has on the youth, the emerging trends, changing news habits, the transforming definition of news in the present scenario and the participatory role of users facilitated by features of interactivity.

Chapter 3: Methodology of Research

Chapter 3 outlines research techniques like survey and focus group discussions that have been used to collect and assemble data from the sample population. The survey data has been gathered through a questionnaire with multiple choice questions constructed with the help of 5-point Likert-scale. The focus group discussion was conducted to provide an in-depth understanding of the youths' use of new media for acquiring news.

This research is partly based on Uses and Gratification Theory and partly on Diffusion of Innovation Theory. The evaluations derived from the data collected have been

analysed from the perspective of these two theories. The Uses and Gratification Theory has been used to find out reasons that the youth aged between 18 and 30 years use digital media and the gratification derived from it. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory examines how young users have adopted the new technology as far as getting their daily dose of news is concerned and how they share it within their social networks.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

Chapter 4 presents the findings arrived at through statistical calculations of the data collected through survey. This has been done with the help of tables followed by interpretations of the data afterward.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Suggestions

The final chapter lists the conclusion along with suggestions for future research work that can be carried out on the subject.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter comprises analysis of research matters that are relevant and significantly linked to the current research topic. It gives an understanding about the research area of the dissertation and the work that has been previously done on the topic. A literature review is a study of academic information available on a particular topic. It provides an outline of the existing knowledge, enabling the researcher to identify theories, research methodologies and what is lacking in studies that are already present.

In order to conduct a literature review, a researcher is engaged in gathering relevant work such as books, articles and journals. The material gathered must be assessed in order to identify the premise, arguments and gaps in the study. Thereafter, a literature review must be written that presents a distinct representation of the state of knowledge on the subject. A good literature review is accurate, objective, thorough and comprises reliable resources. It surveys the existing literature, presents the information in summarized form, critically analyses it and presents the review in a systematic manner.

2.1. The Purpose of Literature Review

The literature review provides background information about the work that has already been done in the research area. It helps establish a familiarity with the current research topic, helps identify strengths and weaknesses of existing research material and paves way for new approaches.

The purpose of literature review is:

To provide basis of knowledge on the subject

Literature review helps in gathering a bulk of literature on a specific topic. Its main aim is to provide a thorough background knowledge for understanding the current subject.

To avoid duplication of research topics

The exercise of literature review helps to identify topics on which research has already been carried out. This helps to avoid duplication of topics on which research work has already been carried out.

To identify gaps in existing research

Literature review helps to identify inconsistencies and areas that have been left uncovered in prior research studies. Hence, it helps the researcher to justify the need for additional research in an area.

To provide a context to the researcher's topic

Literature review helps the researcher put his work in perspective. It provides a context to the research work being carried out in relation to the work that has already been done. It helps to explain the need to carry out further research in order to add value to the existing body of work.

Importance of the new media in the daily lives of youth

Digital media has become an intrinsic part of today's world with people turning to it for acquiring news and information. The instantaneous feature facilitated by high speed, interactivity, minute-by-minute news updates, abundance of news provided by the online platforms has made it popular among users. The youth are the pioneers of the use of new media, its most enthusiastic consumer for all their information needs. Dijk (2012) has called the youth the 'Digital Natives' who were born in the 1990's and have grown up with digital technologies.

It has permeated their complete daily life, almost from birth. Picking up digital technology in the most natural way, they have developed youth culture that reveals a number of common patterns (Dijk, 2012).

Djik (2012) has analysed the second communication revolution brought about by digital technology in the contemporary world in the context of the youth. The author has revealed that new media has brought about a cohesive society that is interconnected through digital technology rather than face-to-face communication. This new trend has influenced individuals especially the youth as they have become totally dependent on it as if it is some kind of lifeline. New media has infiltrated every area of the social lives of young people, that they cannot do without their smartphones, laptops, palmtops and tabs.

The author has focussed significantly on the revolution brought about by digital technology attributing it for drastically impacting the lives of individuals. The emphasis is more on the new media than on the audience. However, this research study will try to strike a balance between the new innovations and their use by youth for fulfilling their daily requirement of news and happenings around the world.

As early adopters of new technologies, young people tend to be at the forefront of new media interaction, thus shaping it through their practices (Zemmels, 2012).

Zemmels (2012) has emphasized that with the advent of new media there are anxieties over its adverse effects on young people. However, young people should be considered as active agents in meaning-making through media engagement. The author has stressed that they are indicators of future trends of media technology and practices that will be formed. From gathering information for educational projects to purchasing items online, from staying connected to getting information and news, the digital media has facilitated numerous things. The lives of youth revolve around social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. These media basically gratify their need to communicate, to stay connected with their peers, to get and share information.

While Zemmels (2012) has stressed on the youth and their use of digital media, the study largely deals with the issue of identity — personal and cultural — and how it is constructed through media engagement in the present times. In the current research work, the researcher will go beyond identity and focus on the transformation brought about in the news seeking, reading, viewing and sharing habits.

The new media are also characterized by a number of communication capacities that are both enabling and defining their use. Strong capacities are speed, geographical reach, storage capacity and selectivity (Dijk, 2012).

Dijk (2012) has revealed that strong features of digital media like geographical reach, storage capacity and speed have made them desirable among youth. Traditional media like newspapers and television are subject to hindrances in delivery and broadcasting owing to the inclement weather and difficult terrain. With a strong network, easy accessibility, instantaneous message delivery, the new media facilitated by the Internet has become an important medium of communication.

These digital natives see these technologies as a logical extension of traditional communication methods, and perceive social networking sites as often a much quicker and more convenient way to interact (Neelamalar & Chitra, 2009).

Neelamalar and Chitra (2009) have studied the use of the Internet among Indian youth and its impact on their social behaviour. They have arrived at the conclusion that the highest level of use of the new media is among the young people. The study emphasizes that even though they are tech-savvy and socially active, the youth use the digital media with a degree of social consciousness.

Even though Neelamalar and Chitra (2009) have categorized the good aspects of Internet like awareness, creativity, education and social skills and its bad aspects like addiction, privacy issues, bullying and psychological issues, they have not dealt with

elaborately regarding the productive and the negative activities that the youth indulge in through the Internet.

Emerging trends in online news

It is a well-known fact that in the contemporary times the new media is an integral part of dissemination and consumption of news. The easy-to-use and interactive medium has given rise to a variety of platforms for accessing and sharing news, like social media, news portals and user-generated online mediums. These are the significant trends that have been seen for some time now. To the extent that even big media organizations apart from having e-papers and online news sites have also started making their presence felt on social media like Facebook and twitter.

Cortessi and Gasser (2015) have depicted in a holistic manner the changing news scenario in the digital era, the emerging patterns and the impact they have on the perception of the youth regarding what news is for them. The authors have taken the youth as the sample population because they are considered massive users of digital technology and it focuses on their engagement with news seeking, sharing and producing.

In recent years, the news landscape has become more complex as a growing number of highly interactive news sources, including social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Reddit), citizen blogs (e.g., CNN iReports), and user-generated online news platforms (e.g., YouTube, PolicyMic) have emerged (Cortessi & Gasser, 2015).

Calabrese and Jenard (2018) have studied how in the online news ecosystem, social media, websites of news channels and online portals have fostered interactivity and participation by providing space for the comments and discussion sections.

Comments are certainly the most common form of user-generated content nowadays, because the social web is designed to promote and circulate this content in order to

foster interactivity, and to produce reusable data about online consumption (Calabrese & Jenard, 2018).

Calabrese and Jenard (2018), though, have only highlighted the role of Facebook and online news sites in explaining the interactive feature of digital media. This research study will include all forms of digital media platforms including Facebook, twitter, local news portals, online news sites, news apps, memes and social media live streaming. Other than interactivity, the researcher will try to find how helpful other features like short content, frequent updates, high speed, unlimited content et al, are to young people in the process of obtaining news.

Recent research on youth online and news highlights youth's strong tendency to take advantage of opportunities for content sharing and creation and options for the broader expansion of interactivity (or the shift toward social production) across the information ecosystem (Cortessi & Gasser, 2015).

Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc (2018) have studied how in a time-starved world, news producers are adopting new technology to attract and sustain the interest of their audiences. The authors have revealed that newsrooms around the world are shifting toward an audience-oriented reconfiguration. This does not mean that audiences were not important in the past but news producers are eager to use digital technology to gather data about audience preferences. New audience-oriented roles like engagement, social media and analytics editors have been created in newsrooms for the purpose of gauging audience engagement with the news guiding the editorial team about decisions regarding content that will be appealing to the audience.

While the public editor or the ombudsman is tasked to react to traditionally qualitative audience feedback, engagement editors, social media editors, and analytics editors are

expected to be more proactive, making sense of quantitative audience feedback to be able to predict audience preferences (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018).

Gangopadhyay (2014) has dealt with the evolution of news from ancient times to the digital era. The author attributes the present-day news scenario to the lightning speed in which news can be produced and accessed from multifarious online mediums. The digital medium is not time bound as the instant factor supersedes every other consideration.

Sometimes a news or information is uploaded as the story is developing with live feeds. Though the stories are initially sketchy but are fleshed out with more information at later stages (Gangopadhyay, 2014).

Gangopadhyay (2014) has highlighted the progress of news from traditional to digital media and how media organizations have adopted different online platforms in order to tap the techno-savvy audiences. It has not touched upon news sites and apps whose content is generated solely for online publication. This research study will include web-based news portals and news apps too.

Juvenia and Dimiyati (2017) suggest that social media like Facebook has helped mainstream news organizations drive online traffic to their websites. Social media is a good publication medium because of its reach, accessibility, usability and immediacy. Facebook helps to connect with people globally, so it has been used as an alternative source for news dissemination by providing hyperlink/linkage of news of media houses on their social media pages. The fact that social media facilitates interactivity of news producers with their users has turned it into an effective tool to get the latter visit their portals and read or view news. However, this study has restricted itself to only Facebook and does not provide a diverse overview including other online applications.

According to Tandoc and Johnson (2016) Twitter has become the most used medium by news organizations and journalists around the globe for reporting and engaging audiences. Twitter enables journalists to gather information about happenings through citizens who are present on the scene and update news and photos through the micro-blogging site. Despite the fact that social media outlets undermine the process of gatekeeping, media houses use Twitter to spread information because there is a growing audience for short but fast bits and pieces of news. The audience's demand for news as incidents and events take place around the world has given rise to newer trends and the latest in this category is short- form news content. Twitter is quite popular with news agencies, television channels and newspapers to break news updates every minute or sometimes even less time.

Tandoc and Johnson (2016) have based their study solely on Twitter and attributed its short content format for having an appeal among the youth. Apart from Twitter, this research work will take into account short news apps that are limited to just 60-100 words news updates.

As per a study conducted by Aneez et al. (2019) in India, Facebook has been identified as a site used for news by almost three times as many respondents as Twitter. However, the latter in spite of having a smaller user base and less website traffic than Facebook is still an important platform for breaking news and generating animated online debate.

According to Molyneux (2017) mobile devices like smartphones and tablets are used for getting news but their formats are shorter and updates are available throughout the day. Mobile based software applications offer breaking news alerts and notifications. The content provided by the news apps are short, succinct, crisp and brief offering important news at regular intervals and updating them as it develops.

Apablaza-Campos and Codina (2018) suggest that social media live streaming has been adopted as a new trend in news dissemination as it gives intensity to a journalist's story. The trend was started by Facebook Live and Twitter. Currently, a wide range of apps offer live streaming facilities like Instagram Stories Live, YouTube Live, Snapchat Live Stories and Tumblr Live Videos. The study emphasizes on how mainstream media organizations use livestream features to add a sense of urgency to a story. However, it has not mentioned that this new feature has enabled the common man to live stream incidents and events in one's locality even though their stories may lack the finesse of that of newsmen and backing of mainstream news organizations.

Rastic et al. (2014) have explored different kinds of memes and how they are emerging as a new media culture. They have stressed that although memes are humorous, awareness of global events are a prerequisite for anybody to understand them. Meme is an emerging genre that may be shallow and humorous and is yet used to communicate messages about incidents and happenings in a funny way. Even though the study has touched upon the subject of memes for dissemination of news, it has not done so in an elaborate manner.

Memes are usually connected with the latest news, any kind of event either political or showbiz. They are very simple in form but nevertheless deal with serious social problems that people face all over the world (Rastic, Dazdarevic, & Fijuljanin, 2014).

Cortessi and Gasser (2015) have focussed on how memes are popular among young users who are engaged in creating them as well. The study conducted by the authors found that young users were making memes using websites that facilitated them to produce highly contextual, humorous, visual, and easily digestible news content and social commentary.

The changing interpretation of news among the youth in digital era

The new trends that have come up in the digital era have changed the notion of news. This change in perception has been found among young people for whom news is more than that what is published/broadcast in newspapers and television.

The serious, lengthy, detailed and insightful articles and news broadcasts are associated with the traditional definition of news. News is what can be picked up on the go in mediums that are user-friendly and accessible and in content forms that are short and light.

Head et al. (2018) have studied the distinction between traditional and online news. Earlier news was divided into distinct categories of newspaper and network broadcasts. After journalists sent their reports, the editors at the news desks decided on the placement according to its importance, with the big stories with bold headlines placed above the fold in newspapers. News items demanding immediacy were shown at the beginning of news telecasts and given more time. But that distinction has blurred in online news, as all kinds of information are placed alongside irrespective of their importance. News of different genres like entertainment, sports, investigative items, current affairs, political news are placed in a mixed format in websites.

Kavanagh et al. (2019) have suggested that there was a marked difference in the presentation of news in the pre-2000 and the post-2000 period. In the pre-2000 period news was event and context based and used elaborate and descriptive details. The language was precise and concrete and the source of information was someone of authority. On the contrary, post-2000 reporting was like storytelling that gave prominence to interactions, personal perspective and emotions. The language used was flexible, unplanned speech and opinions, interviews and arguments.

According to Kramp & Loosen (2018) newsrooms adopt strategies with the purpose of contributing to content for discussions among users on social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Snapchat in order to create an audience base for their news brand. News producers try to engage the young audiences by adopting contemporary forms of communication in their reporting of news. These include messaging apps, posting pictures and videos on social media pages and circulating internet memes. The flexible communication strategy has been encouraged by changing habits of media use.

News seeking, reading/viewing and sharing behaviour of the youth in new media

Young people are less interested in news than the adults, they do take an interest if the news is easily accessible and in formats that suit them. Digital technology has changed the way the youth search for news, consume and share it.

Andersson (2018) has suggested that young people generally do not take part in news as much as the adult population. He has attributed this tendency of the youth to the fact that traditional media forms and formats do not fit into their lifestyle. These media forms are not considered an option for practical, temporal, geographical or economic reasons, they are considered more difficult to make use of.

Andersson (2018) has stressed more on the production of news by young people and the media organizations and how the latter can engage the former in producing news. It basically deals with production of news that appeals to the youth of Nordic and Baltic regions by engaging them as journalists in the digital media environment. In the current research, the researcher will focus on the news habits ranging from seeking, reading/viewing, producing and sharing news by the youth of Darjeeling. It aims at giving a snapshot of news habits of the youth from a different country and culture.

On the other hand, Qayyum and Williamson (2014) have stated that news does interest youngsters as they want to remain updated on day to day happenings around the world. The authors have studied the use of news by the youth in the ever-changing online media landscape of the contemporary times. They have found that the youth are interested in gaining news and their main source is online via the Internet. The young audience come for news if it is accessible to them and in language and formats that suit them. Nevertheless, even though the youth have not completely discarded traditional media like newspapers and television, they are more comfortable using the new media given the fact that with a single click on the search engine, they get several results.

Qayyum and Williamson (2014) have investigated only the news-seeking and browsing behaviours of young adults in the context of the declining print readership and the unlimited news content in online platforms to try and predict changes and trends in this field. In the current research, the researcher will investigate all the news habits of the youth in the digital news environment.

Pew research (Lenhart, Purcell and Smith, 2010) indicated that 62% of Internet-using teenagers, especially older teens, consume online news about current events and politics (Qayyum & Williamson, 2014). The authors have focussed how in an ever-changing digital media environment, the social networking preferences of young users are constantly changing making it difficult for news providers to fulfil their information needs.

According to Molyneux (2017) new media devices especially smartphones and tablets have led to the trend of snacking and grazing on news. Snacking and grazing of news take place when users read news briefly and dispersed over a period of time rather than at a long stretch. Mobile devices are carried everywhere and this has led to the habit of checking on news throughout the day. The author reveals that this has also led to

incidental news viewing because apps and social media newsfeed constantly provide alerts on breaking news even though users are not consciously searching for a news item.

Cortessi and Gasser (2015) have stated that another significant factor affecting news seeking behaviour in young people is one's network of friends and acquaintances on social media. When a peer on social media posts a news, shares a link or comments on a news item, youngsters get influenced to view or read them. This too is incidental consumption of news. Unlike the planned manner in which youngsters seek out news by customizing their search in the Internet, incidental consumption is when individuals come across news by chance. It is because friends and acquaintances share web links via Facebook, twitter, Instagram and YouTube that they become aware of news happenings.

According to Joshi et al. (2013) the digital media has facilitated personalized search by users seeking information relevant to their needs. The concept behind customized search is that by getting to know about the user's preferences through the process of document indexing algorithms, search engines can refine the results for the users. This study however, has been conducted from the perspective of the news producers where they seek to find out the user's interest through user profiling, hyperlink analysis, content analysis and collaborative web search. In the current study, the researcher will try to understand the user's perspective for personalized search on the web and try to determine whether they prefer online media to traditional platforms.

Aneez et al. (2019) in their study have found that several Indians expressed an appetite for more personalised mobile news alerts and more online news video. The authors have presented a view of how new media users in India are adopting an Internet-driven mobile-first platform in which they actively access news through search engines, social

media, and messaging applications. However, on the flip side the authors have also found out that Indians are cautious about disinformation that is spread through such platforms.

Zemmels (2012) has suggested that digital media has less restrictions on artistic expression and civic engagement that has led to creating and sharing creations. This has been termed as participatory media culture and the youth form an integral part of it as they interact in the networked environment through social media like Facebook, MySpace and YouTube.

In this increasingly interactive and social information ecosystem, creating and sharing information have become central activities of youth online, particularly on social media platforms. For example, 86% of teens who use social networks also report posting comments to a friend's page or wall on a social networking site (Cortessi & Gasser, 2015).

Due to their convenient and easy-to-use tools for posting content, social media also simplify and facilitate news sharing—both for media organizations and individuals (Kumpel, Karnowski, & Keyling, 2015).

What makes social media a unique platform for news is the ability it affords citizens to now act as efficient content distributors, and it is necessary to understand if and when people disseminate news in this digital environment (Weeks & Holbert, 2013).

Role of new media in news dissemination

New media is emerging as an important news source so it is important to study the role that it has to play in distribution of information. Research has been carried out to study if the new media has outdone traditional media as a major provider of news. Studies also have been carried out to find why audiences have turned to new media to get their daily dose of news and information.

Bergstorm and Belfrage (2018) have acknowledged that mainstream news media is still a major news producer but the use of traditional media that publish or broadcast their news is declining. The social media pages, online sites, twitter handles of these news organizations are more popular than the traditional platforms for accessing news. The authors revealed that online platforms that are independent of mainstream news organizations (alternative news sources) are becoming important news sources for the youth. The alternative digital news sources have their basis mainly on citizen journalism and focus on news and opinion that are contrary to or underplayed by mainstream media.

However, Bergstorm and Belfrage (2019) have identified that the youth depend mostly on incidental news consumption where news and updates constantly appear on their social media news feeds. The authors have also pointed that the youth have come to depend on opinion leaders who constantly share updates on social networking sites and messaging apps. In the current study, the researcher will investigate the youth's news seeking or gathering habits that are self-motivated and not left to chance.

The most widely used online news sources (beyond platforms) are generally the websites of leading legacy media including broadcasters and newspapers, but some digital-born news media have significant reach, including some alternative and partisan sites who despite limited name recognition have built relatively large audiences (Aneez, Neyazi, Kalogeropoulos, & Nielsen, 2019).

Andersson (2018) has listed the advantages of digital media over traditional media to disseminate information. The researcher has outlined that online media has removed cumbersome processes of printing, circulation and acquisition of satellite frequencies for broadcasting. However, despite the removal of these processes the distribution of news online is, potentially, worldwide.

Kaul (2012) has stressed that another important feature of digital technology is the immediacy brought about in news delivery where news is broken within seconds of events occurring locally or globally. Articles show up on several websites only moments apart and as the story develops, the news items are updated in a jiffy. The author has stated that the same phenomenon doesn't happen with traditional, broadcast and print media except when a specific news event is of great importance that news producers are compelled to break their regular news practices and schedules.

Bergstrom and Belfrage (2018) have stressed that the youth are still interested in news solely because of dissemination through the digital media, otherwise they could have completely avoided it. The online media environment has also replaced the linear model of transmission from message producer to the receiver prevalent in traditional media.

It is also clear that the news shared in young persons' feeds serves to widen their scope of information, in that they unintentionally come across news items they would have missed out on, had it been relegated to traditional platforms (Bergstorm & Belfrage, 2018).

Participatory role of young people as news producers

The audience as news creators is a relatively new phenomenon that falls outside the ambit of the traditional model of news. Andersson (2018) has studied how digital media allows interactivity and new generation of active users can also generate or produce content. The author has mentioned that Axel Burns, an expert in digital media research has coined the term 'producers' to refer to this new category of users. Since the traditional distinctions between production and consumption are no longer viable, the activity they engage in is called 'produsing'.

