

CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF NEW MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Consumers give significance to the term 'mass media', and recent trends have only added to this understanding, as the masses now aren't only consumers of media content, but the producers of it too. The said study involves enhancing of this picture in the present day media production and consumption scenario, wherein masses play a pertinent role in content consumption, feedback and production, also by the means of sharing - with opinion. Hence, the concept of New Media and Community attains all the more value, meaning that community is now inherently, a part of the New Media processes. Since journalism has seen a surge with the use of New Media technologies and there is a greater involvement of the public in discussions, now; it is pivotal to take into consideration the consumer, as this strata is an important stakeholder in the community with regards to conversations related to media. In order to gather this information on consumers, their baseline demographic profile was gathered. The objective aimed at gathering information on consumers' perception towards their need gratification vis-à-vis Print, Broadcast, New Media and all media types, New Media usage by self, and efficacy in usage of New Media tools. For the study, responses from 100 media consumers, pan-India, were recorded, and statistically analysed to understand their perception and need-gratification, with regards to New Media usage.

KEYWORDS: New Media, New Media Tools, New Media Technologies, Need Gratification, Consumption And Production.

INTRODUCTION

Journalism has seen a surge with the use of New Media technologies and there is a greater involvement of the public in discussions, now. This also brings in the aspect of the media consumer and his usage of New Media in everyday communication and not only consumption, but curation and production of media content, or user-generated content. The technology use has made it very convenient for the consumers of media to actively participate in a dialogue and make interchanging of ideas and

thoughts possible in a manner much convenient than before. New Media technology, with the help of an electronic gadget, has offered the ability to see and hear what is going around the world. Today, an electronic gadget, combined with the internet and World Wide Web, has changed the face of journalism (Pavlik, 2009). The study here will attempt to understand the media consumer-his need of information and entertainment, with reference to the usage of

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New Media, which is evidently an institution in itself. The study differentiates between new age consumers and old school consumers, with the help of recording their responses on a scale. The study uses models like Uses and Gratification, and Efficiency Framework, to bring home the point that there is a manner in which the needs of the consumers are met. It further enumerates what persuades the consumers most to pick up one medium over the other to satisfy cognitive needs, and entertainment needs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In a survey conducted by the Columbia Journalism Review Delacorte fellows, later published as an article *New Yorker*, BuzzFeed and the push for digital credibility, (Funt, et.al., 2016, June 27) it was revealed that 82 percent of the subjects' main news source was internet- news found online, 15 percent accessed TV, 2 percent used radio and only 1 percent attained their news and information from print. This shows an increasing usage, fondness and ease of New Media, also due to the enhanced New Media tools. The survey however, discussed credibility as an issue, with the medium.

Chakravarthy, in *Net, media and the mass communication* (2008) says the context in which we are trying to understand journalism as an activity, 'writing for news websites' can cater to online journalism, which again can be understood to have a huge expanse. Media organisations moving into the online space to expand manifold, to kill the boundaries and the ways the consumers would access news and information. They are clearly serving the media consumers' need of getting news and information on a congenial, online portal, without depending upon the "old" mass media. The phenomenon of the rise of the internet journalism is also often spoken of when one discusses or tries to understand the impact of internet journalism on the masses or the new masses, who look toward this platform to satiate their information needs.

An article titled "Digital and online activism" published on *reset.org* (2015, March) highlights independent activism and how citizens have made the internet a tool to spread social messages far and wide. The article, highlighting the tools of digital activism, discusses the significance of online petitions, social networks, blogs, micro-blogging, mobile phones and proxy servers. The article states how this platform can actually help those whose voices are often silenced, by allowing them access to the digital world to make their case and call for change. Also bringing the aspects of computer literacy, internet accessibility, censorship and mobile campaigning into picture, the article discusses serious concerns of the presence or absence of these facilities in various geographical areas. The article concludes that online activity needs to be coupled with offline campaigns to have greater impact even if the desired results aren't achieved.

John V. Pavlik in *Media in the Digital Age* (2008) says that the digitization of the way we communicate has given way to a lot of changes in the entire knowledge sector. Pavlik's work emphasizes on how digital technologies have vitally changed the nature and function of media in our society. They have reinvented old practices of public communication. The book studies the positive and negative implications of children's exposure to the digitized world. In addition, Pavlik focuses on current developments and foresees a media landscape dominated by a highly fragmented though active audience and intense media competition.

THEORETICAL LINKAGES

USES AND GRATIFICATION MODEL

The theory propounded by Katz in 1970 discusses how people use different forms of media for need gratification, to gratify cognitive, affective, self-integrative and social-integrative needs. For this, various media compete with each other to satisfy the media consumers' demands and needs

relating to information seeking, knowledge enhancement, communication facilitation, structuring the day, relationship building, among others (Katz, et.al. 1973, p. 509). The model is relevant in the context of the present study with specific reference to New Media, as the current day media satisfies all types of needs- cognitive, affective, self-integrative and social-integrative of the media consumers.

SPIRAL OF SILENCE

As stated in Baran, J., et.al. (2012), "Observations made in one context (the mass media) spread to another and encourage people either to proclaim their views or to swallow them and keep quiet until, in a spiralling process, the one view dominated the public scene and the other disappeared from public awareness as its adherents became mute. This is the process that can be called a spiral of silence," (Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, 1984). The theory helps to understand how New Media serve the same purpose as traditional media by making people feel equipped to state their views, and hence people with no voices (due to becoming a part of spiral of silence) find one with this tool.

SOCIAL COGNITION FROM MASS MEDIA

The basis of social cognition theory as stated in Baran, J., et.al. (2012), is the fact that one attains learning from observation of one's environment, and that is what leads to social cognition (Albert Bandura, 1994). It is relevant for this study as it helps understand the extent of social cognition from mass media, with reference to New Media, as the society exhibits such behaviour. The social cognitive theory tries to establish causal association between media and behaviour, and can be applied across several viewer-viewing situations.

EFFICIENCY FRAMEWORK

Nowak, et. al. (2005, 2009), developed the efficiency framework on the observation that

many CMC studies resulted in low ratings on the level of interpersonal satisfaction when compared to face-to-face communication. People prefer to do a task as long as it is effortless (Nowak et al., 2009), and in it states the argument, if in comparison to CMC, face-to-face communication has multiple modalities in terms of convenience, better inputs, more experience, and information, or is it less preferred because it is time-consuming and needs effort. The model was assistive to understand the level of efficiency of consumers with regards to usage of various New Media tools. It has helped to comprehend if many of the consumers stick to a particular medium because it is easier and less time consuming and requires minimal efforts.

OBJECTIVE

To understand consumers' perception towards New Media usage, vis-à-vis need gratification

Hypothesis 1.New Media rates highest in satisfying consumers' information and entertainment needs

Hypothesis 2.New age consumers have a positive perception towards New Media usage

METHODOLOGY

POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Consumers were chosen by Non probability sampling procedure using the exponential non-discriminative snowball technique. The study was conducted with 100 consumers, with a pan-India representation from North, South, East, West, Northeast and Central India.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

An online survey, with a self-explanatory questionnaire, was conducted with consumers, where the questionnaires were emailed to them, shared via Google Forms, or collected in person.

INFERENCES

Table 1.Descriptive statistics for demographics

		Old School Consumers n (%)	New Age Consumers n (%)	Total n (%)
Age	15-25yrs	28 (60.9)	30 (53.6)	58 (56.9)
	26-35yrs	13 (28.3)	18 (32.1)	31 (30.4)
	36-45yrs	3 (6.5)	4 (7.1)	7 (6.9)
	More than 46yrs	2 (4.3)	4 (7.1)	6 (5.9)
	Total	46 (100)	56 (100)	102 (100)
Education	Undergraduate	10 (21.7)	12 (21.4)	22 (21.6)
	Graduate	22 (47.8)	19 (33.9)	41 (40.2)
	Postgraduate	13 (28.3)	21 (37.5)	34 (33.3)
	Postgraduate and above	1 (2.2)	4 (7.1)	5 (4.9)
	Total	46 (100)	56 (100)	102 (100)
Gender	Male	20 (43.5)	23 (41.1)	43 (42.2)
	Female	26 (56.5)	33 (58.9)	59 (57.8)
	Total	46 (100)	56 (100)	102 (100)
Background	Rural	4 (8.7)	0 (0)	4 (3.9)
	Suburban	6 (13)	5 (8.9)	11 (10.8)
	Urban	36 (78.3)	51 (91.1)	87 (85.3)
	Total	46 (100)	56 (100)	102 (100)