Similar to 'producers' is the concept of 'prosumers' where consumers or users produce content. Ha and Yun (2014) have attributed the concept of 'prosumption' to Alvin

Toffler who had written about how the society at that time was integrating production and consumption in his book *The Third Wave* in 1980. The authors have used terms such as crowdsourcing and user-generated content to describe the phenomenon of media where producing content is not limited to a small number of selected professional institutions but rather to mass users. The study shows how in the digital era applications are facilitating the 'prosumption' of user-generated content such as Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, and others.

Walls (2015) has described citizen journalists in the twenty-first century as individuals who collected information independently, conducted social media-hosted content, wrote blogs, posted YouTube videos and Twitter posts. They were ordinary people who used digital technology to narrate their own versions of events. However, the study has also revealed that citizen journalism was viewed as unethical, untrustworthy and subjective by professional journalists. Audiences too believed that they were not the authority to produce real news and termed them as unprofessional. The author has not stressed that in the contemporary times mainstream media houses give space to videos recorded and written updates by ordinary persons by verifying the authenticity of such items. In the current study, the researcher will cover how people play a pivotal role in bringing first-person accounts before the audiences, sometimes even before news organizations.

Readers have always recommended stories, provided eye witness reports and figured as sources in stories and this has only become easier with e-mail and user generated content technology (Redden & Witschge, 2010).

Redden and Witschge (2010) have emphasized that although users play a significant role in news production with the new technologies, the balance of power has not shifted to the users because journalists and editors still decide what makes a good story. The

study, however, has not stressed on the role of local news portals that are catching up fast. This current study will focus on how local websites that break local news fast and provide greater details are becoming popular among the audience.

Andersson (2018) has pointed that in case of mainstream news sites where the readers are only able to put their comments and reactions in the comment section of their social media pages. However, the scenario is entirely different for alternative news sources where users are content producers. Moreover, alternative and independent news sources online are providing different perspectives from those represented in mainstream news coverage.

News production has become increasingly decentralised, and a plethora of new, “alternative” news sources have appeared. The vast amount of free news in social media, ad-funded-news aggregator sites, agenda-driven “news” sites etc. have, in addition to dwindling advertising in legacy media, led to a deep crisis for the traditional news media business model (Andersson, Dalquist, & Ohlsson, 2018).

Thomas (2012) has stressed on the fact Mumbai attack was a pivotal moment in the history of citizen journalism in India as it showed that ordinary citizens had become more informed and mobile phones along with social networking sites could be used to provide updates in a language of one’s choice. Thomas has argued that even though reporting by citizen journalists lacks finesse of refined journalism, they are able to feel the pulse of the people. Even though the author has identified that certain recognized bloggers and citizens journalists who contribute to both foreign and national media, he has not depicted the role of local news portals in delivering regional news instantly. In the current study, the researcher will emphasize on the growing popularity of local news sites and their social media pages among audiences.

It is commonly held that citizen journalists emerged in the wake of the experiences of journalism in the context of reporting the war from the Gulf and extraordinary events such as Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and the Mumbai terrorist siege (Thomas, 2012).

Rather than mass media consumers, they are the “me media” generation shaping and contributing to the media economy with a potentially global audience (Zemmels, 2012). Zemmels (2012) has attributed the youth’s eagerness to produce news to the production tools like digital video cameras, smartphones and video editing apps that are easily available at low cost and require little training to use them.

Youth involvement in civic, social and political issues through new media

Research has been carried out to find the connection between digital media and mobilization of the youth for civic, social and political participation. These have yielded mixed results. While some studies have found that digital media is imperative to start movements on various issues, others argue that debates and discussions on social media platforms do not translate into movements in the real world.

According to Simoes and Campos (2016), the significance of digital media in political and civic participation has become distinct in recent years especially as the use of the Internet has become mobile and all-pervasive. Moreover, the space of contemporary protest is a mix where protests on the Internet and the streets are interconnected in different ways. Digital tools especially Facebook and Twitter played complementary roles alongside traditional media in mobilization of the youth for protests in the real world.

Gangopadhyay (2015) has categorized movements on the basis of the level of involvement of digital media. The author has talked about social movement

organizations (SMO) that were started in the real world but used digital media as a tool to boost their campaign. Apart from SMO's there are E-movement (electronic movement) that are completely conducted online through signature campaigns, debates and discussions. Both these movements have a completely different mode of operation. While SMO's are organised into a centralised, vertically hierarchical command structure, E-movements have the freedom to operate in a flexible manner.

Gangopadhyay (2015) has taken three case studies, the Anna Hazare—Anti Corruption Movement, Occupy Wall Street Movement and Nirbhaya Rape Protest Movement to show how mass media accelerated these movements. During the Anna Hazare Movement in 2011 protests in the field were taking place alongside discussions and debates in social media. The author has argued that the social media activism had reached such a momentum that the mainstream media had no option but to highlight it as the main news for as many days as Hazare was on hunger-strike. Similar trend was noticed in the Nirbhaya rape protest in 2012. Demonstrations and candle light rallies had been organized throughout the country demanding severest punishment against the perpetrators.

The young technology savvy Indians spread their outrage across the country and came together to voice their opinions against the weak law and the flaws in our legal system. No doubt television was telecasting all the developments in the case but it was the mobile phone which was updating those sitting in the streets. Every news item was reaching them on their cell phone via Facebook and Twitter etc (Gangopadhyay, 2015). Gangopadhyay (2015) has pointed that in the Occupy Wall Street movement in September 2011, persons affected by economic meltdown used social media as a platform to connect before coming to the streets. The author in the study has not focussed on movements that are limited to only online platforms through debates,

discussions and online signature campaigns. The current research will take into consideration movements and campaigns that are solely based on online media.

Subrahmanyam and Samhel (2012) have stressed that a basic civic right and duty of citizens of any country is to exercise one's franchise. But the youth demonstrate a passiveness when it comes to political participation and casting votes. However, the easy accessibility of information regarding national politics on digital media has got them to think, form opinions, make decisions and act on them. The authors have supported their findings with a survey conducted by Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Education that states that voter turnout among 18-29 years old increased by 2.2 million in 2008 US Presidential election as compared to 2004 and this has been attributed to the use of digital media in political campaigns.

The Internet has become an integral part of the political process. Within the USA, the 2004 and 2008 elections were the first to make widespread and innovative use of various forms of technology including e-mail, text messages, blogs and social networking sites (Subrahmanyam & Samhel, 2010).

Yilmaz (2017) has pointed that there are differing opinions regarding activism through online media. While a group of optimists concluded that digital media is an important catalyst to propel social movements, critics highlighted that online activism was limited to just that medium. The author has constantly used terms like 'slacktivism' combining the words slacker and activism, 'clicktivism', 'armchair activism' and 'feel good activism' to describe activists who are only active on virtual but make no physical effort in the real world.

The term generally points out activities that are performed with minimum personal effort, nevertheless considered more efficient in making the participants feel good about themselves than to achieve the stated political goal (Yilmaz, 2017).

Yilmaz (2017) has studied both aspects of impact of digital media on social activism and has arrived at the conclusion that while most movements reach successful outcomes with social media acting as the facilitator, others remain confined to just rantings on online debate platforms. The author has considered the signing of e- petitions, joining social networking sites' groups, publishing and sharing campaign content, participating in short-term boycotts and taking part in online discussions as frivolous and ineffective. Simoes and Campos (2016) have found out that although social media acts as a galvanising force, it is able to translate only some percentage of online activism to physical protests. The study has found out that it is almost unthinkable to organize protests without the use of digital media in the current times but it also states all of online activism actually does not translate to offline action on the streets.

An optimistic perspective tends to emphasize its democratizing and emancipating role. A critical perspective calls into question the capability of the Internet and digital technologies to generate more participation (Simoes & Campos, 2016).

Conclusion

The overall review of research articles suggests that digital technology has brought about a second communication revolution. The youth are the frontrunners of the new technology in the contemporary times who have adopted it in all spheres of their lives including news consumption. Previous research while emphasizing on the anxieties of the adverse effects of digital technology on the youth have also stated that young people should be considered as active agents in meaning-making through digital media engagement. An overview suggests that the convenient and interactive online media has given rise to a variety of platforms for accessing and sharing news that are adequately used by the youth. This has led to an alteration in the interpretation of news,

changes in news habits. Participation is the key element of online media and audiences are no longer passive.

3.1. Method of Research

Research develops in you a way of thinking that is logical and rational and that encourages you to critically examine every aspect of day-to-day situations (Kumar, 2014).

Research is a way of systematized examination that involves gathering of data, documenting important details and analysing and interpreting that data according to suitable methodology that have been established in academic disciplines. Research is carried out in order to assess the validity of a hypothesis or an interpretive framework. It is conducted to accumulate a reservoir of considerable knowledge and findings so that they can be applied in appropriate areas.

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. In it we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them (Kothari, 1985).

Research methodology is the plan prepared through which researchers need to carry out their research. It shows the course which the researchers follow in order to form their problem and objectives and present the results from the data obtained during the period of research. It comprises the method of research or techniques that the researcher uses in order to collect, assemble and evaluate data.

This research is partly based on Uses and Gratification Theory and partly on Diffusion of Innovation Theory. Through the utilization of the Uses and Gratification Theory as framework, the researcher has sought to find out why the youth aged between 18 to 30 years use digital media for obtaining news, how they use the new interactive media, the notion they have about online news, the satisfaction that they derive for fulfilling their cognitive and emotive, personal and social integrative needs through it.

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory has examined the reasons why the youth have adopted the new technology as far as getting their daily use of news is concerned. It has been used to find their news consumption and sharing habits and if the digital media has replaced traditional media in getting news or has complemented it.

The researcher has followed mixed research that involve both quantitative as well as qualitative methods for this study. The techniques used for collection of data from the sample are the survey method and focus group discussion. As the study is about engagement of the youth in new media for news, an ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in real-life situations and the respondents were asked to fill up paper-and-pencil questionnaires in natural settings. Ethnographic fieldwork focuses on the patterns, attitudes and details of particular section of the society. As the researcher needed to focus on a specific area for carrying out the research, the Darjeeling district was chosen for the study and an analysis was conducted of the attitude of youth of Darjeeling district towards news on digital platforms. Through ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher has tried to understand the phenomena of engagement of youth of Darjeeling — who are the subject of research — with online news.

While the survey method was used for quantitative analysis, focus group discussion was used to examine the topic at hand in an in-depth manner. The study examines patterns that have emerged in the digital news environment and its impact on the youth. The aim of quantitative research study is to produce knowledge that can be generalized regarding the causes of a phenomenon. On the other hand, a qualitative study aims at providing a perspective about the behaviours, social structures comprising beliefs, thoughts, attitudes regarding certain categories of people. The qualitative method seeks to understand and interpret the actions of people taking into account the environment around them.

3.2. Merits of Survey Method

1. They can be used to investigate problems in realistic settings. Activities like news reading, television viewing observed in real-life settings give accurate results instead of in artificial settings.
2. It helps collect a vast amount of information from a large sample population.
3. Survey is not constrained by geographical boundaries.
4. The cost of conducting the research is reasonable considering the amount of information collected.

3.3. Demerits of Survey Method

1. The independent variables cannot be manipulated like they can in controlled settings.
2. Wrong worded questions or incorrect location in the questionnaire can adversely affect the accuracy of the results.
3. Wrong set of respondents will give wrong results.
4. It may be difficult to convince respondents to fill up questionnaires.

3.4. Merits of Focus Group Discussion

1. They are helpful in getting detailed information about behaviours, feelings, opinions.
2. As they are administered in groups, cost of conducting them is reasonable.
3. They provide in-depth information and allow scope for explanation.

3.5. Demerits of Focus Group Discussion

1. There are chances that the discussions may divert from the main issue.
2. The group can be hard to control.
3. It may be difficult to encourage respondents to participate.

3.6. Research Questions

RQ1. How important is new media in the lives of the youth?

RQ2. What are the emerging trends and news practices in the digital era?

RQ3. Has the digital media replaced traditional media to fulfil daily news requirements?

RQ4. In the digitally networked environment, has the concept of news changed for the young generation?

RQ5. How do the youth interact with online news?

RQ6. How do young people consume news?

RQ7. Are the youth effective news producers?

RQ8. Does the youth's engagement with online news make them active citizens?

3.7. General Objectives of Study

- To study the extent of use of digital media for obtaining news.
- To study the adaption of the features of the digital news platform by the youth.
- To study the new news habits and changing notion of news in a digital environment.

3.8. Research Design

A research design section outlines the methods that were chosen to conduct a research study, the reasons for choosing them and the theoretical framework that is appropriate for the study. It helps to make significant decisions regarding research approaches as to how required data for a study will be gathered and the theoretical framework that is relevant to the topic.

A research design is a plan the researchers prepare on how they will go about attaining answers to the research questions that they set to find out. It is a procedural-cum-

operational plan that details what and how different methods and procedures are to be applied during the research process (Kumar, 2014).

There are four types of research designs in quantitative research namely experimental, correlational, causal-comparative/quasi-experimental and descriptive research. The experimental research establishes a relationship between the cause and effect of a situation. The correlational research is a non-experimental method where the researcher measures statistical relationship between two variables. The causal-comparative or quasi-experimental method is an empirical study that determines the cause and effect of a situation.

However, this research study has used the descriptive type of research because it is suitable for identifying patterns, trends, characteristics and frequencies of certain phenomena. The descriptive research does not seek to make predictions or examine cause and effect. Descriptive research is used to describe situations and involves the case-study, observational, longitudinal, cross-sectional, archival and survey research methods.

This research study used the survey method to gain information on opinions, attitudes, feelings and insights regarding the attitude of the youth regarding the use of digital media in getting their daily dose of news. The other method employed to gather information was focus group discussion. The aim of conducting such a discussion was to find out the underlying reasons for the use of digital media for getting news.

A theoretical framework consists of the theories that are used for a study. It is the structure of theories and concepts that are relevant to the topic of the research. Such a framework will help in understanding the findings and co-relate it to broader scenarios. In this case, the Uses & Gratification and Diffusion of Innovation theories have been used to provide a theoretical framework. The Uses & Gratification Theory has helped

to explain people's relationship with mass media and how it contributes to fulfil their needs. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory has explained the process through which digital technology is communicated through different networks over time among the members of the population.

3.9. Method of Study

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods have been used in this research. Quantitative research is said to be more objective and depend on statistical and mathematical analysis of data collected through surveys, questionnaires and polls. Quantitative study designs are specific, well structured, have been tested for their validity and reliability, and can be explicitly defined and recognised (Kumar, 2014).

Qualitative research relies on unstructured data that is observed and not measured and relies on observation, interviews, audio and video materials for gathering information. Qualitative study designs are not as specific, precise and well-defined as designs in quantitative research (Kumar, 2014).

In the course of gathering information for this research, a survey was conducted first among the sample population as a part of the quantitative study design. The researcher chose the questionnaire as a research tool in order to gather information for this study. A paper-and-pencil questionnaire with multiple-choice questions was framed and printed sets were circulated among the sample population in order to gauge their preferences or non-preferences of digital media for obtaining news.

In the second phase, a qualitative research was conducted with the help of a focus group discussion in order to delve deeper and gain an in-depth understanding of the youth regarding their use of digital media for obtaining news.

3.10. Time Dimension

The time dimension is an important part of a research and depending upon the time taken to complete a research there are two types of studies, namely cross-sectional and longitudinal. The cross-sectional study is when a research takes place at a definite point in time and does not linger on. In fact, the researcher takes a segment of the population to observe or measure a phenomenon, attitude, issue et al.

Cross-sectional studies, also known as one-shot studies or status studies, are the most commonly used designs in the social sciences. This design is best suited to studies aimed at finding out the prevalence of a phenomenon, situation, problem, attitude or issues, by taking a cross section of the population (Kumar, 2014).

A longitudinal study takes place over a stretch of time and measurements or observations are carried out two or more times depending on the necessity of the research. The period of study extends from several months to several years and the same variables are measured or observed over a period of time.

In longitudinal studies the study population is visited a number of times at regular intervals, usually over a long period, to collect the required information (Kumar, 2014).

In this study the researcher has used the cross-sectional study method where the data was collected once from the sample population, namely the youth aged between 18 to 30 years in order to study their engagement with digital media for news. In a cross-sectional study, data is basically collected through the survey method and interviews. Likewise, in this study, the survey method was used and data was gathered through questionnaires that were filled up by the sample population and a focus group discussion.

3.11. Period of study

The period of study is the time limit that the researcher has for completing the research study. This research study was carried out during the academic session of 2018-2020. It comprised an eighteen-month MPhil course that was extended by additional six months as this researcher required more time to complete the research work. A further extension of six months was taken due to the crippling situation owing to the nationwide lockdown to prevent Covid-19.

The MPhil course had both the course as well as the research component. It commenced with a six-month mandatory course work for understanding research methodology and the remaining period was devoted to carrying out research work and drafting the dissertation. In this time frame a thorough literature review was carried out of journals, books and articles related to the topic of youth engagement with digital media for news. As it was a survey-based study, a considerable amount of time was taken to distribute the questionnaires to 403 respondents and collect them back. This was followed by tabulation of data, their statistical analysis and detailing the interpretations. The rest of the research period was utilized for filing the draft of the dissertation.

3.12. Population Sample and Sampling

A sample is a subset of the population that is representative of the entire population. An important word in this definition is representative. A sample that is not representative of the population, regardless of its size, is inadequate for the testing process because the result cannot be generalized to the population from which the population was drawn (Wimmer & Dominick, 2017).

In this study the target population is the youth of Darjeeling district who are aged between 18 and 30 years and the sample for this study has been drawn from it using proper sampling techniques.

Sampling refers to the statistical process of selecting and studying the characteristics of a relatively small number of items from a relatively large population of such items. Sampling methods are divided into two types, probability and non-probability sampling.

For a design to be called random or probability sampling, it is imperative that each element in the study population has an equal and independent chance of selection in the sample (Kumar, 2014). Non-random sampling designs do not follow the theory of probability in the choice of elements from the sampling population (Kumar, 2014).

There are different types of non-probability samples but the researcher here has chosen a purposive non-probability technique. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2017), the purposive non-probability sampling includes respondents, subjects or elements selected for specific characteristics or qualities and eliminates those who fail to meet these criteria.

In this research study, the researcher has used her judgement to select samples that have fulfilled the following criteria: they have to be users of digital media devices and have to have a presence in social media.

3.13. Sampling

A total of 403 youths in the age group of 18 to 30 were selected as samples to fill up the multiple-choice questionnaire. As the population consisted of around 2, 80, 000 youths taking together students, employees of private and government offices, businessmen, self-employed individuals and homemakers a sample size of 384 was required to achieve the confidence level of 95% and projecting a response distribution at 50%. The sample of 403 respondents was taken in order to achieve further reduction of margin of error from 5%. Besides this, a focus group discussion was carried out with 10 respondents who had previously filled up the questionnaire.

3.14. Measuring Instruments

A questionnaire was prepared in order to get information as per the objectives of the study. Close-ended questions were used in the questionnaire where the respondents were required to select from a list of multiple answers provided by the researcher. The close-ended questions were used to help determine the use of digital media for news among young users.

These questions are popular because they provide greater uniformity in responses and the answers are easy to quantify (Wimmer & Dominick, 2017).

Another questionnaire was prepared for the focus group discussion with questions that sought to understand the perception of the sample regarding the digital media and news available on them. There were five respondents who were asked introductory questions to familiarize them with the topic of research followed by analytical questions that sought to understand the reasons that they use digital media to access news.

3.15. Questionnaire Construction

A structured questionnaire was prepared by the researcher consisting of multiple-choice questions to determine the news habits of the youth in digital media. These included simple questions where the respondents had to tick the appropriate answer or answers from the list provided.

The other questions were statement-type that were based on a 5-point Likert scale. The ordinal scale was used by respondents to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with a statement and the extent to which they used digital media ranging between always and never.

The questions were framed with the Likert-scale in the following pattern and respondents were asked to give answers accordingly.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

5 4 3 2 1

Strongly Agree Agree Maybe Disagree Strongly Disagree

5 4 3 2 1

In an ordinal scale, responses can be rated or ranked, but the distance between responses is not measurable. In other words, one cannot assume that the difference between responses is equidistant even though the numbers assigned to those responses are.

Simple and familiar words were used to frame the questions and the sentence structure was uncomplicated, concrete and specific. Words with ambiguous meanings, double-barrelled questions and pompous words were avoided.

Pre-testing a questionnaire is an important part of a survey to determine if questions are designed in the correct manner. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2017), a mini-study should be conducted with a small sample to determine whether the study approach is correct and help refine the questions.

In order to pre-test, the researcher chose a sample of 10 respondents to fill up the questionnaire. This was done to determine if the questions were simple and easy to understand and some of the questions were reframed after pre-testing.

The questions for focus group discussion comprised the introductory type in the first part to make the participants familiar with the topic and was followed by exploratory questions that sought to find out their personal preferences, diverse opinions, feelings, emotions and attitudes. The last part comprised questions that encouraged participants to give their opinions on the topic other than the questions that were previously asked.

3.16. Measures

The variables of interest in this study were:

- Use of different forms of media
- Ownership and use of different forms of digital media
- Interest in news
- Changing news reading/viewing habits
- Changing perception of online news
- News consumption on emerging digital platforms
- Preference for news in digital platforms
- Gratification from digital media
- Sharing news in digital media
- News production and sharing in digital media
- Youth's online activism on civic, social and political issues
- Online activism translates to offline activism

3.16. Operational definitions

New media: New media are all those electronic mediums using computer technology and driven by the Internet. They are also known as digital media. New media is also used to refer to all the content made available using various types of electronic media. Such content can be checked on any device and allows people to interact instantly through the medium of user comments and by sharing the content online with an individual's social network. New media has made media use personalized as individual users can now consume as well as produce news.

Traditional media: Traditional media are the old media forms that were prevalent before the new media. They comprise print publication (newspaper, magazine),

broadcast (television, radio), billboards etc. They comprise any kind of mass communication that was available before the digital media starting from the indigenous medium which is a part of our culture and is used for transmitting tradition from one generation to another such as folk songs, folk arts, folklore, et al.

Youth: The National Youth Policy of India in 2014 describes youth as those in the age bracket of 15-29 years which constitutes 27.5 per cent of the population according to Census-2011, that is about 33 crore persons. The persons in this age group are a vibrant, energetic and dynamic section of the population.

News: Newly received or noteworthy information about recent happenings around the world that are disseminated through both traditional and new media is called news. In a journalistic perspective it refers to the collection, presentation and interpretation of any new happening in order to inform the people. It is the information that was not known before and is broadcast through the radio, television, print and online media. In order for an information to be newsworthy it has to have the elements of proximity, prominence, timeliness, oddity, conflict, human interest, extremes/superlatives, scandal and impact.

Digital platforms: Digital platforms are online mediums like search engines, social media, websites and software applications that facilitate interaction between two or more groups of people via the internet. These are basically any web-based platform like Facebook, twitter, YouTube, Instagram for presenting content to the users.

New Trends: A trend is something that is popular at a particular point of time. In this study it is the emerging trends in online news like news apps, short news apps, web portals and memes. In other words, trend is the prevailing tendency, inclination, a general movement, a swing towards new fashion, a current style or preference.

News Habits: The pattern in which audiences seek, acquire, read/view and share news. News habits refer to an individual's daily time of reading/viewing news, the use of the kind of media, time devoted to reading/viewing news and preferences of different news types.

Social Media: Websites and apps that enable social networking as well as to create and share content. Social media is digital technology that helps in the sharing of ideas, opinions, and information through virtual networks and communities. Social media can be accessed on computer, tablet, smartphone through software applications and websites.

Dependency: The extent to which an individual is dependent on something to fulfil one's needs. In digital media it is used to refer to how much time an individual spends in using platforms like Facebook, Instagram, twitter and how dependent one is in day-to-day activities on these online mediums.

Interactivity: Two-way communication between participants, whether it is human to human or human to machine forms that facilitates exchange of ideas and influence one another. Simply put, it refers to the different ways in which people process and share information, or how they communicate with one another.

News production: News production is the process of gathering news, compiling them, editing, laying out or allotting time slots and publishing or broadcasting them. These are news production stages in mainstream newspapers or news channels. However, new platforms in digital media like YouTube, social media live streaming and memes are current trends that are used in creating content.

News sharing: News sharing refers to the practice of sharing news links on social media, messaging apps et al. It is the habit of giving a defined set of people access to news content via social media platforms by posting or recommending it. The ritual of

sharing news articles among family, friends, and social circle in an online environment is defined as news sharing.

Gratification: The satisfaction that individuals feel after actively choosing and using certain media forms in order to specify specific needs. Gratification is the pleasant reaction of happiness when a desire is fulfilled. Such a reaction comes through the fulfilment of social needs such as affiliation with a desired group, socializing, social recognition, and mutual admiration.

3.17. Reliability and Validity

Determining the reliability and validity of a research tool are important tasks in a research. Reliability refers to how consistent and stable a research tool is and therefore how predictable and accurate the results of the study are. Validity of a research on the other hand is to determine if a measuring tool is measuring what it is supposed to measure.

3.17.1. Reliability

The concept of reliability in relation to a research instrument has a similar meaning: if a research tool is consistent, stable, dependant, replicable it is considered reliable. The greater the degree of consistency and stability in an instrument, the greater its reliability (Kumar, 2014).

There are four methods to determine the reliability of an instrument namely test-retest, split-half technique, parallel form and internal consistency.

Test-retest is applying the same instrument to test twice to the same sample over different periods of time. Split-half technique is when the test is divided into two halves and administered on two groups of respondents to find the correlation of scores. The parallel form is when the same sample is administered in a different measuring test

within a short duration. Internal consistency is a measure based on the correlations between different items on the same test.

In this research study, the researcher has used Cronbach's alpha which is a measure of internal consistency and reliability of a scale. It measures how closely related a set of items are as a group.

When Cronbach's alpha was administered on the multiple Likert questions in the survey questionnaire the researcher got scores ranging between 0.32 to 0.88.

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. However, there is actually no lower limit to the coefficient. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale (Gliem & Gliem, 2003)).

The researcher constructed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire comprising closed-ended questions carefully following guidelines ensuring reliability and generalisation. A five-point scale was used in the close-ended questionnaire where the youth of Darjeeling district could register their level of agreement and frequency.

3.17.2. Validity

A valid measuring device measures what it is supposed to measure (Wimmer & Dominick, 2017). It is important for a test to be valid so that the results can be accurately applied and interpreted. It tries to find out a match between conceptual definition and operational definition. There are three measures of validity namely construct validity, external validity, internal validity.

3.17.2. i. Construct Validity

Construct validity is about ensuring that the method of measurement matches the construct you want to measure. Constructs are concepts that are abstract in nature such

as characteristics of people like intelligence, laziness, activism, interests et al. These concepts cannot be directly evaluated but they can be measured using variables associated with them. Constructs are sometimes mistaken for the way the researcher constructs or frames a research tool for eg. a questionnaire. On the contrary, they are concepts that are operationalized or measured with the help of variables.

Constructs are higher level concepts which are not directly observable or measurable (nature) while variables (sometimes used interchangeably with indicators or measures) seek to measure the underlying construct (nature exposed to our method of reasoning) (Agarwal, 2011).

Therefore, construct validity is a term used to assess the validity of the measurement procedure that the researcher uses to measure a given construct. To achieve construct validity, the researcher has to ensure that the variables and measurements are carefully developed based on relevant existing knowledge.

In the current research, there were three constructs — (i) the youth's extent of use of new media for news, (ii) the emerging trends in digital news environment and their popularity among the youth (iii) the youth's changing news habits in the digital era.

In order to operationalize the three constructs, (a) respondents from Darjeeling district aged 18-30 years were asked to complete a 21-question survey. The questionnaire was multiple-choice type using a summated scale i.e. 5-point Likert scale for strengthening the construct validity, and (b) focus group discussion was conducted by the researcher because it allows participants to express their feelings, emotions, and thoughts as they reflect on the process of search, consumption, creation and sharing information online.

The variables under (i) the youth's ownership and use of new media for news include:

- Use of different forms of media

- Ownership and use of digital media
- Interest in news
- News consumption on emerging digital platforms

The variables under (ii) popularity of emerging digital news trends among the youth include:

- Preference for news in digital platforms
- Gratification from digital media
- Changing perception of online news

The variables under (iii) the youth's changing news habits in digital era include:

- Changing news reading/viewing habits
- Sharing news in digital media
- News production and sharing in digital media
- Youth's online activism on civic, social and political issues
- Online activism translates to offline activism

Close-ended questions were used to assess the various aspects of the youth engagement with digital media for news. They marked their level of agreement, disagreement or neutrality through a five-point rating scale on statements in the questionnaire. The questions were not complex, did not involve touchy topics and involved no risk. Hence, the respondents filled them up in a relaxed state of mind ensuring the validity of the responses.

3.17.2. ii. Internal Validity

Internal validity is the extent to which a research proves that a particular effect is due to the manipulation of the independent variable and not some other factors. There is a causal relationship between the independent and dependent variable. It also reflects that a given study makes it possible to eliminate the confounding variables. Internal validity

is an estimate about the inferences regarding cause-effect or causal relationships and is therefore not relevant in observational and descriptive studies. Since the current research study was of descriptive nature, it did not try to establish a cause-effect relationship between variables. So, it was not required to establish the internal validity of the research.

3.17.2. iii. External Validity

External validity refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be accurately generalized to the population at large. It can be improved by setting experiments in a more natural setting and to survey a sample that has been clearly mentioned in the research.

With respect to external validity, the ideal research procedure involves selecting a random sample from the relevant real-world population, operationalizing research variables to parallel those in the real-world, selecting a research setting that is representative of the environmental variation in the real-world, and choosing a design that preserve the correspondence between the two settings and which provides the type of information required for decision-making (Calder & Tybout, 1981).

In most cases, it is not possible for a researcher to work with the entire population of interest but he must instead carry out a study of a smaller sample of that population. This will enable the researcher to draw conclusions about the larger group from which the sample is taken.

In order to make the research accurately valid, the researcher in the current study brought a gross number of 403 samples from Darjeeling district in the survey. It was difficult to bring the entire population in the sample survey due to time constraints and lack of resources. The researcher went around distributing the questionnaire in colleges, offices, neighbourhoods, shops etc where the respondents filled them up in a familiar

and relaxed environment. This helped to ensure the external validity of the research so that research results are applicable in natural settings, in contrast to made-up settings of a classroom, laboratory, or survey-response arrangements.

3.18. Data Gathering

Data is defined as a set of values of qualitative or quantitative variables. They are presented as facts or figures from which conclusions can be drawn. Data can be collected through a primary source where the researcher collects them first-hand or a secondary source where the researcher obtains the data that has already been collected by other sources for example such as data circulated in a research journal. While primary data is crude, factual and original, secondary data represents a refined analysis of data that has already been collected and interpreted by somebody else. Primary data sources include surveys, personal interviews, experiments, observations and focus groups discussions while secondary data sources include books, journals, articles and websites.

In the current research study data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The survey method was used to collect quantitative information about items in a population through multiple-choice questionnaires as a tool. The survey was conducted in the field and the respondents were contacted by the research person personally. This method took a lot of time and effort but it ensured that data collected was accurate, recent and relevant to the topic. Another method used to collect primary data was through focus group discussion in order to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for people's attitudes, preferences and behaviour. A desk research was also carried out to collect secondary data from journals, books, articles, theses, dissertations, government publications and websites. The collected data were subjected to proper recording, editing, classification, tabulations and

interpretations as per the well- established practices of research methodology in social sciences.

3.19. Analysis of Data Collection

This research study was descriptive in nature and was suitable for identifying attitudes, trends, patterns, characteristics and frequencies of certain phenomena. Hence, descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data because such measurements are useful in describing a situation at hand. The 5-point Likert scale has been used to measure levels of agreement to statements that measure the youth's attitude towards online news platforms and their frequency of use of these mediums.

The descriptive statistic of frequency was used by the researcher to find out the prevalence of certain responses or scores that arise on a given study measure. Firstly, the total count and missing values if any were calculated. In the second step, the researcher has used the total count and relative frequency for each category. Thereafter, the prevalence percentage of responses in each category was calculated.

The data collected through the survey have been presented through tables. The analysis of the findings has been provided beneath each table and the conclusion has been arrived at on the basis of the results.

4.1. Findings & Analysis

In the current research work, the researcher has collected necessary data from 403 youths using a questionnaire based on 5-point Likert scale. The questions have been aimed at finding out the level of engagement of the youth of Darjeeling district with digital media for news. The data collected was tabulated and results were arrived at using statistics. These results have been presented with the help of tables and interpretations have been provided beneath each table to explain the findings.

Similarly, for collecting qualitative data, a focus group discussion was conducted with five participants. This method of data collection was used as it was an effective measure for determining why there was a prevalence of the given attitude or experience of the youth towards news on digital media. The discussion revolved around why the participants used digital media for reading/viewing news and their reasons for adopting the new technology. The information collected through the session was compiled and presented in an organized manner. The insights received from it were subsequently summarized in order to provide a thorough understanding of the topic of engagement of Darjeeling youth with digital media for news.

Table 1: Digital devices owned by the youth

Digital Media device	Youth	(%)
Smartphone	394	98%
Desktop	45	11%
Laptop	155	38%
Tablet	27	7%
Total	403	100%

The research study was based on the use of digital media by the youth of Darjeeling district for news. As the samples were chosen through the purposive non-probability technique, the criteria required the youth to be users of new media devices and have a presence on social media. Consequently, it was necessary to first find out which of the following new media devices — smartphone, desktop, laptop, tablet — they owned. A multiple-response question was framed where the respondents chose from the list of options provided to them. They chose one or more of the options from the list provided in the questionnaire as per the new media gadgets they owned. Out of the 403 respondents, 394 of them owned smartphones, followed by 155 who owned laptops, 45 who owned desktops and 27 of them who possessed tablets.

The percentage-wise distribution shows that a maximum of 98% respondents possessed smartphones followed by 38% who also owned laptops, 11% owned desktops and 7% owned tablets. It implies that the smartphone was the ubiquitous gadget among the youth as majority of the respondents possessed it because of its affordability, portability and convergent technology. The second handy gadget was the laptop owing to its handy nature and portability making it a viable alternative to the desktop. However, 11% of the 403 respondents chose desktops as one of the devices they owned apart from the other options provided in the questionnaire. Lastly, the least number of respondents, i.e. 7%, chose tablets as one of the devices they owned. This may be because it is expensive and smartphones were preferred because of their affordability and ease to carry around.

Table 2: The youth's digital media use per day

Hours	Youth	(%)
>05	185	46%
05 to 10	173	43%
10 to 15	38	9%
15 to 20	7	2%
Total	403	100%

A close-ended question had been framed to gauge the daily use of digital media by the youth of Darjeeling district. They were presented with options ranging from below five hours, five to ten hours, ten to fifteen hours and fifteen to twenty hours. The respondents were supposed to choose one answer from the options in the list. The consumption pattern of digital media by the youth revealed that out of 403 respondents, 185 of them used digital media for less than five hours closely followed by 173 of them whose usage duration ranged from five to ten hours. While 38 of them used the new media for ten to fifteen hours, only 7 of them used them for fifteen to twenty hours.

This means that the highest number of respondent's usage of digital media was under five hours and they comprised 46 % of the total respondents. This was closely followed by 43% respondents whose usage duration ranged between five to ten hours. While 9% used the digital media for ten to fifteen hours, only two percent used them for fifteen to twenty hours. Almost half of the total respondents (46%) reported a daily usage of less than five hours. Nearly as much i.e. 43% respondents indicated that their daily usage exceeded five hours up to 10 hours. Only a few respondents (9%) indicated that their daily usage ranged between ten to fifteen hours and a negligible portion (2%) used the digital media for fifteen to twenty hours.

Table 3: The youth's digital media use for news per day

Hours	Youth	(%)
>01	214	53%
01 to 02	156	39%
02 to 04	26	6%
>04	7	2%
Total	403	100%

This question has tried to assess the duration the youth used digital media for reading/viewing news. A close-ended question was framed where respondents had to tick options ranging from less than an hour, one to two hours, two to four hours and more than four hours. A total of 214 respondents that comprised 53% of the total number, used digital media for news for less than an hour. Another 156 respondents i.e. 39% of total 403 respondents marked their duration of use of digital media as one to two hours. The respondents who used digital media for news for two to four hours and more than four hours were relatively low i.e. 26 and 7 respectively. Percentage-wise these numbers corresponded to 6% and 2%. This implies that more than half of the respondents (53%) used digital media for news for less time followed by 39% who used it for moderate duration. Only a small number of respondents used them for higher duration for the purpose of seeking news.

Table 4: Time of the day to read/view news

Morning	(%)	Evening	(%)	Anytime of the day	(%)	Total
45	11%	8	2%	350	87%	403

The respondents were asked through a close-ended question as to which time during the day they preferred reading/viewing news. A majority of 350 respondents i.e. 87% opted for the option ‘anytime of the day’. Only 45 i.e. 11% of the respondents read or viewed news in the morning and 8 i.e., 2% did so in the evening. This implies that the youth were quite flexible in terms of when they wanted to consume news and it was not confined to a particular time of the day.

Table 5: The youth’s daily use of media

	Comprise digital media	(%)	Comprise traditional media	(%)	Comprise both traditional and digital media	(%)
Always	223	55%	50	12%	74	18%
Often	111	28%	68	17%	97	24%
Sometimes	51	13%	169	42%	154	38%
Rarely	16	4%	97	24%	60	15%
Never	2	0%	19	5%	18	4%
Total	403	100%	403	100%	403	100%

Table 5.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach’s alpha	N of items
0.59	4

The objective of Table 5 was to find out how much the youth are inclined towards digital and traditional media. This was done using a 5-point Likert scale that measured the frequency of usage — always, often, sometimes, rarely, never — of the respective media daily by the youth. The results showed that 223 of the youth always used digital media, followed by 111 who often used them. A total of 51 respondents used them sometimes, 16 used them rarely and 2 of them never used digital media. In the case of

traditional media, 50 respondents always used them followed by 68 who often used them, 169 who used them sometimes, 97 who used them rarely and 19 who never used them. Overall, 74 respondents always used both digital and traditional media devices, 97 used them often, 154 used them sometimes and 60 and 18 used them rarely and never respectively.

A percentage-wise distribution shows that 55% and 28% of respondents always and often used the digital media and 13% and 4% used them sometimes and rarely respectively. While only 12% and 17% of respondents used the traditional media always and often, 42%, 24% and 5% used them sometimes, rarely and never. Altogether 18% and 24% respondents used both digital and traditional media always and often, while 38%, 15% and 4% used them sometimes, rarely and never respectively. This implies that the majority i.e. 83% of respondents were more inclined towards using the digital media most frequently (always and often) while the second majority of 42% respondents preferred to use a mix both digital and traditional media in that manner. However, only 29% chose to use traditional media in the same way. On an occasional basis i.e. sometimes, quite a considerable number — 13%, 42% and 38% of respondents — used digital, traditional and combination of both the media, respectively. On the contrary, the number of respondents who scarcely (rarely and never) used digital was only 4%. Altogether 29% and 19% hardly (rarely and never) used traditional media and both traditional and digital media respectively.

Table 6: News genres that interest the youth

	Youth interested in current affairs	(%)	Youth interested in political news	(%)	Youth interested in sports news	(%)	Youth interested in entertainment news	(%)
Always	163	40%	69	17%	75	19%	161	40%
Often	95	24%	93	23%	67	17%	91	23%
Sometimes	104	26%	136	34%	139	34%	104	26%
Rarely	33	8%	71	18%	85	21%	29	7%
Never	8	2%	34	8%	37	9%	18	4%
Total	403	100%	403	100%	403	100%	403	100%

Table 6.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.328	4

The objective of Table 6 was to find out what genre of news was of most interest to the youth. They were provided with the options of current affairs, political, sports and entertainment news and had to choose from always, often, sometimes, rarely, never according to the frequency with which they read/viewed news. A total of 163 respondents always read/viewed current affairs followed by 95 who often read/viewed such news. Overall, 104 youths were sometimes interested in reading/viewing current affairs items and 33 and 8 rarely and never read/viewed them respectively. A similar trend was visible with the youth reading/viewing entertainment news. While 161 and 91 of them read/viewed such news always and often, 104, 29 and 18 read/viewed them sometimes, rarely and never respectively. Only 69 and 93 youths read/viewed political news always and often followed by 136, 71 and 34 of them who read/viewed them sometimes, rarely and never respectively. The number of youths who were interested in sports news was somewhat like that of the political genre. While 75 and 67 of them read/viewed sports news always and often, 139, 85 and 37 of them read/viewed such news sometimes, rarely and never. Percentage-wise distribution shows that 40% each of the youth read/viewed current affairs and entertainment news respectively. A figure of 24% and 23% of the youth viewed/read current affairs and entertainment news often. A figure of 26 % of the youth read/viewed current affairs and entertainment news sometimes followed by 8% and 7% who read/viewed them rarely and 2% and 4% who never did so. This was followed by 19% of respondents who always read/viewed sports news, 17% did so often, 34% sometimes, 21% rarely and 9% never. While 17 % of the respondents read/viewed political news always, 23%, 34%, 18% and 8% of them did so often, sometimes, rarely and never respectively.

This implies that current affairs and entertainment news were mostly (always and often) read/viewed by the majority — 64% and 63% of the youth respectively. Political news came third with 40% of the youth most frequently (always and often) reading/viewing such items followed by 36% of the youth who read/viewed sports items frequently (always and often) respectively. A sizable number i.e. 26%, 34%, 34%, 26% indicated that they read/viewed current affairs, political, sports and entertainment news occasionally (sometimes) if not on a regular basis. However, there were fewer respondents who scarcely (rarely and never) read/viewed the four types of news ranging between 10% and 30%.

Table 7: News sources of the youth

	Newspaper	(%)	TV	(%)	Radio	(%)	Laptop	(%)	Tablet	(%)	Smartphone	(%)
Always	43	11%	75	19%	8	2%	49	12%	19	5%	316	78%
Often	44	11%	78	19%	17	4%	71	18%	29	7%	60	15%
Sometimes	158	39%	155	38%	60	15%	109	27%	59	15%	17	4%
Rarely	100	25%	67	17%	101	25%	79	20%	58	14%	6	1%
Never	58	14%	28	7%	217	54%	95	24%	238	59%	4	1%
Total	403	100%	403	100%	403	100%	403	100%	403	100%	403	100%

Table 7.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.66	6

The objective of Table 7 was to find out which media devices were mostly used by the youth to access news items. The respondents were provided a mix of six devices ranging from traditional to digital and they had to choose the frequency of use based on a 5-point Likert scale — always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. A total of 43 youths accessed news from newspapers, 44 did so often, 158 sometimes, 100 and 58 did so rarely and never respectively. Altogether 75 and 78 youths accessed news from television always and often respectively, 155 of them did so sometimes, 67 and 28 did so rarely and never respectively. As for radio, only 8 and 17 youths accessed news from the device always and often, 60 did so sometimes and 101 and 217 did so rarely and never. A figure of 49 youths always got news from laptop, 71 and 109 got it often and sometimes and 79 and 95 got news from the device rarely and never respectively. Only 19 and 29 youths accessed news from tablets always and often, 59 and 58 did so sometimes and rarely and 238 never got it from the device. Altogether 316 youths always got news from smartphones, 60 got it often, 17, 6 and 4 got it sometimes, rarely and never respectively.