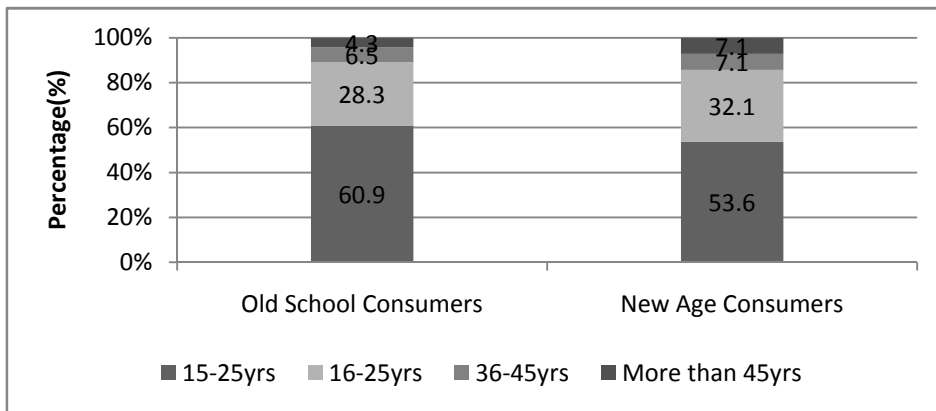


Figure 1.i. Consumers' ratio vis-à-vis age

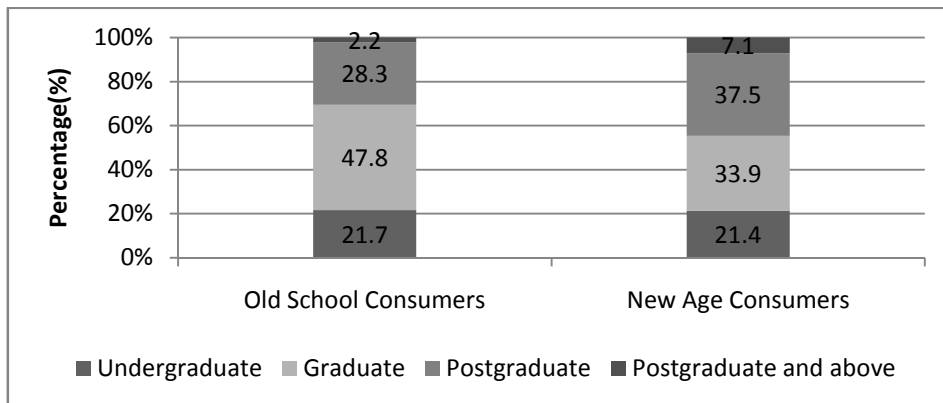


Figure 1.ii. Consumers' ratio vis-à-vis education

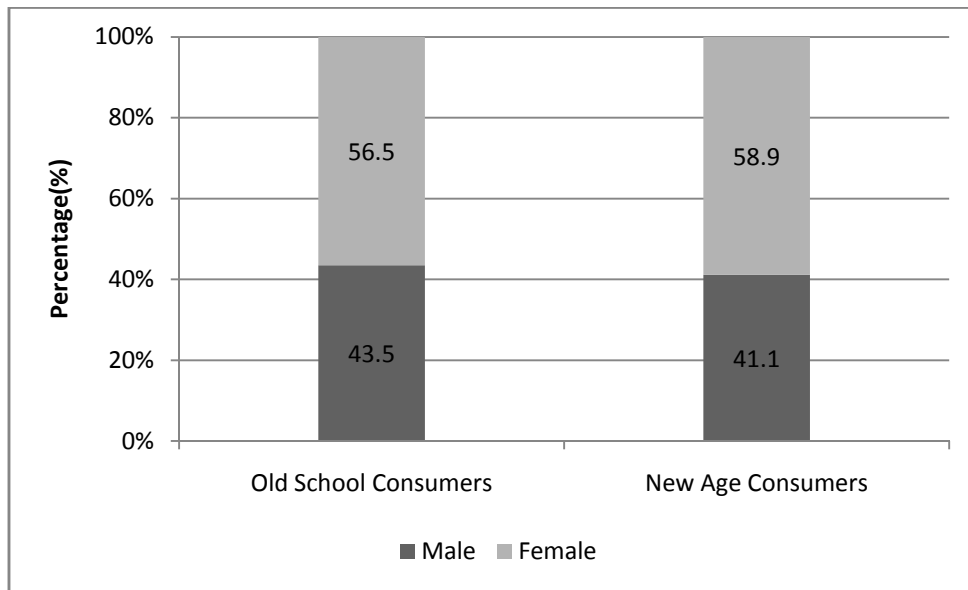


Figure 1.iii. Consumers' ratio vis-à-vis gender

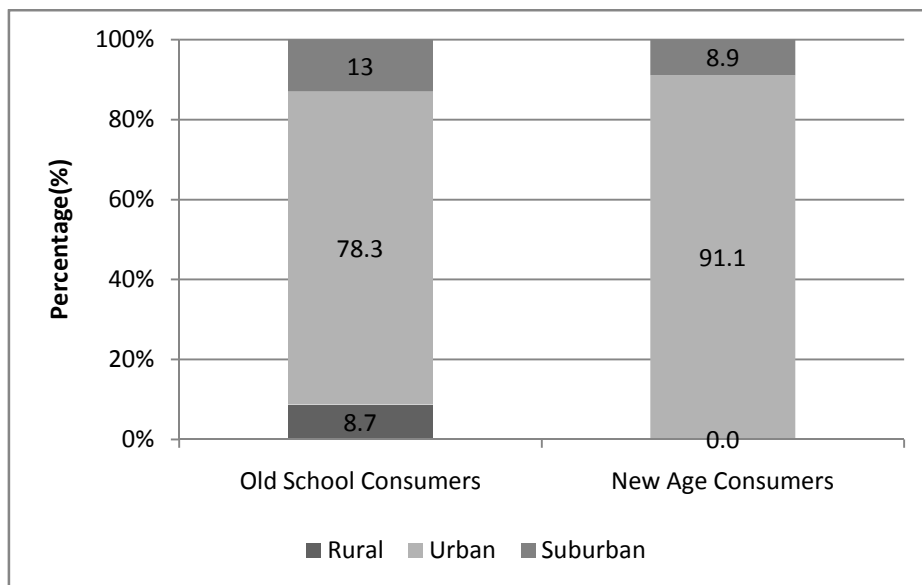


Figure 1.iv. Consumers' ratio vis-à-vis geographical area

Hypothesis 1. New Media rates highest in satisfying consumers' information and entertainment needs

Table 2. Average level of Need Gratification of media users

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
PRINT MEDIA				
Cognitive	6.33	2.875	1	10
Affective	4.60	2.766	1	10
Self-integrative	4.76	2.740	1	10
Social-integrative	4.42	2.770	1	10
Total	20.67	10.215	4	37
BROADCAST MEDIA				
Cognitive	6.24	2.864	1	10

Affective	5.73	2.884	1	10
Self-integrative	5.16	2.886	1	10
Social-integrative	5.08	3.030	1	10
Total	22.20	10.467	4	40
NEW MEDIA				
Cognitive	6.29	3.017	1	10
Affective	5.84	3.053	1	10
Self-integrative	6.01	2.879	1	10
Social-integrative	6.57	3.039	1	10
Total	24.72	11.232	4	40
ALL MEDIA				
Cognitive	6.28	2.798	1	10
Affective	5.56	2.672	1	10
Self-integrative	5.47	2.810	1	10
Social-integrative	5.77	2.955	1	10
Total	23.09	10.730	4	40

Table 2 gives an understanding about consumers' need gratification vis-à-vis use of Print, Broadcast, New Media, and all media types. The relation, in terms of mean, between Print media satisfying consumers' cognitive, affective, self-integrative and social-integrative needs is 20.67. The relation in terms of mean for broadcast

satisfying these needs is 22.20, and that of New Media is 24.72, making it the medium that rates highest in users' need gratification. In addition, each medium satisfies users' cognitive needs the most, with Print media satisfying the least of the other three needs.