A percentage-wise distribution showed that 11%, 11%, 39%, 25%, 14% got news from newspapers in the sequential order of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. In turn, 19%, 19%, 38%, 17%, 7% of the youth got news from television in the order of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. For radio 2%, 4%, 15%, 25%, 54% of the youth got news from the device always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. Laptop was used by 12%, 18%, 27%, 20%, 24% always, often, sometimes, rarely and never respectively. Tablets were used by 5%, 7%, 15%, 14%, 59% to always, often,

sometimes, rarely and never in the corresponding order. Finally, smartphones were used by a majority of 78% respondents to always get news, followed by 15% who often did it and 4%, 1% and 1% who used it sometimes, rarely and never respectively.

It implies that smartphones were the most popular device with the majority — 93% of the youth — always and often using them. Television followed with 38% of the youth using it frequently (always and often) for news. Even though television trailed far behind the smartphone in terms of frequency of use, the youth have not discarded it because as many as 38% of the youth admitted to using it to get news sometimes. Similarly, newspapers were only used by 22% of the youth on a regular basis to get news (always and often). Yet 39% of respondents still used it sometimes to access news but a majority of 43% scarcely (rarely and never) used it. Laptop was another device that was not used as frequently for getting news as only 30 percent used it always and often but a major section of the youth i.e. 44% rarely and never used it. Yet, it was not completely out of use for getting news as 27% of the youth used it sometimes. The table shows that radio and tablet were the least used devices with 79% and 73% of respondents using them less frequently (rarely and never) to acquire news while only 6% and 12% of respondents used them frequently (always and often) for the purpose.

Table 8: The youth's news source on digital media

Statement	Always	(%)	Often	(%)	Sometimes	(%)	Rarely	(%)	Never	(%)
Websites/Apps of newspapers	95	24%	90	22%	117	29%	56	14%	45	11%
Website/Apps of TV channels	63	16%	106	26%	137	34%	59	15%	38	9%
News pages on SM	196	49%	98	24%	67	17%	21	5%	21	5%
Short news apps	95	24%	87	22%	112	28%	67	17%	42	10%
Search engines	212	53%	92	23%	71	18%	15	4%	13	3%
News portals	125	31%	86	21%	113	28%	48	12%	31	8%
Memes	134	33%	95	24%	108	27%	40	10%	26	6%
News links shared on SM	110	27%	99	25%	124	31%	51	13%	19	5%

Table 8.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.69	8

The objective of Table 8 was to find out which was the most popular online platform that was used by the youth to acquire news. The respondents were asked to choose their frequency of use of different digital media platforms. A total of 95, 90, 117, 56 and 45 youths showed that they got their daily dose of news from websites and apps of newspapers in the order, always, often, sometimes, rarely and never respectively. In the same order 63, 106, 137, 59, 38 got news from websites and apps of TV channels. Altogether 196, 98, 67, 21 and 21 youths got news from news pages on social media in the order of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. A total of 95, 87, 112, 67 and 42 youths indicated that they got news from short news apps in the corresponding order of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. Similarly, a sum of 212, 92, 71, 15, 13 got news from search engines like Google in the and 125, 86, 113, 48, 31 youths got news from local news portals. A total of 134, 95, 108, 40 and 26 youths acquired news from memes on current affairs in the order of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never while 110, 99, 124, 51, 19 got theirs from news links shared on social media respectively.

Percentage-wise distribution shows that 24%, 22%, 29%, 14% and 11% of the youth got news from websites and apps of newspapers in the serial order of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. In the same order 16%, 26%, 34%, 15% and 9% of the youth got news from website and apps of TV channels, 49%, 24%, 17%, 5% and 5% got it from news pages in social media, 24%, 22%, 28%, 17%, 10% access news from short news apps, 53%, 23%, 18%, 4% and 3% of the youth got it from search engines, 31%, 21%, 28%, 12%, 8% of the youth got news from local news portals, 33%, 24%,

27%, 10%, 6% from memes and 27%, 25%, 31%, 13% and 5% got it from news links shared on social media.

It implies that the highest number of youths most frequently got their daily dose of news from search engines like Google as the combined percentage of always and often indicates i.e. 76% of the youth. Very few — 7% of the youth — indicated that they less frequently (rarely and never) resorted to search engines to get news. News pages on social media came a close second with 73% of the youth always and often using these platforms. Only 10% used it as infrequently as rarely and never. Memes were the third preferred medium chosen by 57% of the youth who constantly (always and often) got news from it while only 16% of the youth were less reliant (rarely and never) on it. However, a good number, 27% of the youth used memes every now and then (sometimes) for news. A percentage of the youth i.e. 52% relied most frequently (always and often) on local news portals and news links shared on social media. On the other hand, 20% and 18% of the youth used these media less frequently (rarely and never). A good percentage of 28% and 31% of the youth occasionally (sometimes) relied on local portals and news links for getting news. Websites and apps of newspapers and short news apps were preferred by 46 % of the youth each in regularly (always and often) accessing news while 29% and 28% of the youth sometimes accessed through these mediums. Websites and apps of news channels were the least frequently used among these mediums but only a tad behind the other digital platforms. While 42% used the medium most frequently (always and often), 34% used it sometimes to get news. Overall, all the digital platforms were quite popular among the youth with most of them using the mediums from regularly to every now and then for getting news. As less as 7% to 27% of the youth indicated that they infrequently used all these mediums for acquiring news.

Table 9: Youth’s news reading/viewing habits on media platforms

Statement	Always	(%)	Often	(%)	Sometimes	(%)	Rarely	(%)	Never	(%)
Speed reading of news	160	40%	101	25%	107	27%	15	4%	20	5%
Reading whole items	49	12%	66	16%	164	41%	89	22%	35	9%
Viewing only headlines	117	29%	106	26%	115	29%	45	11%	20	5%
Viewing whole news	32	8%	67	17%	142	35%	112	28%	50	12%

Table 9.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.50	4

The objective of Table 9 was to study the news habits of the respondents as to whether they resort to only skimming of the headlines or go through the whole length of the article or news telecasts. The participants were provided with the options of speed-reading of news articles, viewing only headlines of news broadcasts, going through the whole length of articles and viewing the whole news broadcast. They were to choose from a 5-point Likert scale of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. In that order, a total of 160, 101, 107, 15 and 20 youths indulged in skimming news articles while 49, 66, 164, 89 and 35 youths read them in detail. A total of 117, 106, 115, 45 and 20 youths viewed only headlines of news broadcasts always, often, sometimes, rarely and never respectively and 32, 67, 142, 112 and 50 youths viewed entire news broadcasts in the same order. Percentage-wise distribution shows that 40%, 25%, 27%, 4% and 5% respondents skim news items in the sequence of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. Similarly, 12%, 16%, 41%, 22% and 9% of the youth read entire news items. While 29%, 26%, 29%, 11% and 5% of the youth viewed only headlines, 8%, 17%, 35%, 28% and 12% of the youth viewed entire news items. It implies that the youth were more inclined in skimming news items as the figures show that 65% of them did so always and often. A good number — 27% of the youth — speed-read news items on every now and then (sometimes). Likewise, a combined percentage of 55% of the youth most frequently (always and often) viewed only headlines and a considerable number — 29% of the youth — did so sometimes. Only 28% of the youth most frequently (always and often) read news items in detail whereas a good number 41% did so sometimes. While only 25% of the youth viewed news telecasts through the end, a significant number 35% did so sometimes. Overall, as the figures signify, most of the

youth read or viewed news swiftly, scanning over headlines and highlighted pointers. However, figures also indicated that they have not completely discarded detailed reading and viewing as a sizable number of respondents indicated that they occasionally indulged in such activities.

Table 10: Youth's reasons for preference of digital media

Statement	Strongly Agree	(%)	Agree	(%)	No opinion	(%)	Disagree	(%)	Strongly disagree	(%)
It is cost-efficient	129	32%	114	28%	131	33%	28	7%	1	0%
Easily accessible	211	52%	163	40%	21	5%	7	2%	1	0%
Short content	66	16%	195	48%	116	29%	25	6%	1	0%
Frequent updates	137	34%	203	50%	53	13%	8	2%	2	0%
User feedback	91	23%	199	49%	103	26%	10	2%	0	0%
High Speed	112	28%	173	43%	84	21%	30	7%	4	1%

Table 10.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	No. of items
0.70	6

The objective of Table 10 was to find out the reasons for the youth's preferences for choosing digital media to access news. The respondents were provided with six reasons and they had to choose their level of agreement based on a 5-point Likert scale — strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree. Of total 403 respondents, 129 strongly agreed that the medium was cost efficient, 114 agreed, 131 expressed no opinion, 28 disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed. In context of easy accessibility of information, 211, 163, 21, 7 and 1 chose strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Altogether 66, 195, 116, 25 and 1 respondents chose in the same order for shortness of content in digital media. Similarly, 137, 203, 53, 8 and 2 respondents indicated that digital media provided frequent availability of updates in the sequence of strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree. A total of 91, 199, 103, 10 and 0 respondents strongly agreed, agreed, expressed no opinion, disagreed and strongly disagreed that digital media allowed user feedback and 112, 173, 84, 30 and 4 respondents chose in the same order for high speed. The corresponding percentages were 32%, 28%, 33%, 7% and 0% for cost-efficient medium, 52%, 40%, 5%, 2%, and 0% for easy accessibility of information, 16%, 48%, 29%, 6% and 0% for shortness of content, 34%, 50%, 13%, 2% and 0% for frequent information updates, 23%, 49%, 26%, 2% and 0% for interactivity through feedback and 28%, 43%, 21%, 7% and 1% for high speed. It implies that the majority of people highly agreed that they preferred digital media because of its features while a very few did not agree to it. Most respondents i.e. 92% highly agreed (strongly agreed and agreed) that they used digital media because vast content was easily accessible, 5% expressed no opinion and 2% disagreed. Another

84% highly agreed (strongly agree and agree) that it provided frequent information updates, 13% had no opinion and 2% disagreed. A total of 72% highly agreed that digital media facilitated interactivity or user feedback, 26% had no opinion and only 2% disagreed. A sizable number i.e. 71% highly agreed (strongly agree and agree) that digital media ensures high speed, 21% expressed no opinion and only 8% absolutely disagreed (disagreed and strongly disagreed). As for shortness of digital content 64% respondents highly agreed, 29% had no opinion and 6% disagreed.

Table 11: Definition of news

Statement	Strongly Agree	(%)	Agree	(%)	No opinion	(%)	Disagree	(%)	Strongly disagree	(%)
News comprises only that published/broadcast in old media not digital media	34	8%	55	14%	110	27%	198	49%	6	1%
News content available on both traditional and digital media	59	15%	212	53%	76	19%	51	13%	5	1%

Table 11.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.88	2

The objective of Table 11 was to find out what notion the youth had about the news on digital media. The respondents were provided with the two options — firstly, news comprised only the content that was published/broadcast in traditional media and not digital media and secondly, news comprised content that was published in both digital and traditional media. The respondents had to choose their level of agreement based on a 5-point Likert scale — strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree.

A total of 34, 55, 110, 198 and 6 respondents indicated their level of agreement in the order of strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree for the notion that news comprises only that content published in traditional media. The corresponding percentages were 8%, 14%, 27%, 49% and 1% respectively. However, 59, 212, 76, 51, 5 expressed their levels of agreement in the sequence of strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree for the notion that news was content available in both traditional and digital media. The corresponding percentages were 15%, 53%, 19%, 13% and 1%. It implies that the majority i.e. 68% of respondents highly agreed (strongly agree and agree) that news was that which was available in both digital and traditional media and only a few 14% denied (disagree and strongly disagree) it while 19% remained neutral (no opinion). On the other hand, 50 % respondents denied (disagree and strongly disagree) that news was only that which was available in traditional media while less than half i.e. 22% have replied in the affirmative and 27% have expressed no opinion.

Table 12: The relevance of digital and traditional media to the youth

Statement	Strongly Agree	(%)	Agree	(%)	No Opinion	(%)	Disagree	(%)	Strongly Disagree	(%)
Digital media has replaced traditional media	30	7%	57	14%	60	15%	244	61%	12	3%
No, digital media has complemented traditional media	41	10%	250	62%	54	13%	56	14%	2	0%

Table 12.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.89	2

The objective of Table 12 was to show if the digital media had totally replaced traditional media in the lives of the youth or not. The respondents were provided with the statements — firstly, digital media has replaced traditional media and secondly, digital media has not replaced traditional media but complemented it. The respondents had to choose their level of agreement based on a 5-point Likert scale — strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree. Out of 403 respondents, 30, 57, 60, 244 and 12 responded with strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree to digital media totally replacing traditional media. The corresponding percentages were 7%, 14%, 15%, 61% and 3%. A total of 41, 250, 54, 56 and 2 respondents indicated that they strongly agreed, agreed, had no opinion, disagreed and strongly disagreed to digital media not replacing but complementing traditional media. The corresponding percentages were 10%, 62%, 13% and 14%. It implies that the majority of the respondents i.e. 64% totally disagreed (disagree and strongly disagree) that digital media had replaced traditional media in their lives, 15% expressed no opinion and only 21% replied in the affirmative (strongly agree and agree). On the other hand, majority of respondents i.e. 72% highly agreed (strongly agree and agree) that digital media had complemented traditional media in their lives, 13% had no opinion and 14% disagreed. Overall, it was evident that the youth had indicated that digital media has not replaced traditional media but has rather complemented it for their daily consumption of news.

Table 13: The gratification received from news on digital media

Statement	Strongly Agree	(%)	Agree	(%)	No Opinion	(%)	Disagree	(%)	Strongly Disagree	(%)
Knowledge Boost	153	38%	212	53%	28	7%	6	1%	4	1%
Wider exposure to news	92	23%	242	60%	49	12%	18	4%	2	0%
Constantly Updated	147	36%	221	55%	29	7%	5	1%	1	0%
Interactivity	62	15%	178	44%	128	32%	33	8%	2	0%
Can share news online	71	18%	186	46%	95	24%	48	12%	3	1%
Selectivity	102	25%	238	59%	53	13%	8	2%	2	0%
Helps to relax	103	26%	183	45%	85	21%	26	6%	6	1%

Table 13.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.77	7

The objective of Table 13 was to show the different needs of the youth the digital media gratifies from its use to obtain news. The respondents were provided with different options and had to choose their level of agreement based on a 5-point Likert scale — strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree. A total of 153, 212, 28, 6, 4 respondents indicated that news on digital media boosted their knowledge in the sequence of strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree. Likewise, 92, 242, 49, 18 and 2 respondents expressed their level of agreement in the order of strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree for digital media providing them wider exposure to news. Another 147, 221, 29, 5 and 1 respondents chose strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree respectively for being constantly updated. In the same order, 62, 178, 128, 33 and 2 of the youth provided their response for the option of interactivity. As for online news sharing, 71 agreed, 186 strongly agreed, 95 expressed no opinion, 48 disagreed and 3 strongly disagreed. For the option of ‘selectivity’ 102, 238, 53, 8 and 2 of the respondents chose strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Altogether, 103, 183, 85, 26 and 6 respondents chose in the same order for the option ‘helps in relaxation’. The corresponding percentages were 38%, 53%, 7%, 1% and 1% for boosting knowledge, 23%, 60%, 12%, 4% for providing wider exposure to news, 36%, 55%, 7%, 1% for being constantly updated, 15%, 44%, 32%, 8% for interactivity, 18%, 46%, 24%, 12%, 1% for online news sharing, 25%, 59%, 13%, 2% for selectivity and 26%, 45%, 21%, 6% and 1% for helping in relaxation. It implies that the majority of respondents replied in the affirmative about all the options provided under gratifications received from news on digital media while only 1% to

13% replied in the negative. A majority of 91% each of the youth highly agreed (agree and strongly agree) to the option ‘knowledge boost’ and ‘constantly updated’ and 7% each expressed no opinion. A total of 84% and 83% highly agreed (strongly agree and agree) that digital media provided selectivity and provided wider exposure to news respectively. While 13% and 12% expressed no opinions for the options. A total of 71% highly agreed (strongly agree and agree) that digital media helps in relaxation but 21% had no opinion and 7% disagreed. While 64% highly agreed (strongly agree and agree) to the option ‘can share news online’ 24% had no opinion and 13% disagreed. Lastly, 59% highly agreed to the option ‘interactivity’ in digital media while 32% had no opinion and 8% disagreed.

Table 14: News sharing activity of the youth

Yes, I share news online	(%)	No, I don't share news online	(%)	Total
348	86%	55	14%	403

Table 14.1: Digital media on which the youth share news

	Always	(%)	Often	(%)	Sometimes	(%)	Rarely	(%)	Never	(%)
Share on FB	74	18%	74	18%	106	26%	54	13%	95	24%
Retweet on twitter	10	2%	20	5%	64	16%	58	14%	251	62%
Forward on WhatsApp	106	26%	80	20%	108	27%	63	16%	46	11%
Sharing memes	107	27%	52	13%	97	24%	61	15%	86	21%

Table 14.2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.65	4

The objective of Table 14 was to show if the respondents shared news among their friends, acquaintances and relatives. The results showed that 348 i.e. 86% respondents indicated that they shared news on digital news platforms while 55 i.e. 14% did not share such items. The Table 14.1 shows the extent to which youth used different digital platforms to share news. A total of 74, 74, 106, 54 and 95 youths shared news on Facebook in the order of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. Altogether 10, 20, 64, 58 and 251 of them used twitter to circulate news in the same order. Similarly, 106, 80, 108, 63 and 46 respondents used WhatsApp for the purpose and 107, 52, 97, 61 and 86 youths shared news via memes. The corresponding percentages in the order of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never are 18%, 18%, 26%, 13% and 24% for Facebook, 2%, 5%, 16%, 14% and 62% for twitter, 26%, 20%, 27%, 16% and 11% used WhatsApp and 27%, 13%, 24%, 15% and 21% used memes. It implies that the highest number of youths i.e. 46% used WhatsApp most frequently (always and often) to share news and good percentage i.e. 27% shared sometimes through the medium. Memes came a close second with 40% using it always and often to share news while 24% did so sometimes. Only a tad behind was Facebook with 36% youth using the medium most frequently (always and often) and 26% doing so sometimes. Only 7% youth shared news most frequently (always and often) on twitter and 16% did so sometimes. However, the majority i.e. 76% youth least frequently (rarely and never) used twitter for the purpose. Overall, the figures indicate that WhatsApp was the most preferred platform for sharing news with memes and Facebook following closely with minimal difference with one another. On the contrary twitter lagged far behind in terms of preference for sharing news.

Table 15: Youth’s use of social media to produce and share news

Yes, I use SM to produce and share news	(%)	No, I don’t use SM to produce and share news	(%)	Total
317	79%	86	21%	100%

Table 15.1: Digital platforms used by youth to produce and share news

	Always	(%)	Often	(%)	Sometimes	(%)	Rarely	(%)	Never	(%)
YouTube	102	25%	69	17%	74	18%	45	11%	113	28%
Livestream on FB and twitter	53	13%	53	13%	87	22%	60	15%	150	37%
Post photos updates on SM	33	8%	44	11%	88	22%	70	17%	168	42%
Record videos and post them on social media	36	9%	59	15%	98	24%	85	21%	125	31%
Produce and share photo/video updates in messaging apps	56	14%	51	13%	96	24%	79	20%	121	30%

Table 15.2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.82	5

The objective of Table 15 was to show which digital medium was most preferred by the youth in order to produce news. A total of 317 respondents indicated that they produced news using digital platforms and 86 did not do it. The figures corresponded to 79% and 21% respectively. It shows that the majority of the youth were engaged in producing news through digital media.

The objective of Table 15.1 was to show which was the most favoured medium of the youth to produce and share news. A total of 102, 69, 74, 45 and 113 youths produced news in the corresponding order of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never on YouTube. Likewise, 53, 53, 87, 60 and 150 youths livestreamed on Facebook and twitter in the same order. A total of 33, 44, 88, 70 and 168 respondents posted photo updates of local news on social media. Altogether 36, 59, 98, 85 and 125 youths posted recorded videos on FB and 56, 51, 96, 79 and 121 circulated their news videos and photo updates in messaging apps. The corresponding percentages in the order of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never are 25%, 17%, 18%, 11% and 28% for YouTube, 13%, 13%, 22%, 15% and 37% for livestreams on social media, 8%, 11%, 22%, 17% and 42% for photo news updates on social media, 9%, 15%, 24%, 21% and 31% video news updates on social media and 14%, 13%, 24%, 20% and 30% for video and photo updates on messaging apps.

It implies that although a fair number of respondents did produce news on social media, the majority indicated that they did so on an occasional basis or not at all. While 42% respondents used YouTube most frequently (always and often), 39% hardly (rarely and never) did it and 18% used it sometimes. A section i.e. 27% of the youth produced and circulated videos and photos through messaging apps most frequently, 50% of

respondents not very frequently (rarely and never) did so and 18% did it sometimes. While 26% constantly (always and often) livestream through social media, 52% were very less engaged (rarely and never) in the activity and 22% did it every now and then (sometimes). A figure of 24% of the youth frequently (always and often) produced videos and shared them on social media but a much greater percentage i.e. 52% scarcely (rarely and never) did so. However, 24% of the youth did it sometimes. As for posting photo updates on social media only 19% of the youth did so frequently (always and often) whereas 59% not quite indulged in the activity and 22% did so only sometimes.

Table 16: Youth’s participation in online civic, social, political, environmental debates

Yes, I participate in online debates	(%)	No, I don’t participate in online debates	(%)	Total
248	62%	155	38%	403

Table 16.1: Digital platforms in which the youth participate in online debate

Statement	Always	(%)	Often	(%)	Sometimes	(%)	Rarely	(%)	Never	(%)
Post likes and comments on FB	56	14%	62	15%	95	24%	51	13%	139	34%
Tweet	11	3%	21	5%	50	12%	47	12%	274	68%
Use hashtags to highlight issues	36	9%	41	10%	87	22%	75	19%	164	41%

Table 16.2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.72	3

The objective of Table 16 was to show if the youth engaged in online debates and discussions in digital platforms for civic, social and political issues. A total of 248 respondents indicated that they engaged in such debates while 155 of them said that they did not. The corresponding percentages were 62% and 38% respectively. It implies that more than half of the respondents actively raised their voice in favour of or against issues of social concern.

The objective of Table 16.1 was to show which were the preferred media that were used to participate in online debates. The respondents had to choose their frequency of use for posting likes and comments on social media, tweeting about them and using hashtags to highlight issues. Altogether 56, 62, 95, 51 and 139 respondents chose from the order of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never for posting likes and comments on social media, 11, 21, 50, 47, 274 chose tweets and 36, 41, 87, 75, 164 chose hashtags in the same series. The corresponding percentages were 14%, 15%, 24%, 13% and 34% for social media likes and posts, 3%, 5%, 12%, 12% and 68% for tweets and 9%, 10%, 22%, 19% and 41% for hashtags.

It implies that a section of the youth indulged in frequently voicing their opinion in online platforms even though the majority of them fell in the category that scarcely did so. A section i.e. 29% of the youth engaged most frequently (always and often) in posting likes and comments on social issues, a greater number i.e. 47% of the youth least frequently (rarely and never) did so and 24% engaged in the activity sometimes. Overall, 19% of the youth indicated they most frequently engaged in using hashtags but 60% used it the least and 22% did so only sometimes. Twitter was the least frequently used medium with only 8% using it most frequently (always and often) and 12%

respondents using it sometimes. However, 80% respondents indicated that they scarcely (rarely and never) used tweets to voice their opinions.

Table 17: Youth who have participated in campaigns in real world

Yes, I have participated in campaigns	(%)	No, I have not participated in Campaigns	(%)	Total
134	33%	269	67%	403

The objective of Table 17 was to find out how many respondents participate in real world movements on social, political, civic issues after being made aware through online campaigns. A total of 134 youths replied in the affirmative while double the number i.e. 269 denied being motivated to take part in such movements. The corresponding percentages were 33% and 67%. This implies that the activism of the majority of the youth was limited to voicing their opinions in online platforms, they were reluctant to come forward and take up issues in the real world.

4.2. Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussions are used when there is a need to understand an issue at an in-depth level than can be done with the help of a survey. While a survey is an apt method to find out how many people prefer something, a focus group discussion is a good way to learn why that number of people prefer it. This method has been found to be most effective for finding out about the opinions and attitudes of the people.

In the context of this research, the focus group discussion has been used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the attitude of Darjeeling youth towards news on new media. The data was acquired from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population as the latter had already been done during the survey method.

Table 18: Details of focus group discussion

Number of participants	5 female participants
Date & Time	20/09/2020 62/1 AB Path, Kurseong
Details of FGD members	The five participants were aged between 18 and 30 years. While four of them were pursuing their under-graduate and postgraduate studies, one of them was working with a private company.

4.3 Objective of focus group

To get a deeper insight about the impact of digital media in the news seeking, producing and sharing behaviour of the youth in Darjeeling district.

4.4 Discussion

The participants were informed about the purpose of the focus group. As none among them had ever participated in a focus group, the researcher first explained to them the topic of the dissertation. They were made familiar with the subject and apprised about their expected role in the discussion. The researcher asked them to be upfront, as it was not a test and therefore there were no right answers. They only had to express their opinions on different issues during the discussion. This was done in order to gauge the behaviour, attitude and perception of the youth in an appropriate manner. They were informed that the researcher was noting down the entire discussion so that their answers could be properly documented.

The discussions were carried out under the following topics:

4.4.1 The utility of digital media in the lives of the youth

The participants of the focus group discussion admitted that digital media had a considerable impact on their daily lives. They laid a great emphasis on the role of digital media especially in the current times where due to the pandemic situation people had

come to heavily rely on Internet-driven digital media gadgets. As most of the respondents were students pursuing their undergraduate and post-graduate studies, they acknowledged that digital media like smartphone, laptop and desktop had helped them a lot in their online studies. “I have realised how important the digital media is during the pandemic. The online media helped me a lot to attend online classes. Moreover, some books were too expensive to buy and not available in libraries. During such a situation, eBooks and Pdfs were of great help,” said a participant.

The participants attended classes, searched for study material, carried out assignments and submitted them through the online media. They believed the developed countries of the world were technologically advanced and had already adapted to the digital media a long time back. However, developing countries like India had not fully utilized the potential until the emergence of COVID-19.

In the contemporary time, the participants said that they were able to connect with people around the world through the virtual community and it was a good exposure for them because they learnt new things every day. The participants also discussed how they had become reliant on the digital media as they got all the features in one single device. The participants did not have to use different media for different functions i.e. television to watch a favourite program, smartphone to make calls, newspaper for reading news et al. “Digital devices like smartphones are handy, convenient to use and have all the functions packed in one. These are the features that I look for in digital devices,” a participant said.

The participants cited ease of use as digital media had all features in one compact device. They mentioned that a single gadget — be it smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop — allowed them to read news, watch television, shop for goods, read books, take calls, watch movies, listen to audios and songs. Besides, these gadgets also allowed

them to form virtual connections through social networking like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat et al and stay connected through video calls and chat groups.

The participants said that they used the digital media for several important activities like sending mails, filling application forms for jobs, college admission, examinations, membership forms of clubs, travel reservation, movie bookings, hotel reservations and many more activities. The participant who was with a job explained how the digital media had made it convenient to work from home. “Apart from the fact that we are not physically present at the office, the working hours are the same and we attend meetings through video conferencing,” the participant said.

The participants engaged in recreational activities by watching web series on over-the-top media platforms like Netflix, Disney+ Hotstar, Voot, Sony Liv, Zee5, Alt Balaji et al. That apart new movies too were being released on these platforms and consequently the young people said that they were not missing out on anything.

Online shopping allowed them to search for newest products that were not available in the stores and they were able to compare features and prices to find out the feasibility of the purchase. In all, the participants concluded that digital media allowed them to get their daily dose of social connectivity, entertainment and information.

4.4.2 Usefulness of the digital media in obtaining news

The participants expressed that the digital media had high utility for them in obtaining news. The ubiquitous nature of the new media devices driven by the internet had increased connectivity and interpersonal communication. The most popular factor for the participants to use digital media for obtaining news was because such media provides them with an abundance of news from a growing number of channels and sources. The participants stated that they could look for any news on the internet unlike in traditional media where they have to read/view what has been provided.

The participants felt that they were more updated through the digital media because they got news even when they were not looking for it. This happened through social media pages like Facebook and twitter where news pages and handles subscribed by them updated news throughout the day. “My main source of news is Facebook because everybody is posting about some event or the other that has happened anywhere and all of these are news for me,” a participant said. The participants believed they were subject to incidental consumption of news because they stumbled upon news shared by their friends on the social networking sites even when they were not looking for such items. They felt that they were accidentally updated while carrying out recreational activities on social media.

The instant factor was what made the digital media highly useful to the participants. They said that they got news minutes within the occurrences taking place throughout the world. This was one feature they listed that scored over the conventional media because news that they would have got half an hour later on television or a day after in a newspaper was available within minutes. The participants credited local news portals for informing them of any happening at both local, national and international level. Apart from the portals, apps of news channels and newspapers provided constant updates as and when news stories developed.

The fact that news was available while moving around was what made the digital media suitable for the participants. In addition to the all-in-one feature of digital gadgets, portability had made them a valuable possession of the young people. The participants explained how handy digital media was when they must immediately read or view a news item. They didn't need to rush home to watch it on television or purchase a newspaper for it. Whether the participants wanted to read, listen to or watch a particular news, they could do it on their smartphone, tablet or laptop.

However, they admitted that digital media was not as useful without the internet for accessing news. The participants had faced problems often due to bad internet connectivity owing to bad weather conditions and remote locations. Under such circumstances, television and newspapers were the most reliable options for seeking news.

Moreover, they maintained that even though the younger generation had adapted to the new media technology, the older generation comprising parents were still reliant on the traditional media. For example, all of them had radio and television at home and their families subscribed to the local newspaper. “We may have moved on to digital media but we cannot totally avoid using traditional media. My parents still listen to the local news on the radio. So, I end up listening too,” one participant said. They were not totally cut off from the conventional media. As a result, they felt that traditional media could not be written off saying that the digital media had replaced them.

4.4.3 Gratification received by the youth from using digital media for news

The participants of the discussion acknowledged that the use of digital media for news has provided them gratification by fulfilling their different needs. Firstly, it satisfied their need to boost their knowledge. Through the digital media they were able to stay abreast with all that was happening around the world and that too at their convenience. Online news satisfied their need to get the most recent information in minimal duration. It fulfilled the participant’s requirement to occupy their free time doing something productive like seeking out news that they had missed during the day.

Besides, all participants were content with the fact that they could control what they wished to read, listen and view. “The most important thing about news on digital media is that we can select the ones that we want to read and avoid the items that are not to

our liking. I like to read positive news and select accordingly but crime news is not my cup of tea, so I avoid it,” a participant said.

They all agreed that there was certain news that they wished to avoid according to their preferences. While some of them were not interested in politics, others felt that news about celebrities was frivolous and unconstructive. Unlike conventional media where the selected news items are telecast or printed according to a schedule, digital media offered them an abundance of information on different subjects from where they could choose. In gist, participants used digital media for their own benefits rather than passively take in what has been chosen for their consumption.

The digital media satisfies the participants’ need to provide responses to news items. The feature of interactivity helped them to do so providing instant gratification in the process. Since the participants were active users of digital media, they interacted in different ways like commenting, liking and sharing news items on social media. They stated that they were able to raise questions on issues that they did not agree with. The new media had enabled them to come across diverse opinions from other users who had expressed their thoughts on a particular topic. The participants were able to engage in discussion on every news of their interest through these online platforms.

The fact that participants were abreast with everything that was going on around the world enabled them to partake in discussions in social gatherings. They were able to talk about current news during outings with friends, in their workplace, discussions in the classroom and during dinnertime conversations with family members. Such engagements helped boost their standing in the society and encouraged critical thinking. “Being updated is important is important as it enables me to voice my opinions during conversations,” a participant said. The participants said it helped in their personal

development as in future during interviews for jobs and other purposes, they would be able answer questions on current affairs without hesitating.

Finally, the participants stated that through entertainment news on digital media they got their daily dose of recreation. During leisure time, some of the participants admitted that they looked up entertainment news like tidbits about celebrities, new movie releases, happenings in the world of sports. They felt that it was not always necessary to read hard news about politics and crime. Soft news helped provide them with relaxation and they enjoyed looking at memes that gave a funny outlook on serious issues. They had a good time watching ridiculous videos about people engaging in eccentricities that go viral. On the other hand, they also looked up websites and social media pages that specialized in offering amusing, unknown and fascinating facts that most of the people didn't know.

4.4.4 The impact of online news on the news habits of the youth

The news habits of the participants certainly changed due to the constant barrage of news available in 24-hour news cycles. Firstly, unlike traditional media where there were scheduled timings for reading newspapers or listening to news bulletins, online news consumption was not time-bound. With the constant availability of online news, they read or viewed them as and when they got the time. It was not confined to early mornings or evenings like in the case of conventional media. Sometimes they even multi-tasked i.e. browsed for news online while carrying out other activities like eating, listening to music et al.

All the participants admitted that they were not very keen in reading news and watching broadcasts in a detailed manner. As the online platforms provided them with endless streams of news, they had to keep up with. In the process, they simply browsed the headlines and read the highlighted parts. Besides, they preferred apps that provided

news in gist and news videos that were only up to a minute long. Through the discussion it was revealed that the participants processed the news in a cursory way, only taking time to go through in an in-depth manner if the news item was of interest to them. “My morning ritual after waking up is to browse through social media where I get some news updates. But I engage in reading or viewing news items when I get time during the day,” a participant said. In fact, on some occasions another participant said that she “didn’t even read news, but used apps like Google Assistant to read out for her.”

The daily news routine of participants started with a cursory glance on their social media pages. This was followed by updates that they received throughout the day from news apps. Other than that, the participants filled up the interim period in between work by catching up on happenings they had missed. The dedicated hours where they wholeheartedly read and viewed news was after work was done, holidays and during weekends.

As for the format of news, the participants preferred a mix of graphics and videos with small written content that provided the context of the news. Whatever the news the layout was what attracted them towards reading or viewing it. Apart from that, the local news portals and their social media pages were quite popular. The participants stated that events occurring in their proximity was of more interest to them. Such news was provided by the local news portals that also gave news of events occurring at the national and international levels as and when events occurred.

4.4.5 The reason the youth produce and share news on digital media

The participants engaged considerably in production of news and they attributed this to the handy nature of digital gadgets, their compact size and convergence of several features in one single device. They stated that a modest smartphone enabled them to click pictures, record videos and post them in their social media pages. Their products

were not as refined as those captured with professional cam-recorders and microphones and edited using software but the content was the same. Such posts served the purpose of intimating their friends and acquaintances both on social media and offline about occurrences that have happened at nearby locations.

The participants also engaged in sharing news items through social media and messaging apps. These were either news that they had produced or some item they had come across on online platforms. Their main motivation behind producing and sharing news was because they felt strongly about certain issues like maintaining civic hygiene in their locality, raising their voice against animal cruelty, highlighting lack of basic services like a faulty street light, potholed roads and irregular supply of water from civic body. Apart from that any event in the locality like felicitation programmes, celebration of festivals, cleanliness drives by the local community organization prompted them to take pictures and videos and post them in social media.

One of the participants in the discussion wrote a blog that provided everyday information to her readers. “I like to communicate, so I write a blog where I record everything that happens in my life and in my surroundings,” a participant said. She also wrote in her college magazine and contributed to a local news portal. Another participant who headed a club in college prepared online posters creating awareness on environmental, social and civic issues. “I am the vice-president of the culture club at college. So, I engage in writing online posters during events for events like college foundation day, Women’s Day, Independence Day et al,” she said.

The interactive feature of digital media has given functions of creation and dissemination whereby the participants were able to generate their own reportage and upload it in an online platform.

However, even though they engaged in sharing news, the participants were wary of the authenticity of items that go viral on digital media. They stated that many times they had been victims of fake news distributed through messaging apps like Messenger and WhatsApp. They admitted to having forwarded news without verifying the source of the information during the current pandemic situation. Nevertheless, these experiences had made them increasingly aware of the dangers of fake news.

4.4.6 Activism both online and offline as a result of awareness through online news

The participants agreed that they were mobilized by news of civic, social, political and environmental significance on online platforms. Two of the five participants engaged actively in expressing their opinions on issues close to their heart through posts on social media and putting up comments in the feedback section of news items. The remaining three expressed their approval or disapproval by using emoticons and hashtags to highlight issues. The participants felt that online activism was quite effective as it brought issues that needed immediate attention to the notice of the authorities. They cited instances where tagging people of authority on Facebook posts and mentioning them in twitter proved helpful in initiating necessary action.

However, the participants felt that online activism was only limited to generating public opinion. A movement in the real world was necessary to mobilize the people as in-person protests were stronger than online activism. A mix of protests, both online and in the streets was necessary to bring a change. Issues relating to animal welfare, cleanliness drives, human rights violation and tree plantation were close to the hearts of the participants. They had participated in cleanliness drives, rescue of stray animals, candlelight march in protest of social injustice and tree plantation campaigns in the past.

5.1 Analysis of variables to determine the youth's digital media consumption

5.1.1 Youth's use of different forms of media

This variable was measured using the statement; 'My daily use of media comprises' followed by three options 'digital media like smartphone, laptop, desktop, tablet', 'traditional media like newspapers, television and radio, 'both digital and traditional media'. The respondents were provided with a 5-point Likert scale that measured the frequency of use of these media forms. The purpose was to find out which media was preferred most by the youth. It was evident from the data gathered that the youth of Darjeeling district preferred to use the digital media a lot more frequently than traditional media. The option of use of both the media forms didn't garner good response from the participants though its figures were slightly better than that of traditional media.

The data in Table 5 revealed that even if traditional media was remodelling to catch up with the digital, the majority of the youth preferred to solely use digital media while only occasionally using the traditional media. This result also supported previous findings by various researchers that stressed that the youth were the forerunner of digital media and took to the new media very quickly.

Zemmels (2012) has emphasized young people are the indicators of future trends of media technology and practices that will be formed. Being socially connected was important to the youth who used the digital media for the purpose of talking to friends, joining in on group conversations, learning about current events, staying up to date with online content and meeting new people.

Marc Prensky (2001) has made a delineation between digital natives — young people who have grown up with digital technology — and digital immigrants — older people

who have adapted to it later in life. Prensky has emphasized that digital natives have a different way of gathering information, they yearned for interactivity, valued a mix of graphics and visuals rather than only written content, wanted random access to information and worked at very high speed.

5.1.2 Ownership and use of different forms of digital media

This variable was measured using the two questions that sought to find out the digital media that the respondents owned and the number of hours they engaged in using them. The first question was ‘Which of the following media devices do you own?’. The respondents were provided with options of smartphone, desktop, laptop and tablet. The respondents ticked on the devices that they owned.

The data in Table 1 shows that almost cent percent respondents possessed the smartphone which was the universal device. A little less than half of the respondents also owned laptops while only a few of them had desktop and tablet. The past research has shown similar results that revealed the same pattern of ownership of digital media devices by the youth.

Fedosov et al. (2016) stated that personal devices such as smartphones and wearables, with their rich set of networking capabilities and sensors, have made it possible to capture, record, and share those novel types of digital content. The last few years have in fact seen a dramatic shift towards using mobile devices in tasks related to the digital consumption and creation of content.

Brohl et al. (2018) suggested that while the smartphone was the most ubiquitous device, laptops were used for more important tasks that had to be dealt with in greater detail and owing to its mobility the device was most preferred by those who have jobs.

The variable of ownership and use of digital media was also gauged with the question ‘How many hours a day do you spend using digital media?’. The respondents were

provided with the options — less than five hours, five to 10 hours, 10 to 15 hours and 15 to 20 hours. They had to choose one of the four options. The data in Table 2 revealed that the majority of the respondents used digital media up to 10 hours a day while a negligible number of people used them for 10 to 15 hours. This finding revealed that the youth's use of digital media in Darjeeling district was high. The purpose of use varied from gathering information, educational purpose, office work, online shopping, social networking and watching movies and videos.

5.2 Analysis of variables to determine the youth's online news habits

5.2.1 Interest in news

This variable was deliberated using the question 'How many hours a day do you spend reading/viewing news on digital media?'. The respondents were given options — less than an hour, one to two hours, two to four hours, more than four hours and had to select one of the options. The data in Table 3 on an average more than half the respondents read/viewed online news for less than an hour and were designated as light readers and viewers but a significant number engaged in doing so for one to two hours and were tagged in the category of average readers/viewers. A negligible portion of the total respondents read/viewed news on digital media for more than two hours and were categorized as heavy consumers of online news.

The trend has revealed that the majority of the youth devoted time to stay updated with appropriate and engaging news and content in areas that matter to them even if it was for a small duration of the day. Whether they engaged in daily pursuit of seeking out news or came across it incidentally in their social media news feed or notifications from news apps, the youth kept the momentum going. The data revealed that the section of average news consumers who devoted one to two hours read the news items thoroughly instead of just scanning through the headlines and highlighted portions. In short, most

of the youth dedicated only a few minutes to online news as they read/viewed just their preferred news section. To keep up with the preferences of the youth, producer's designed news articles and videos in such a way that the lengthiest of news coverage took only up to five minutes.

Earlier research too has revealed that in order to gauge the attention span of news consumers, the producers adopted new strategies to attract the attention of the youth. According to Kramp & Loosen (2018) these strategies involved presence in social media, shorter content of news and interactivity.

The findings in the current research showed that if it was to their liking, the average news consumers read/viewed lengthier articles or videos. However, the news items have been descriptive in nature, having a human-interest element and investigated deeper into the news than plain reportage that just laid out the facts and timeline of events and happenings. These comprised feature articles, human interest stories, editorials and opinion pieces, panel discussions in which selected speakers debate on burning issues that are carried out for 30 to 45 minutes.

The variable was also measured by gauging the youth's preference of media for getting their daily dose of news. The statement used for the purpose was 'I obtain my daily dose of news from' followed by options of newspaper, television, radio, desktop/laptop, tablet and smartphone. The respondents had to choose from a 5-point Likert scale, the frequency of use of each item. The data in Table 7 revealed that the majority of the youth used smartphones at the highest frequency for getting their daily dose of news. Even though television came second in frequency of use, it was far behind in figures. This was followed by the laptop and newspaper and an insignificant number of youth used the tablet and radio for reading/viewing news.

The result proved that in the present time, the youth did not exclusively use traditional or digital media. As there was an ample number of media options — both digital and traditional — at their disposal, the youth used multiple devices in different levels of frequency rather than a single media device for getting news. Even though the inclination of the youth was highly in favour of digital media, the traditional media too was used for news purpose but less frequently.

Previous research has found that some people used both media either for different types of news or similar information. Yuan (2011) has stated that since there was an abundance of media options, news audiences may choose diverse media platforms that offer the same or overlapping information. The author has suggested that the news audiences could use complementary sources that provide different information to satisfy their multiple needs. Audiences can exercise a greater degree of selectivity while choosing media content from multiple media sources.