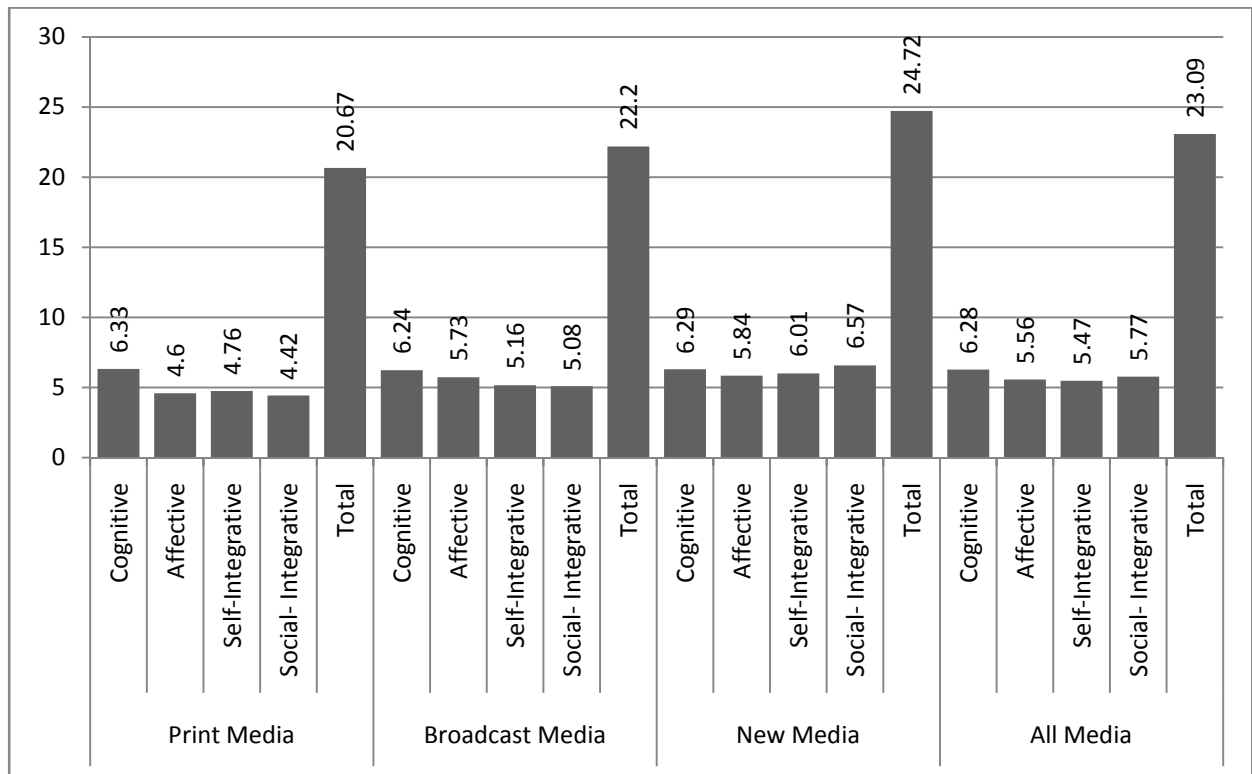


Figure 2. Average level of Need Gratification of media users

Hypothesis 2. New age consumers have a positive perception towards New Media usage