The third statement used to measure the interest of news was ‘News that I search for’ followed by the options of current affairs, political news, sports and entertainment news. The respondents had to choose from a 5-point Likert scale, the frequency with which they searched the news items. The data in Table 6 revealed that the majority of the youths of Darjeeling district were interested in news of the current affairs and entertainment genres because they looked up these types of news very frequently. On the other hand, fewer youths looked for news items on sports and politics.

This proved that the urge to remain updated on the day-to-day events and happenings around the world prompted the youth to look for news on current affairs. Moreover, their interest in this news genre was stimulated by the constant notifications they received from social media pages and news apps.

Research conducted on similar topics in the past has come up with comparable findings that the youth are interested in breaking news i.e. big news from around the world. Bergstorm and Belfrage (2018) in their study have reported that young people were very much interested in current affairs in order to keep up with news on civic and political issues around the world. They were eager to know about news that affected society in a major way.

The entertainment genre comprising news on celebrities, lifestyle, fashion, food and travel also appealed to the youth. A study by Qayyum and Williamson (2014) has suggested that young people want a mix of entertainment and hard news, with local news of immediate relevance being more valued than economics or politics.

5.2.2. Changing news reading/viewing habits in the online environment

The changing news habits on account of digital media were measured using two variables — time of the day preferred for reading/viewing news and news reading/viewing habits. For the first variable the respondents were asked to choose from the options of morning, evening and any free time of the day. The data revealed that a great majority of respondents read/viewed news during any free time they got during the day, while a negligible portion of them did so either in the morning or in the evening.

The data in Table 4 revealed that online news was not constrained by time boundaries and unlike the traditional media news did not become outdated if one missed reading a newspaper early in the morning or watching the television news bulletin at its scheduled time. For the youth, the best time to read news was whenever they felt like. However, the news reading activity was not limited to just a single free time of the day because they kept a tab during any free time they got like the slack period in work, lunch hours,

in between chores et al. The youth had an irregular schedule for reading/viewing online news, it was mostly spontaneous and during any time of the day. Majority of them checked on the news all through the day. This was possible because of the portability of digital media like smartphones and laptops that could be carried everywhere.

Several studies in the past have stated that the news reading behaviour has changed in the digital environment. Borchuluun and Erdelez (2011) have stated that with technology making numerous advancements in delivery of news, audiences got a much more flexible media environment in comparison to the traditional media. Consequently, they were not confined to predetermined time schedules to consume news. The authors stated that audiences are inundated with news and information to an extent that there was an information overload. They have suggested that cell phones, laptops, and other portable devices provided a tremendous opportunity for readers to choose stories that interested them at any time they desire and from myriad channels and websites. People could consume online news any time they wanted whether it was squeezed between work schedules or during time dedicated for leisure activities.

Ayyad (2011) argued that the laxity of the internet represented a challenge to the rigidity of the traditional media. The users have less flexibility in accessing traditional media like newspapers, radio and television that have rigid and limited time schedules. On the other hand, newer media forms such as smartphones, laptops and tablets allow easy access to content and at flexible time schedules. The users could get several opportunities to browse the news that they would like to read and not earmark a distinct time to purposefully read or view them.

The other statement used to measure the changing news habits in an online environment was 'My news reading/viewing habits comprise' followed by options 'speed reading of news', 'reading whole news items', 'viewing only headlines' and 'viewing whole

news'. The respondents were supposed to choose their frequency of news consumption on a 5-point Likert scale. The data in Table 9 indicated that the youth most frequently skimmed through news items than read the whole of it. The results revealed a similar trend towards viewing news videos. The youth were more inclined towards scanning videos only to watch important sections than watch them through the end.

The findings in the current research revealed that the majority of the youth always preferred reading the headlines and highlighted text in an article. They did so because the headlines gave a gist of the article, an idea of the underlying information. The youth found reading lengthy articles a cumbersome process and that a mix of videos, district and text were preferable to them. Moreover, in online news users read/viewed only the news which interested them.

The findings fall in line with several studies that have investigated how news reading behaviour has changed in the digital environment. Borchuluun and Erdelez (2011) found that a screen-based reading behaviour has emerged, which was categorized by more time spent on glancing and scanning, keyword spotting, one time reading, and non-linear reading. The authors stated that less time was given for in depth and focused reading.

Monyleux (2017) has stated that digital platforms increased the trend of snacking on news to the extent that it encouraged quicker, dispersed news reading/viewing patterns. The author has stressed that the younger generations were more likely to be snacking on news. Young adults nibble away at the news, whenever and wherever they feel like it and they prefer frequent news snacks to regular full meals.

5.2.3. Changing perception of news among the youth

To understand how respondents perceived news, the researcher used the statement 'The definition of news for me is'. It was followed by the option of 'news comprises only

serious, lengthy, detailed and insightful articles and news programmes published or broadcast in newspapers and television'. The other option was 'apart from traditional media, news is also what can be picked up on the go, in internet-driven media that are user-friendly and accessible with short content'.

The respondents were supposed to choose their level of agreement for both the options on a 5-point Likert scale. The data in Table 11 revealed that the majority of the respondents amply agreed that news consisted of content available in both digital and traditional media while a relatively low number agreed that news was that which was only available in traditional media and not digital media.

The findings in the current research show that the youth have changed their perception of news with technological innovations. Their notion of news was more comprehensive than the conventional idea that it was provided only by the mainstream media comprising media conglomerates through traditional outlets like newspaper, television and radio, in fixed schedule and in a story-telling format. For most of the youth, the conventional definition of news was limited.

However, the internet-driven digital media has changed the concept of news. In the contemporary sense, news was available in abundance and in all forms of media. Irrespective of the platform, news was anything that increased understanding of events happening around the world. For the youth, digital media has made news more attractive by making it all-pervasive, easily accessible, short in content and available on the go.

Research carried out earlier had similar findings about the changing concept of news in a digitally networked environment. Cortessi and Gasser (2015) have stressed that in the online environment everything that provided information like citizen blogs, aggregators, and eyewitness testimony delivered directly through social media fell in

the purview of news. The authors argued that any news ranging from politics to current events that was in sync with the function of informing people on whatever platform, thereby empowering them to be active in the democratic process was news. Apart from the serious information, the authors also found that some section of the youth broadly included anything from breaking news about current events to learning about a friend's new relationship.

The other aspect explored in order to get an idea about the changing perception of news was to find out if the digital media had totally replaced traditional media in the lives of the youth or complemented it. The variable was measured using the statement 'the digital media has' followed by the statements 'totally replaced the traditional media for obtaining news in my life' and 'No, digital media has complemented traditional media for obtaining news'. The respondents had to choose their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale for each of the two statements.

The data in Table 12 revealed that the majority of the youth highly agreed that the digital media had not replaced traditional media in their lives but complemented it. However, only some of the youth agreed that digital media had totally swapped traditional media in their lives for news consumption while a great many of them disapproved of the statement. This implies that internet-driven media may have taken up a greater role in providing news to the youth but they certainly had not cut off traditional media from their lives. The use of traditional media may be on the decline but absolute displacement was not possible. In retrospect, print media had survived the advent of radio and radio had survived television. So, with the advent of digital media, the older media forms were adapting to the new technology to retain their old audiences and attract new ones.

Past research has indicated that traditional and digital media would exist simultaneously and complement one another. Nguyen and Western (2006) have suggested that as far as the area of news and information was concerned, the coexistence of old and new media will carry on in the internet age. The authors stated that since there was a limitless demand for news, the traditional media will complement digital media to disseminate news among a considerable segment of society. The authors, however, conceded that the waning of traditional media for news and information usage might be ongoing. Nonetheless, it was highly impossible that they would be replaced.

5.3 Analysis of variables to determine the youth's use of digital media for news and gratification from them

5.3.1 News consumption on emerging digital media platforms

As several digital platforms that could be used for the purpose of reading/viewing news have emerged, it was necessary to find out which among them were used frequently by the youth to get their daily dose of news. Therefore, the variable to analyse the youth's use of digital platforms was measured using the statement 'I obtain news from the following platforms in digital media'. It was followed by options of 'websites and apps of newspapers', 'websites and apps of news channels', 'social media sites', 'search engines', 'local news portals', 'memes on current happenings' and 'news links shared on social media'. The respondents were to choose their frequency of use for each of these options on a 5-point Likert scale.

The data in Table 8 revealed that search engines were used most frequently by the majority of the youth for news. This was followed by news pages on social media, memes, local news portals and news links on social media, websites and apps of newspapers and websites and apps of news channels in a descending order. The data

revealed these platforms had garnered good figures as far as frequency of use was concerned with only slight differences between them. The findings proved that the youth had favourably adapted to the digital media platforms for the purpose of getting news.

There have been unprecedented changes in the media environment in the past few decades and these changes were caused by the advent of digital media technology. The new technology has vastly affected the news sphere as new trends of news consumption have emerged. News was important in everyone's life and they needed to be updated and informed from the very first moment that an event had happened. As the data revealed, the majority of the youth preferred to use in a frequent manner some, or the other online platform to get news. The reasons for such uses were obvious — the online media was the fastest in dissemination of news and allowed the users to interact with the medium as well as with others.

Ruggiero (2000) had come up with three concepts related to uses and gratification in the digital news environment. The first concept was that of demassification that gave the user the privilege to select from a wide range of media forms and content. Going by the findings in the current research, the youth's frequency of usage of almost all the digital media options provided in the questionnaire was quite high.

The second concept was that of high interactivity of the new media which he said strengthened the core uses and gratification notion of the active user. This too has been proved in the findings as users were active in accessing information, downloading them, uploading their own posts and photos and reacting to others posts. The third concept was the asynchronous communication that allowed users to send, receive and revert messages in their own time. Although this concept has not been included in the current research, it basically means flexibility in timing. In this context, it can be applied to the

flexibility in timings of the readers to read/view news as and when they desired because it was always available online and there was no fixed schedule of accessing news.

Research done in the past has revealed that even though the youth frequently used different forms of digital media, the needs that each medium fulfilled was different. Masourous and Papademetriou (2015) have argued that social media and news websites are both important platforms for accessing online news but the type of needs they fulfilled were not the same.

According to the authors, the difference was not very significant, nevertheless they were important in the way the users experienced news. Social media was used mainly for the purpose of entertainment where the users either deliberately looked for news pages or came across information through shared links and news feed notifications. On the other hand, mainstream news sites are meant for the purpose of providing information which the users deliberately accessed for the sole purpose of getting news. The authors stated that among the two, the youth used social media more frequently than news sites.

The findings of the current research also pointed towards a similar trend. The data revealed that social media and memes — mainly used as entertainment tools — were higher up in terms of preference than websites and apps of newspapers and websites and apps of news channels.

5.3.2 Preference for news in digital platforms

The uses and gratification theory emphasized an audience-centric approach where the users played an active role in choosing the media form they want and used it for their benefit. Therefore, it was imperative to discuss the useful features of the digital media that made such devices most preferred among the youth for news purposes. The statement used to measure the preference of digital media was ‘I like to use digital

media to obtain news because'. This was followed by options of 'cost efficiency', 'easy accessibility', 'short content', 'frequent updates', ability to provide user feedback' and 'high speed'. The respondents were supposed to choose their level of agreement for each option on a 5-point Likert scale.

The data in Table 10 revealed that most of the youth greatly approved of the fact that digital media was useful to them because of ease of access to any news they wanted. There was easy accessibility to abundant content as well as the variety of digital platforms from which they could access news. The youth agreed that frequent updates via news apps and social media notifications were beneficial to them as they helped in keeping them in the know about what was happening. The youth affirmed the fact that they were active in online media because it enabled them to provide instant feedback. That apart they also liked the fact that they got news from digital media at high speed — almost as instantly as an incident occurs, news about it was available online.

The shortness of content suited their preference of gathering maximum information in minimum time and the cost efficiency factor helped in getting content of all media forms — i.e. news from mainstream newspapers and channels et al — in a single device that could be a smartphone, laptop or tablet at a reasonable expense. The abilities of digital media listed in the questionnaire got a good level of approval from the youth. The youth felt that the digital media had several abilities which are of benefit to them and they preferred to use them more frequently than traditional media.

Several studies conducted on digital media have revealed that audiences are active in choosing media that served their interest. The findings of the current research to corroborate the fact that users actively used new media to their benefit which was in sync with the uses and gratification theory. Yuan (2011) has argued that the uses and gratification stressed on the active audience perspective of media use. The users are

considered independent people who selected media as per their needs. The author emphasized a user-centric model of news consumption as laid down by the uses and gratifications theory. Consequently, audiences were understood to actively select different media to fulfil their need for news.

Masourous and Papademetriou (2015) too have stated that the audiences' choice and use of digital media was simply based on their needs and requirements and they used them to their own benefit.

5.3.3 Gratification from digital media

The uses and gratification approach has been the most suitable theoretical approach that can be applied to the study of choice of media and the gratification that can be obtained by using a particular type of media. In the current research, the researcher has sought to examine the gratifications the youth got from using digital media for news. The variable has been measured using the statement 'I seek the following gratification (satisfaction) from using digital media for news'. The statement was followed by the options of 'knowledge boost', 'wider exposure to news', 'constantly updated', 'interactivity', 'ability to share news', 'selectivity' and 'helps in relaxation'.

Katz et al. (1973) have categorized five types of needs for which the users seek gratification from the media. They are cognitive needs — quest for knowledge to strengthen reasoning abilities, affective needs — need for recreation, personal integrative need — the need for boosting self-confidence through constant acquisition of news and social integrative needs — the need for sharing acquired information within one's social circle.

The options provided to respondents were categorized under the five types of needs. Under cognitive needs were the options of knowledge boost and wider exposure to news, affective needs — relaxation, personal integrative needs — constantly updated

and ability to access news and social integrative needs — interactivity and ability to share news.

The data in Table 13 revealed that most of the youths highly agreed that news in digital media boosted their knowledge i.e. digital media gratified their cognitive need and helped them at an intellectual level. An equally higher number of youths agreed that news in digital media gratified their personal integrative needs by keeping them constantly updated and in that way boosting their confidence. Next in the order was selectivity of news because a significant number of youths agreed with it. It served to satisfy their personal integrative need because ability to access news gave them prerogative to select news and this boosted their confidence.

A tad smaller number of youths agreed to the fact that there was a wider exposure to news in digital media which again satisfied their cognitive need by enhancing their knowledge. Relaxation that fulfilled the youth's affective need for entertainment fell fourth in the series in level of agreement. A good number of youths agreed that the ability to share information satisfied their social integrative needs. Although the feature of interactivity came last, a good number of youths agreed that it gratified their social integrative need by enabling interaction with the media form and with people online.

Previous research too had similar findings regarding the gratification of need by digital media. Masourous and Papademetriou (2015) in their study examined four basic components of the uses and gratifications theory comprising information — the user's want to collect information, discussion or interaction i.e. interaction with the other users and with the medium, entertainment referred to the use of media for satisfying recreational need, and surveillance which referred to the need of users to remain updated on current events.

The authors have suggested that the convergence of various media forms in the digital era has rendered obsolete the earlier assumption of uses and gratification that a particular medium satisfies a certain gratification. In the contemporary time, they could choose from an ample number of media forms that satisfy their multiple needs.

5.4 Analysis of variables using Diffusion of Innovation

5.4.1 Sharing news in digital media

In the current research, the variable sharing of news in digital media has been categorized under the diffusion of innovation theory. This theory propounded by Everett Rogers consisted of an innovation that was communicated through certain networks over a period among the members of a society. Diffusion theory had a wide scope and covered different areas from technology to communication. In the current research, it was applied alongside the communication viewpoint that has helped in understanding its connotation in digital media with reference to the practices of users in social networking sites.

The variable ‘sharing news in digital media’ has been measured by determining how many respondents engaged in the practice of news sharing and the platforms that they used to share news. The data in Table 14 to the question ‘Do you share news in digital media?’ showed that barring a few, majority of the respondents engaged in the practice of sharing news.

In the second part, the researcher tried to find out the channels through which the respondents shared news. The variable was measured using the statement ‘I share news on digital media through’ followed by the statements ‘share option on Facebook’, ‘retweet option on twitter’, ‘forward option on WhatsApp’ and ‘sharing memes’. The respondents were supposed to choose their frequency of use for each of the options on a 5-point Likert scale. The data in Table 14.1 revealed that the majority of the youth

used WhatsApp most frequently to share news followed by memes, Facebook and twitter in descending order. As per figures, WhatsApp, memes and Facebook were most popular with twitter trailing far behind.

The youth who participated in the current research were of the age group 18 to 30 years and grew up in a digital media saturated world. The findings indicated that the youth were at the forefront of the new technology as they were the innovators — a small group of risk takers who did not shy away from embracing new media for news. As the results have suggested, the youth were also categorized as early adopters — a larger number of people who readily adopted the new technology — and lastly, they were also the opinion leaders who spread the good word about accessing news through digital media. However, given their proficiency in using the digital media, the youth of Darjeeling district hardly fell in the opinion follower or the late adopter categories.

The youth have readily adopted the several features of digital media including the sharing element. From the communication perspective, the activity of sharing came under dissemination of online news — that was considered an innovation — and hence the diffusion of innovation theory provided a perspective. The interactive feature had democratized the flow of information as the youth engaged actively in sharing among their social network, blog posts, news videos and news articles that they found interesting and relevant.

Previous research has suggested news sharing was an important activity that the youth engaged in on digital platforms. Kumpel and Karnowski (2015) have stated that users accessed news content via social media platforms and posted and recommended them. The authors have identified the trends and the patterns about how news and information were diffused on digital platforms. They found that the youth shared news under different circumstances like crisis situations, state of affairs and achievements. Their

findings suggested that WhatsApp had a huge number of users for diffusion of news while Facebook was trying to expand even more as a news platform.

Cortessi and Gasser (2015) have stated that memes were fast gaining popularity as sharing viral media objects that were funny depictions of news and information. Memes could appear as superficial at first glance but they were useful in diffusing serious information in a humorous manner.

The notion that an innovation was better than its predecessor was considered a relative advantage. Compatibility was how easily one can adapt to using the new technology. When an innovation was consistent with needs, values, and experiences of the adopter. This characteristic was known as the compatibility (Atkin, Hunt, & Lin, 2015).

5.4.2 News production and sharing in digital media

An innovation was generally associated with producers who were engaged in manufacturing products and providing them to the users. However, since the advent of digital media, the demarcation between producers and users has been blurred. As the youth have very well adapted to the digital media and the online content, they used the digital media to produce their own content. From the perspective of diffusion of innovation theory, there were five reasons why users turned to news producers. Everett Rogers, who propounded the theory cited five features of innovation diffusion that could be applied in the context of production of news through digital media — in this case, online news digital media are the innovations. These were relative advantage, compatibility/simplicity, complexity, trialability and observability.

The variable ‘News production and sharing in digital media’ was measured using two statements. The first sought to find out the number of people who used digital media to produce news and the second statement was to find the platforms used to produce and share news. The data in Table 15 revealed that the majority of the respondents replied

in the affirmative to the question ‘Do you use digital media to produce and share news?’ while only a few of them replied in the negative.

The other statement ‘The digital platforms I used to produce and share news comprise’ was to find out the platforms used most frequently by the youth to produce and share news. This was followed by the options ‘YouTube’, ‘Facebook livestream’, ‘photo updates on social media’, ‘video updates on social media’ and ‘video and photo updates on messaging apps’. The youth had to specify their frequency of use for each statement on a 5-point Likert scale. The data in Table 15.1 revealed that while many of the youth produced and shared their own news content, the frequency of usage was occasional rather than all the time. In a descending order, the most used online platforms to produce and share news were YouTube followed by video and photo updates in messaging apps, Facebook livestream, posting recorded videos on social media and lastly posting photos and updates on social media.

The reasons the youth used digital media to produce news was because of its relative advantage over traditional media. With traditional media, it was inconceivable for the users to produce news but digital media helped users to produce news and share it. The compatibility or simplicity feature referred to the user-friendly and interactive nature of digital media that make it favoured among the youth. Moreover, with convergence of media in a single device, several functions could be carried out in a one gadget. The complexity referred to the technical intricacies of digital media but the youth were dexterous enough to overcome them.

The youth need not directly adopt digital media but by the feature of trialability they could first try out using the gadget of their friends and family before taking a decision. Lastly, by observability, the youth could witness their peers use digital media to produce news that encouraged them to adopt them too.

Research done in the past has shown similar findings that exhibited how the users were empowered due to the new media technologies. Nielsen et al. (2016) suggested that the development of digital technology had not just benefitted the big companies but also empowered the audiences. The authors have stressed that new media has provided users with new avenues to engage with the news by commenting on stories, sharing them, discussing them with others, or even publishing their own material via user-friendly tools like blogs or social media.

5.4.3 Youth's online activism on civic, social, environmental and political issues

The word activism usually gave people the notion of physical actions such as rallies, sloganeering, protests, blockades et al. Around nearly two decades ago, the notion of activism was confined to only movements in the real world and digital campaigns were unconceivable. But as time progressed, the interactive digital media encouraged a participatory culture where groups of people collectively exerted their voices on important issues of public concern. As the youth were the frontrunners of digital media, they were the ones who were most active in raising their voices on issues that were detrimental to society.

The variable 'Youth's online activism on civic, social, environmental and political issues' was measured using two statements. The first sought to determine the number of youths who engaged in online activism. The data in Table 16 revealed that most of the youth replied in the affirmative on being asked if they engaged in online activism. The second part sought to find out the online tools used, through the statement 'I participate in debates in social media on political, social, environmental and civic issues by' followed by the options 'posting likes and comments on Facebook', 'tweeting' and 'using hashtags to highlight issues'.

The youth were supposed to tick their frequency of use on a 5-point Likert scale for each of the options. Most of them preferred using likes and comments to show their support or dislike for an issue followed by hashtags and finally tweets. The data in Table 16.1 revealed that a lesser number of youths used these tools on a regular basis. In fact, the number of youths who used them least frequently outnumbered the ones who used them most frequently. The finding suggested that even though most of the youth were active in the online media some time or the other, the frequency was low. Research studies carried out in the past too have come up with similar findings that suggest that even if the youth engaged in one or the other form of online activism, they did not do it frequently. Seelig (2018) indicated that there was low level of online participation on social issues. Though online activism appealed to the youth, few of them frequently shared news and signed online petitions. The author suggested that there was a high level of awareness on important issues due to unlimited access to information but not much action.

Elliot and Earl (2018) suggested that the youth engaged in several activities both online and offline. They were engaged in social movements, volunteered for civic actions and political campaigns. However, they preferred to engage in such activities without being bound by formal organizations both online and offline. This was because once the youth became affiliated to associations and groups, they had to give up their free will and act in accordance with the instructions from their respective groups.

5.4.4 Online activism translates to offline activism

Activism included all forms of protests and campaigns that aimed at bringing about a change in policies, practices and opinions. The existence of activism dates back in history and has been recorded as revolts and rebellions by the common man against those in power. With the coming of technology, it has permeated into the online

environment too. In the present time, it works both ways i.e. activism started in the real world eventually gains momentum in the online system and vice versa.

In the current research, the researcher has sought to explore if the youth of Darjeeling district were just active on social media or took it to the real world too. The variable 'online activism translates to offline activism' has been measured by asking the youth if they have participated in movements in the real world. The findings in Table 17 suggested that 67 % of the youth who were active online did not participate in campaigns in the real world. The remaining 33% of the youth have taken part in different campaigns carried out on the ground. This was followed by an open-ended question 'What are the campaigns you have participated in the real world?'

The answers to the second question revealed that the youth participated in varied offline activities like solid waste management, protests against child abuse, reducing carbon footprint, religious initiatives, demanding wage hike of tea garden labourers, environmental awareness campaigns, protests against Citizen Amendment Act, rescuing stray animals, cleaning river, tree plantation, cleanliness drives, water conservation, blood donation camps, candle light rallies, protests against cyber bullying, anti-rape campaigns, raising funds for different causes, anti-cracker drives, anti-human trafficking campaigns, the Himalayan clean-up campaign, anti-plastic rallies, women and child welfare campaigns, anti-deforestation protests, students' movements against fee-hike et al.

The findings suggested that digital tools like social media have played the role of a catalyst in mobilizing the youth of Darjeeling district to partake in campaigns in the real world. While some online activism has gained tremendous momentum in the real world, others were confined to simply rantings in online discussions.

Some research carried out in the past have come up with findings that suggested the same outcome. Simoes and Campos (2016) have found out that even if social media acted as a motivating force, it was able to translate only some percentage of online activism into physical protests. The study has found that it was almost impossible to organize protests without the use of digital media in the present time but authors also stated that all online activism did not translate to offline action on the streets.

Other research, however, has laid great stress on digital media for helping offline movements get the necessary impetus to become successful. Cammaerts (2015) suggested that the social media was significant in enabling mobilization, organizing actions, giving directions for movements in the real world. The author stressed that with the help of online media all these activities were carried out with greater efficiency and cost-effectivities than could have been done in the offline mode.

RQ1. How important was new media in the lives of the youth?

In the current study, a survey analysis was conducted to collect information on the importance of digital media in the lives of the youth — aged between 18 and 30 years from Darjeeling district — along with a focus group discussion to understand the underlying reasons. Different variables were measured using research tools that helped the researcher arrive at the conclusion that the Internet-driven digital media has fascinated the young generation to such an extent that they used it in almost all activities they engaged in their day-to-day lives.

In the past two decades, digital media has gained enormous fame around the globe and it has had a huge impact on the lives of people, especially the young generation. The current study has found that even though people of all age groups were connected to at least one or the other digital media, the youth were their most enthusiastic users to the extent that they literally used such media for everything. In fact, the new media —

digital media — has impacted the lives of the youth of Darjeeling district to such a great deal that their lifestyle, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour have been impacted.

According to the findings of the survey, the youth of Darjeeling district were moderate users of digital media with their active period ranging between 0 to 10 hours daily. The findings of the focus group discussion helped find out the reasons that the young people engaged in activities like education, recreation, networking, office work, shopping and other miscellaneous activities.

In the field of education, the youth who were physically dispersed could use digital media to attend online classes, exchange study material, purchase e-books (much cheaper than hardcover), carry out assignments and projects. In the present time, mediums like Google Classroom have helped schools, colleges and universities to conduct online tutorials and finish the syllabus. The students were able to make groups in WhatsApp and Facebook messenger to distribute information and emails facilitated the submission of assignments to the respective teachers.

As far as recreation was concerned, the youth were able to watch web series and movies of their choice, play online games, produce their own videos, create memes, browse social media, upload pictures and videos, follow favourite celebrities, read about them, go through their posts and even interact with them through likes and comments. Online shopping was one activity that a lot of the youth indulged in to get anything, ranging from apparels, books, shoes, gadgets, household items et al. The youth admitted that they engaged in online shopping because of the flexible timings, variety of items available and the ability to compare prices. In short, digital media has made the lives of youth easy, entertaining and efficient.

The youth of Darjeeling district engaged a great deal in social networking to stay connected with friends without physically meeting them. This has helped them maintain

strong friendships with friends from many years ago who lived in other continents. “There are relatives and friends living at far off places and we miss them during festivals and get-togethers. But we get to talk to them through video calls nowadays and it helps a lot even though it is virtual,” said a participant in the focus group discussion.

Social networking has helped the youth form new connections by opening career opportunities. It has helped them stay updated on information from around the world. The youth carried out even the miscellaneous activities as menial as making travel reservations, movie bookings, sending mails, paying electricity bills, recharging DTH and mobile numbers. “I practically use the digital media to carry out every activity. I have also been filling up forms for job vacancies online,” said another participant.

The youth of Darjeeling district agreed that even though digital media has made life easy, it socially isolated them from people. The virtual communication brought down the number of face-to-face interactions that could make them socially reclusive. Chatting in messaging apps has given rise to short forms for words which are easy to use. However, it tends to spoil the grammar of the young people, weakening their vocabulary and spelling skills.

RQ2.What are the emerging trends and news practices in the digital era?

The prevalence of the digital media in the news arena has gained momentum in the past decade ever since the internet was extensively available to the users and at reasonably lesser costs. This has distracted the audience, especially the young users from the traditional media towards digital media. An activity that was vital to every human being was that of seeking news about happenings around the world. In the conventional mode, audiences turned to newspapers, radio and television during a specific time of the day

to get daily news. However, the data for the current survey has revealed that the majority of young users spend between 0 and 10 hours every day on digital media. Consequently, they carried out every activity on online platforms including news reading/viewing.

The news producers have realized the heavy reliance on digital media and came up with new trends to attract and retain the attention of the youth. The most evident aspect of which were the websites of mainstream newspapers and news channels. As different types of social media drove major traffic of the youth, the news producers also created news pages on these platforms. The fact that the youth preferred to use different types of digital media in differing frequencies has prompted producers to use various multimedia including mobile apps to disseminate news.

According to the data gathered in the current study, the maximum number of youth spent less than an hour reading/viewing online news. In order to tap into the short time that the youth read online news, the news providers adopted a digital format that included a mixture of short text, videos, pictures, hyperlinks in between news items that connected to related news, and were simultaneously available in several digital platforms. The synchronous access to events as they happen i.e. real-time access on multimedia platforms, interactivity feature, competition among different online platforms to break news first were the manifestations of emerging trends in online news. Apart from traditional diversifying into digital, there were news platforms that were exclusively online. These included search engines, news portals, mobile apps, short news apps, twitter handles, Facebook pages, blogs, vlogs and memes. These new trends have completely changed the way in which young audiences seek and consume news. The survey conducted in the current research showed that platforms that were exclusively online were most preferred by the youth. These included search engines,

social media pages, memes, news portals. However, websites of newspapers and television news channels were lower in the hierarchy of the youth's preference.

Another trend was that of alternative news platforms, smaller start-ups by an individual or a group of individuals who started distributing news to niche audiences. However, such platforms soon grew in popularity and had a user-base of a considerable number of people. This busted the prevailing notion that news could be distributed only by major news organizations that were basically profit-oriented. Alternative journalism established the concept that news could be disseminated by anyone.

Individuals and smaller enterprises were visible and no longer overshadowed by big media giants. The diverse platforms of digital media allowed them to showcase their content at cheaper cost and to a larger audience. The news producers were in direct contact with their readers and viewers who gave them instant feedback on what they liked about a particular news item and disliked about it.

RQ3. Has the digital media replaced traditional media to fulfil daily news requirements?

News on digital media has become an integral part of contemporary society. The young tech-savvy generation preferred to consume news online instead of the traditional forms as news was readily available in shortened broadcast time. The internet has helped the digital media in surpassing the features of the traditional media. The convenience in obtaining information has encouraged users to turn to digital media for obtaining news. The young people preferred to obtain news and information from online sources but the legacy media was popular among the older generation. However, in the current research, most of the youth believed the digital media had only augmented the traditional media in disbursing news but not replaced it.

The goal of digital media was very much the same as traditional media. Both the digital and traditional media sought to inform and expand their audiences. News that was available in newspapers or news channels was also available in the online format. The two media forms strive to provide news about recent happenings as fast as they can. However, while the traditional media has certain limitations, digital media offers flexibility, interactivity and convenience. These are the primary reasons cited by young users who preferred to use digital media.

This, however, does not mean that the digital media has totally replaced traditional media in the lives of the youth. The data from the survey as well as focus group discussion revealed that even though the youth used both media forms, the balance was not perfect but tilted highly in favour of digital media. This meant that digital media was their primary source of news and traditional media was used as a secondary in case of unavailability of the former.

As a result, even though there was a high degree of diffusion of digital media among the youth, legacy media continued to have a presence in their lives. In other words, there was a coexistence of both media forms, with rapid adoption of new media and gradual waning of old media in the lives of the youth. “We cannot say that traditional media is obsolete because it still has some relevance in our life. Digital media devices are only as good as the internet connectivity. So, we still depend on traditional media in order to get news,” a participant said.

The findings suggested that even if there was a considerable shift towards the digital, it was unlikely that traditional media would be replaced as it would continue to fulfil the news and information needs of their audiences. The members of the younger age group tended to have a distinctive media preference as digital media allowed for more customized approach in news consumption. The preference for digital media was due

to its dynamic nature unlike the traditional media that merely allowed the consumption of news.

RQ4. Has the concept of news changed for the young generation?

In the digital news ecosystem, the definition of news has changed for the youth that differs a great deal from the limited definition of news on traditional media. The notion of news for the contemporary youth was different from that of an adult perspective that considered only those items that are balanced, structured, thorough and delivered by professional media houses as news.

The younger generation subscribed to a broader definition of news that comprised every piece of information as news be it blogs, eye witness accounts, updates on social media, information shared on messaging apps that did not bear the endorsement of popular media outlets.

The youth felt that in the current times there was no escape from news as it got you anywhere. Unlike in the earlier times when people used to purposefully sit down to watch a news broadcast or read newspapers, it came to them even when they unintentionally opened their social media accounts for some other purpose. The younger generation felt that in the digital ecosystem news was all-encompassing and there was no escaping from it.

For the older generation, it was necessary for news to have a structured format comprising an introduction that provided a gist of the event, a body that gave an in-depth account of what had happened and a conclusion that summed it up. A picture or video provided alongside the narrative helped to make the account more vivid.

The youth were not fussy about the structure and content of news items. For them, news comprised any event taking place anywhere that they had no prior knowledge about and impacted them. “Every item that informs me about something I did not previously know

is news for me. I may purposely search for news or come across it by chance,” a participant said.

It did not matter to them if the news came from an ordinary individual who felt like updating his acquaintances of a piece of news he had come across through a post in social media. It could also come from a professionally trained journalist from a big media house whose news piece had gone through several editors before it had been brought before the public.

For the old timers, a good news presentation comprised an organized format that allotted spaces or time schedules for different news items in accordance with their importance. In the traditional platforms there were separate slots allocated for advertisements too. The language used was formal with a conventional choice of words that was specific to each media house. A mixed format would probably get them all confused and irritated.

On the contrary, online news had a colloquial style that stressed on personal views and perception. The language was less of straight-forward description of the events that had taken place but provided differing arguments on them. Unlike in traditional media, there wasn't a specified structure or space allocation but rather a mixed format. News of varying degrees of importance appeared alongside one another. A news item was accompanied with short descriptive text, illustrative pictures and videos, all assorted in one. Moreover, promotional videos played in between news and pop-up advertisements came up unannounced. In addition, the commentary in the comment section helped them gain several perspectives to understand implications of the news. This compact package of digital news was more to the liking of the younger generation.

In conclusion, the youth viewed news as broader than simply a one-way formal narrative. For them, news was inclusive, comprising comedy of memes, satire of blogs,

online word-of-mouth via social media, livestream using a handy smartphone. Essentially, the youth interacted with news because it helped to satisfy their curiosity and understand what was happening around the globe.

RQ5. How do the youth interact with online news?

The increasing ownership of multiple devices has offered the youth various platforms to access news. In the current research, the findings suggested that the prevailing trend was ownership of several digital devices. While smartphones were the common device owned by the youth, several of them also owned laptops, desktops and tablets. The prevalence of smartphones for accessing news meant that the device was ubiquitous and served several purposes other than its main function of making and receiving calls. The youth were most comfortable using the handy device for news other than several functions it performed. “The most convenient device for accessing any information for me is the smartphone but if I am working on my laptop, I tend to Google Search for news in the latter,” said a participant.

However, the youth used other digital devices too for accessing news but the pattern of usage depended on the type of news that they wanted to consume. While the youth accessed breaking news, short videos and viral news through smartphones, the device was not suitable for handling large amounts of information. This was where the laptop and desktops came handy for the youth. If they wanted to read a lengthy editorial, feature article or an e-magazine, the bigger screen (probably ranging from 14” to 17”) of laptops and desktops were preferred by the youth.

These devices were also used to watch news documentaries as they offered larger screens and better picture quality than smartphones. Nevertheless, smartphones were the devices of choice because they ensured mobility and provided immediate access to

news under any situation. The youth could consume news alongside making phone calls, texting, browsing social media et al.

Another important interaction of the youth with online news was the activity of sharing news. The youth had a high tendency to share news for two reasons, firstly they deemed the news they had just got to know as important and bearing an impact on a large section of the population. The youth got motivated to share the news at hand as they felt that others too should know about it. “I share news because I feel it is important for everybody to know what is happening around us,” a participant said.

Secondly, sharing on Facebook, twitter, messaging apps like WhatsApp and Messenger had become the latest trend among young people and this was what prompted them to share news. It had become a habit among the youth because their friends were sharing news items and they too passed them on.

The other interaction that the youth had with online news was that of leaving comments in the feedback section. Different platforms like social media, news websites, blogs had enabled users to provide their opinions through the comments section. “When I don’t like something that I read, I like to express my opinion through a comment or angry emoticon on Facebook,” a participant said.

The youth actively provided their opinions for news items that piqued their interest and directly affected them. Apart from that the youth indulged in giving reactions (like, dislike, love and care emoticons) that were easy ways of expressing an opinion. So, if the youth considered writing a comment required too much effort, they simply provided their reactions. Other than leaving comments, the youth engaged in discussions with other users who agreed or disagreed with them and this led to long conversation threads.

RQ6. How do young people consume news?

Younger audiences have different wants and choices as far as news was concerned. The youth were a dynamic lot who wanted progress and enjoyment in life. This attitude was reflected in their preference for news too. The young people were individualistic and always looked for what news can do for them as single entities rather than the society. The youth were best described as spontaneous in the way they consumed news. The days of predictable news consumption were long gone when the morning newspaper and evening news bulletin was predominant. The youth liked to read news when their mood suited them or when they got the time to do so. As there were plenty of news items to choose from in digital media, the youth resorted to foraging for news to read/view what interested them the most.

Another change in online consumption pattern brought about by digital media was that the youth were no longer loyal to a single media brand. “More than apps of popular newspapers, I get my information from a news app called InShorts. It provides news in gist in about 60 words,” a participant said.

When the traditional media was at its prime, audiences stuck to their preferred brand of newspapers and television channels. However, the digital media provided content aplenty from branded media houses, start-up news portals, vlogs, blogs. With such abundance at their disposal, the youth simply scanned news items from different sources in order to get the required information.

The digital ecosystem was characterized by user control where audiences self-selected what they liked to read. This prompted the youth to actively choose which news they would like to be exposed to and which ones they chose to block. “During the pandemic, the internet was filled with negative news. It was important to keep my sanity, so apart

from important news regarding daily COVID-19 count and lockdown protocols, I avoided any negative news regarding the disease,” a participant said.

Visual content of the news played a great role in attracting the attention of the youth. A mix of text, videos and pictures was what attracted the youth’s eye and such a format helped them in retaining news content in their memory for a long time.

Digital devices have led to the habit of snacking and grazing on news. The youth preferred to snack on small bits of information rather than consuming whole items. Grazing was a similar activity where the youth go over the news content superficially rather than delving into them in detail.

Although the youth were able to gather a lot of information through this kind of news consumption, online news has led to shallow understanding of issues. This was because they tended to focus on the highlighted points while missing out on the parts that provided explanations.

Most of the youth kept a tab on news throughout the day. This has been facilitated by portable devices like smartphones, laptops and tablets. As mobile devices were carried everywhere, this encouraged the habit of checking on news throughout the day. This has also led to incidental news viewing because apps and social media constantly provided alerts to users on breaking news through notifications even though they were not consciously searching for a news item.

The youth’s consumption of news on the internet became a shared social experience as they interacted with one another through discussion threads, shared links, posted stories and highlighted important issues.

RQ7. Are the youth effective news producers?

The emergence of interactive, digital media multiplied the opportunities of the audiences to serve as content producers. The quick technological innovations have

opened a wide range of possibilities in the online environment. The digital media had become a good partner of the youth in producing online content. This trend had particularly caught up in the field of journalism and young people were readily adopting it.

Transformation in the news arena facilitated by digital technology was a continuous process and it has shifted to a more user-oriented framework where consumers turned into news producers. The youth were identifying themselves as journalists although they did not possess institutional training. Even though the youth took on an amateurish role, this trend blurred the boundaries between news providers and audiences in the present time.

The feature that allowed users to produce news was the feature of interactivity. While interactivity has been understood as the feature that allowed user-control and feedback, it also included the active engagement of users as news producers. However, the difference between content produced by the youth had a reach that was limited to their social network acquaintances and that produced by professional media houses reached the masses.

Most of the youth produced news not with a purpose of bringing about great changes in the society but as random acts. Such contributions were casual, amateurish and lacking the standards set in the field of journalism. However, a few of the youth did it in a serious manner usually guided by the motivation to put the issue in the notice of those in governance. "I am a part of the welfare group of the local community. We engage in activities like cleanliness drives and tree plantation. I record videos of such activities and contribute them to local news portals to be published," said a participant. Digital media has turned the conventional experience of the audience comprising passive intake of content to a dynamic one filled with user activity. The youth have

started taking advantage of the multiple platforms to carry out their recently acquired role as journalists. Their content was mostly in the genre of entertainment but sometimes it also extends to serious social issues. The youth also produced news related to civic issues, misconduct by those in power and sometimes sting operations to expose corrupt practices.

Even though the youth played a significant role in producing news with the new technologies, the scales of power were still tilted in favour of big media houses because they have a brand value and still decided what made a good story. Nevertheless, the role of local news portals cannot be denied as they were catching up fast. Local websites and news pages on social media were fast gaining popularity among the youth. Such platforms were mostly run by the youth and were quick in breaking local news fast and provided greater details.

These were known as alternative news sources. They functioned in an independent manner and provided different perspectives from those carried out in mainstream news coverage. In the current times, people who were at the receiving end of the media system were now voicing their opinions, demanding changes in governance and exposing wrongdoings.

RQ8. Does the youth's engagement with online news make them active citizens?

The youth's engagement with news made them active citizens. This was the obvious consequence of being constantly updated and aware about news happenings around the globe. In the age of digital democracy, the youth engaged in the participatory culture where there was free flow of information, virtual communities enabled users to stay connected, share and produce content. Under the circumstances, they were undoubtedly

influenced by one another and so if one voiced an opinion on social media, others did it too. It kindled an aspiration in the youth to do something constructive for the society. The primary reason for the youth as active citizens were the effective communication tools. These enabled them to get unlimited information that enhanced their understanding of civic, political, environmental and social issues around the globe. As they became critical thinkers, the youth did not accept anything at face value and started asking pertinent questions. If they believed injustice had taken place, the youth even resorted to online protests in the form of hashtags, e-petitions, online posters, tagging people in authority demanding action on issues of civic, social and political concern. Debates and discussions in the comments section of blogs, websites, social media pages helped in developing a public opinion.

The digital media had blurred boundaries and it had enabled the youth to connect to people from different places and cultures. In this way, they were able to garner support for their causes not just from the local vicinity but from around the world in less time and cost. Apart from online campaigns, action in the real world was important in mobilizing the masses. The youth used the digital media to organize protests, sit-in demonstrations, election rallies, tree plantation drives, cleanliness campaigns, candle light rallies, pen-down strikes, road blockades and general strikes in the real world. So, it could be said that if the youth had the right communication tools, they would keep contributing and participating in issues that plague the world.

7.1 Conclusion

The present study was taken up to analyse the involvement of the youth of Darjeeling district with digital media for consuming news. The internet has become a universal phenomenon and the youth are its most extensive users. Research has shown that India's internet base, especially among the youth has grown rapidly in the past decade due to accessibility of smartphones and internet at reasonable costs.

The country had 560 million subscribers in September 2018, second in the world only to China (Kaka, et al., 2019). Of the total Indian population, the youth aged between 20 and 39 years comprised more than half of the internet users. Around 54 percent of the Indian internet user base was between 20 and 39 years old in early 2019 (Statista, 2019). Likewise, the youth of Darjeeling district rely heavily on digital media in their daily activities. They are totally immersed in the use of digital media like smartphones, laptops and tablets to the extent that they carry out practically every activity using them. The youth as the early adopters of digital technology have set the trends and practices of use. They view digital innovations as extension of traditional modes of communication, much quicker and convenient for socializing, carrying out transactions, engaging in leisure activities and most importantly getting news and information.

The current study adopted an exploratory approach to determine the youth's usage of digital platforms for news, adaption of the emerging features of new technology and the behavioural and conceptual changes that have been brought about because of online news.

7.1.1 The youth's extent of use of digital media for obtaining news

The Darjeeling youth are increasingly shifting their loyalty towards digital media for news consumption. This is the obvious result as the youth in the present study form the millennials or those born in the 1990's and onwards. They have grown in the digital era

when there was an inundation of internet and digital devices in the society and there was no escaping from it. However, they also form the generation who have had a fairly good exposure to the traditional forms of communication. The legacy forms of media like the newspapers, television and radio formed a major part of their lives in their formative years and even later during their adolescence. So, they form the generation who experienced the transitional phase where the traditional media forms are gradually giving way to digital media.

The digital media has been present in the lives of the youth of Darjeeling district ever since their adolescence or teen years. Some of them even own the most common device i.e. smartphone ever since they reached the higher secondary level at school or even earlier. The ownership of digital devices was either out of necessity — for gathering information for educational purposes — or due to the influence of peers who already owned such devices. Almost a majority of the youth of Darjeeling district owned a smartphone. The major reason for owning the device was the basic need to remain connected with friends and family through phone calls and social media. The technological convergence of various media forms in the smartphone at a cheap price also made it the most preferred item among the youth.

The ownership and utility of digital devices increased with progress in age of the youth because their needs increased. More multifaceted forms of digital devices like desktops, laptops and tablets were owned by a section of the youth apart from the smartphone. As is the case with every invention there is a taboo associated with the new media technology as well. The internet-driven digital media has been linked to internet addiction among the youth, cyberbullying, cybercrime, privacy risks and other adverse effects.

Like there are two sides to a coin, the Darjeeling youth feel that spending long hours online does not necessarily mean addiction or indulgence in immoral activities. In the survey conducted for the present study, the majority of the youth indicated that they spend about five hours daily using digital devices and an almost equal number of youths spend more than five but less than 10 hours. In the contemporary times, all activities are carried out in the online mode and in order to keep up with the rapidly evolving media scenario, they have to be adept at using the digital technology. Those who fail to do so lag behind.

Yet, in the long duration of internet usage ranging up to 10 hours, the majority of Darjeeling youth spend less than an hour consuming news. The reason for the youth spending less time on online news is probably because digital technology is fast-paced and there is stiff competition among multiple online sources to be the first to break a news item. In the digital format, news is provided in rapid succession in a crisp manner with word limit not exceeding 150 to 200 words. News items become old in a matter of seconds as fresh ones are updated. The youth increasingly prefer online news because it curtails the cumbersome process of waiting until morning for the newspaper to get delivered or switching on television at a scheduled time. It is there on the internet for them to get as and when they like on the multiple platforms and easy to read/view.

The Darjeeling youth are individualistic in nature regarding the news that they choose on digital media for consumption. This has been prompted by the feature of selectivity that allows them to choose from the repository of news and information i.e. the internet. With its wide range and pervasiveness, it is unlikely for the youth to miss out on any event or occurrence that takes place anywhere in the world. Nevertheless, they have the privilege to choose what news they want to consume and what they want to avoid. They customize their searches to allow only the news that interests them in their news feed.

The youth are mostly inclined to consume news on current affairs, that keeps them abreast of happenings as soon as possible without indulging much into the analysis of the event. They prefer updates that give them a gist of the news at hand and does not involve long reportage. The Darjeeling youth are inclined towards fashion and lifestyle and these preferences reflect in their choice of news too. They are more interested in soft entertainment news that provide titbits on celebrities and the latest fad in the entertainment world than in intense political news stories.

The Darjeeling youth are fairly serious about online news and this is manifested in their optimum use of the online platforms to stay updated. Typically, they are stimulated to use media that offers them a wide variety of options to pick from at high speed, with reasonable cost and most importantly they are armed with the power to choose. From the personal perspective, the abundance of news on digital media has improved the Darjeeling youth's reasoning abilities that help them make informed decisions. Through the information they have gathered in online media, the youth have learnt to assess situations and manage risks.

As much as online news keeps them informed, the youth also relax through light-hearted news that simply informs them of amusing facts from around the world. They feel good that they can provide their point of view on global events during conversations with their peers.

From the societal perspective, the knowledge boost has increased the youth's awareness on important issues. As conscious citizens, they are now able to discern illegalities and discrepancies in the social system. This has motivated them to raise their voice against any form of injustice.

7.1.2 The adaptation to the features of the digital news platform by the youth

In parallel to the drastic changes in the media landscape, the topic of how well the youth have adapted to the features of online news media is imperative. Interactivity of digital media is the main feature that has revolutionized the present media scenario. The Darjeeling youth form an active audience who interact with the media and also with their social connections in the virtual world. Unlike the generation before them, the youth have no inhibitions of trying out the new features in digital media. As far as interaction with the digital media is concerned, the Darjeeling youth are quick to buy digital gadgets with evolved features than the device they previously owned. The youth are not scared of changes and willing to invest in something new and better if it improved their online experience.

Active participation is the essence of the digital world and the youth of Darjeeling district have understood that it is intrinsic to the fundamental nature of the online system. They are way past the stage of exploration and discoveries of the intricacies of digital technology and become adept at producing. The interaction with online features has helped to enhance the creativity of the youth. They are eager to showcase their skills and talents to the world rather than just friends and acquaintances in their immediate surroundings.

Driven by this enthusiasm, the youth produce their own content and upload them on social media, messaging apps and video-sharing platforms. As in the present times the definition of news has become fairly inclusive to even take in every bit of information on diverse digital platforms, the youth have inadvertently become producers of news. The new media technology has helped build the independence of the youth to either

modify or create content. In the process, this has honed the youth's skills and helped to manage their online presence.

Buoyed by the capabilities of the digital media, some of the youth in Darjeeling district have taken to serious journalism. Initially, they use simple platforms with minimal cost like their personal social media accounts, blogs and as their followers increase, the youth graduate to social media pages, websites and apps. At present, the digital media scenario in Darjeeling district is saturated by the presence of innumerable amateurish online news platforms. The proliferation of such platforms has taken place in the past five years and the youth mainly focus on local news. There are so many of them catering the same news that it has worn off the novelty. Only a few have been successful enough to earn revenue through online advertisements.

Even though the Darjeeling youth are individualistic in their choice of news, their consumption of news on the internet has become a shared social experience. The youth have attributed their collective experience to social media where numerous users consume news simultaneously. Although they are not physically together, the youth are connected virtually and able to express opinions and hold discussions with other users. The youth can see what their friends in social media read, comment on and share. Since their peers are constantly updated, the youth are inclined to regularly follow news topics that they are interested in. The combined news experience exposes them to different viewpoints and inspires them to support causes they are concerned about.

Common news interests among young users generates a sense of belonging that is reflected in the membership of the Darjeeling youth in several private groups created on social media and messaging apps. They form active members in news groups that have a global outreach which signifies that the youth are not content being confined to the local but wanted to expand their horizons to a global level. Participation in such

social media groups has broadened their outlook by exposing them to new ideas and thought processes of members from all over the world.

Since the digital world is a dynamic space that is constantly evolving it has posed a challenge to the news producers to adapt to the new technologies and environment. They respond to the structural changes in news production in the digital era by adopting new ways to enlist more readers/viewers to their online sources. The Darjeeling youth have distinct preferences and always look for which media and news satisfy their need the most. The producers have adopted a more personalized approach in order to gauge the likes and dislikes of the young audiences.

Many mainstream news organizations have appointed social media editors who assess the likings of users and in order to deliver them the appropriate content. This increased connectivity between the audiences and the news producers has worked for both groups. For the youth, improved features enhance their news consumption experience and the news producers garner more audiences for their online news platforms.

7.1.3 Changing news behaviour and concepts in the digital age

The words ‘revolutionize’ and ‘transform’ have been associated with digital media for a reason and this has been reflected in the drastic changes in news behaviour and concepts in the digital age. Consumption of news in digital media is relatively widespread among the youth of Darjeeling district. Their pattern of reading/viewing news involves a mix of deliberate and incidental. In the deliberate consumption, the youth are selective about what news topic they are seeking. Social media is the space where the Darjeeling youth are prone to incidental news consumption. In fact, they have come to depend on the updates that pop up in their newsfeed to widen their knowledge. Even though they have encountered such updates involuntarily, the youth would have missed out on them if they had depended on traditional media.

The news behaviour of the youth of Darjeeling district depends greatly on peer influence, in other words, their friends are responsible in generating the youth's interest in news. In social media, the youth rely on news that their social network friends share on their newsfeed. In fact, friends form an influential news source even more than mainstream news platforms. The reason for this is, the youth perceive their friends to have a similar news interest as them, so they read/view news that friends share thinking that it is relevant to them. The disadvantage of depending heavily on social media friends is that the moment they stop sharing updates, the youth get cut off from news.

In the contemporary times, the youth are no longer loyal to a few media brands. There is an abundance of media sources at the youth's disposal from where they can pick any one that fulfils their news requirements. The youth simply scan through news items from different sources and select that which attracts them the most. In fact, the youth can't afford to stick to particular media brands because it is hard for them to avoid the barrage of news from different sources. A simple search on search engines brings out numerous news items from a variety of sources in both text and video formats that the youth are spoilt for choice.

The Darjeeling youth do not spend long hours consuming news in online platforms. On the contrary, they snack on bits of news items all through the day. Another news consumption pattern prevalent among the youth is grazing where they superficially consume news i.e. read/view only the headlines and highlighted portions that convey the gist of the news. They give a miss to the parts that contain in-depth analysis of a happening which results in shallow understanding. On digital devices, the news consumption of the youth is integrated with activities like social networking, online shopping, watching web series and various other activities. Their consumption pattern is dispersed and unfocussed which affects their comprehension of the news report.

The youth have grown so accustomed to digital media for news requirements that it has changed their concept of news. The participatory culture fostered by digital media has resulted in every individual donning the role of a journalist at some point or the other through the news updates they post on social media, Twitter, blogs et al. Therefore, an element of inclusivity has entered into the concept of news adopted by the youth. For them everything that gives information is news, irrespective of where it comes from. They accept information from a newspaper, television or a radio that has been verified by editors of media houses owned by big conglomerates and also updates casually posted by social network friends as news because it enlightens them with knowledge they did not possess.

7.2 Limitation of study

The COVID-19 situation posed a major limitation to the external validity of the current study because the researcher had not completed the last part of the survey when the lockdown was announced. While 260 questionnaires had been filled up and returned by the respondents, 143 questionnaires still needed to be filled up and returned. Under the circumstances, the respondents who filled up the last batch of 143 questionnaires were mostly from two of the four sub-divisions — Siliguri and Kurseong sub-divisions — of Darjeeling district. With limited vehicular movements, the researcher could not travel to Darjeeling and Mirik sub-divisions to get the questionnaires filled up.

The respondents were not prompt in returning the filled-up questionnaire, probably due to the restrictions in movement during the lockdown and this slowed the process for the researcher to complete the survey part of the study. Subsequently, the process of tabulation, statistical analysis and drafting of the findings got delayed.

The sample size of the population could not reflect the whole population of the youth aged 18-30 years in all of Darjeeling district. Moreover, as the time period for

conducting the research was less and with cost constraints, a study of larger magnitude, a larger area and a sample size greater than 403 could not be conducted to gauge the engagement of the youth with digital media for news. Hence, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other districts of West Bengal as the youth of Darjeeling district are different from other places because of the socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and geographical reasons.

The researcher has used purposive non-probability sampling in which the selection of candidates is based on characteristics that are present within the members of the selected population group. The researchers work with specific goals in mind for quantitative studies and have to go after people with specific traits that need to be examined so that the research method is successful. If not, then the purposive sampling will not provide the desired results.

In the context of the current research, the respondents needed two traits in order to participate in the research — own a digital media device and have presence in social media. It was a cumbersome process to select the respondents according to the specific traits and get them to fill up the questionnaire.

The process of referencing to previous literature was also hindered as there was lack of access to data from libraries. Due to closure and partial functioning of some libraries, important books and journals that were deemed important references to the current study were not available at the disposal of the researcher. Although there were provisions for online access to libraries, not all books and journals were available in online forms. Under the circumstances, the researcher had to rely on the e-books and online journals that were of open access in research websites.

Moreover, the focus group discussion was delayed because of restrictions on movement and a precautionary measure to avoid gatherings during the lockdown due to the

pandemic. The focus group discussion had to be conducted when restrictions were eased considerably during phase four of unlocking process, in the month of September.

This extended the timeline of the research study and submission of the dissertation.

For a focus group discussion, the number of participants should range between five to ten members. The greater the number of participants the better is the outcome of the discussion, so the ideal number of respondents should be around eight to ten. However, the researcher could not recruit the desired number of participants for the discussion.

The researcher could only accommodate the minimum number of five respondents all of whom were residents of Kurseong and not from other parts of Darjeeling district.

The researcher has used only two theories — Uses & Gratification Theory and Diffusion of Innovation Theory — to arrive at the findings of the research study. So, the results arrived at with the use of the two theories cannot be replicated by using other communication theories.

For instance, the uses and gratification theory are considered to be too audience-centric and overtly focuses on the power of the audiences who are considered reasonable individuals capable of selecting what is good for them. The audiences are considered active citizens who participate in the mass communication process. The theory is criticized for not taking into account the power of the digital media and the inadvertent effects they may have on the audiences.

As for the diffusion of innovation theory, it is criticized for depending heavily on the human capital or the human resources — the skills, knowledge and experience possessed by an individual. Since an innovation is fairly new in comparison to existing technology, the users are required to have a certain knowledge and skill in handling the new technology.

An array of skills required for innovation including basic and digital-age literacy, academic and technical skills; however, education and technical skills remain an important prerequisite to innovation (McGuirk, Lenehan, & Hart, 2015).

7.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Taking into consideration the current situation, it can be expected that digital technology will be all-embracing in the coming years making studies like this relevant and significant. However, there are some aspects of online news and the youth in the current study that the researcher did not anticipate. These details can be worked on and further research can be conducted on them.

The study can be used as a foundation to carry out further research in the direction of news that is exclusively available in digital media. The current study has briefly focussed on how such news platforms — news portals, websites, blogs, memes, social media pages, short news apps — have become popular among the youth of Darjeeling district. Studies can be carried out to find the role of alternative media in fostering opinions that are in contrast to those perpetuated by the mainstream media which intend to maintain status quo. The role of alternative media in enhancing democratic practices in journalism can also be examined.

Memes have become the latest internet phenomenon to spread news. They are humorous take on recent happenings that become viral through social media and messaging apps. Studies can be conducted on the features and attributes that are required to make a good meme, how memes act as popular carriers of news, the social networking framework that spreads them and the section of the population that use them the most. Research to find out the perception among the audiences if memes are a valid news source like articles in newspapers, television, news pages on social media and websites can also be conducted.

Proliferation of fake news through online media has become a big threat in the past few years. The fact that fake news can be easily spread through social media and messaging apps makes it easy to disseminate without verification. Future research can be carried out to find out the gullibility of the youth to fake news spread through online news platforms. Apart from focussing on the youth, studies can also be carried out as to which section of the population is most susceptible to be targeted by fake news. Research can be conducted on how fake news aids as propaganda in defaming opponents in the political arena.

The current research has been confined to only the district of Darjeeling and youths aged between 18-30 years who belonged to this area. Therefore, future research can be carried out in a larger area consisting several districts of Bengal and a bigger sample population. In the present research, the researcher has not segregated the gender and studied the youth in the age bracket of 18-30 years irrespective of whether they were male or female. In future, research can be carried out on a gender-based engagement of the youth with online media for news.

Another trend that can be studied is the trend of posting personal news on social media platforms. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, Tumblr and Snapchat have become popular for users to announce personal news like promotions, birth's, travel and different achievements to their social network friends. Research can be carried out on why users like to express their personal news on social media and how they prefer to do it.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

NOTE: This questionnaire is exclusively for the academic purpose for the requirement of Dissertation in M.Phil in Journalism & Mass communication on 'Engagement with New Media for News: A Critical Analysis of youth in Darjeeling.'

Personal Details

Name_____ Age_____ Gender_____.

Occupation_____.

School/College/University (Applicable for those who are currently studying)

_____.

For better understanding of the respondents, new media or digital media comprise all forms of media that are driven by the Internet for example computers, laptops, tablet, smartphones etc.

Traditional media or legacy media are the forms of mass communication that dominated the scene before digital media. They comprise newspapers, radio, television, books and magazines.

1. Which of the following digital media devices do you own? (Tick your choice of answer/answers)

Smartphone

Desktop

Laptop

Tablet

2. On an average how many hours a day do you spend using digital media? (Tick your choice of answer)

Less than five hours

Five to 10 hours

10 to 15 hours

15 to 20 hours

3. On an average how many hours a day do you spend reading news on digital media? (Tick your choice of answer)

Less than an hour

One to two hours

Two to four hours
More than four hours

- 4. Statement 1: My daily use of media**
- a. Comprise digital media like smartphone, laptop, desktop, tablet**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
 - b. Comprise traditional media like newspaper, TV, radio**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
 - c. Comprise both digital and traditional media**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- 5. Statement 3: The news items that I search for**
- a. Current affairs**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
 - b. Political**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
 - c. Sports**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
 - d. Entertainment**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- 6. Statement 4: I obtain my daily dose of news from**
- a. Newspaper**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
 - b. Television**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
 - c. Radio**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
 - d. Desktop/laptop**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

- e. **Tablet**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- f. **Smartphone**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

7. Statement 5: I obtain news from the following platforms in digital media

- a. **Websites and apps of newspapers like Times of India, Indian Express, New York Times**
Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- b. **Websites and apps of news channels like Times Now, India Today, CNN, BBC**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- c. **Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- d. **Short news apps like Dailyhunt, InShorts, Google New**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- e. **Search engines like Google**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- f. **Local news portals like Darjeeling Chronicle, OMG Kurseong**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- g. **Memes on current happenings that communicate news**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- h. **News links shared on social media by friends**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

8. When do you read news? (Tick your choice of answer)

- Morning**
- Evening**
- Any free time of the day**

9. Statement 6: My news reading/viewing habit comprise

- a. **Speed-reading only the important points in news articles**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

- b. **Reading the whole news item**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- c. **Viewing only the headlines of news programs**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
- d. **Viewing the entire news program**
 Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

10. Statement 7: I like to use digital media to obtain news because

- a. **It is cost-efficient**
 Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree
- b. **It is easily accessible on gadgets like smartphones, laptops**
 Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree
- c. **Content of news articles and news programs are short**
 Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree
- d. **Frequent news updates are available**
 Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree
- e. **It enables user to provide instant feedback through comments and likes section**
 Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree
- f. **It has high speed**
 Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. Statement 8: The definition of news for me is

- a. **News comprises only serious, lengthy published/broadcast in old media and not digital media.**
 Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree
- b. **News is that which is available in both old and digital media.**

Strongly Disagree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Agree

12. Statement 4: The digital media has

a. The digital media has replaced traditional media

Strongly Disagree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Agree

b. No, the digital media has complemented traditional media

Strongly Disagree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Agree

13. Statement 8: I seek the following gratification (satisfaction) from using digital media for news

a. To boost my knowledge

Strongly Disagree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Agree

b. To provide wider exposure to news

Strongly Disagree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Agree

c. To keep me constantly updated

Strongly Disagree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Agree

d. To enable me to provide a feedback (interactivity)

Strongly Disagree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Agree

e. To enable me to share news online

Strongly Disagree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Agree

f. To enable me to select news that I require (selectivity)

Strongly Disagree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Agree

g. Help me relax with entertainment news

Strongly Disagree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Agree

14. Do you share news in digital media? (Tick your choice of answer)

Yes

No

15. Statement 9: I share news on digital media through

a. Share option on Facebook

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

b. Retweet option on twitter

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

c. Forward option on WhatsApp

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

d. Sharing memes

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

16. Do you use social media to produce and share news? (Tick your choice of answer)

Yes

No

17. Statement 10: The digital platforms I use to produce and share news comprise

a. YouTube

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

b. Live Stream on Facebook, Twitter

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

c. Post photo updates on social media

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

d. Record videos and post them on social media

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

e. Record videos and share it on WhatsApp

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

18. Do you participate in debates in social media on political, social, environmental and civic issues? (Tick your choice of answer)

Yes

No

19. Statement: I participate in debates in social media on political, social, environmental and civic issues by

a. Posting likes and comments on Facebook

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

b. Tweeting on Twitter

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

c. Using hashtags to highlight issues

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

20. Has awareness brought about by online news encouraged you participate in campaigns and movements in real world? (Tick your choice of answer)

Yes

No

21. If yes, what campaigns and movements have you participated in?

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1. What is the utility of digital media in your life?**
- 2. How important is the digital media in obtaining news?**
- 3. What gratification do you receive from using digital media for news?**
- 4. How has it affected your news reading/viewing habits?**
- 5. What is the motivation behind producing and sharing news?**
- 6. Has the awareness brought about by online news made you an active citizen?**