Table a.i. New age users' perception regarding New Media usage

	Responses on scale 1-7							Mean	Rank
	N (%)	2 N (%)	3 N (%)	4 N (%)	5 N (%)	6 N (%)	7 N (%)		
Easy	0 (0)	3 (5.4)	2 (3.6)	1 (1.8)	5 (8.9)	20 (35.7)	25 (44.6)	6.0	2
Unlimited	1 (1.8)	3 (5.4)	0 (0)	7 (12.5)	3 (5.4)	20 (35.7)	22 (39.3)	5.8	3
Modern	1 (1.8)	(0)	(0)	4 (7.1)	6 (10.7)	23 (41.1)	22 (39.3)	6.1	1
Formal	5 (8.9)	12 (21.4)	16 (28.6)	7 (12.5)	8 (14.3)	3 (5.4)	5 (8.9)	3.5	10
Reliable	1 (1.8)	4 (7.1)	6 (10.7)	12 (21.4)	14 (25)	14 (25)	5 (8.9)	4.7	9
Useful	0 (0)	1 (1.8)	2 (3.6)	9 (16.1)	13 (23.2)	21 (37.5)	10 (17.9)	5.4	6
Enhancing	1 (1.8)	1 (1.8)	1 (1.8)	10 (17.9)	7 (12.5)	21 (37.5)	15 (26.8)	5.6	4
Relaxed	1 (1.8)	1 (1.8)	1 (1.8)	10 (17.9)	13 (23.2)	18 (32.1)	12 (21.4)	5.4	7
Active	1 (1.8)	0 (0)	2 (3.6)	7 (12.5)	13 (23.2)	20 (35.7)	13 (23.2)	5.6	5
Systematic	0 (0)	3 (5.4)	2 (3.6)	10 (17.9)	14 (25)	16 (28.6)	11 (19.6)	5.3	8

In order to understand the perception of new age users regarding their use of New Media, the values on the semantic differential scale were used to calculate the mean, and were ranked in order of users' perception. According to *table a.i.*, users ranked the value 'modern' at top, in their perception of New Media usage. This was followed by its ease and its unlimited scope. The

users perceive media as enhancing, active and useful, in that order in the ranking. Users' perception, however, regarding New Media as a relaxed, systematic and a reliable medium was somewhat low. Most users perceive New Media as highly casual, resulting in the value to be ranked last.

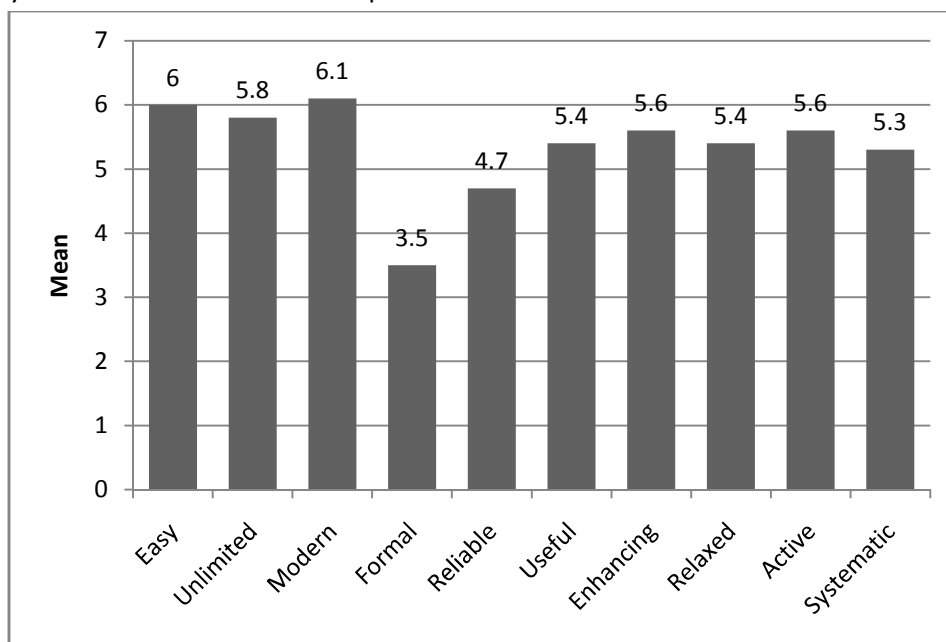


Figure a.i. Representation of media consumers' perception of New Media usage

CONCLUSION

To recapitulate, consumers' perception of New Media, in general and in particular, appears to be

positive. The consumers show acceptance towards New Media, and that is true, more so, for new age consumers. Consumers also show a certain level of efficacy in usage of New Media

with regard to various tools. In addition, majority of the consumers perceive that New Media satisfies their cognitive and entertainment needs better than Print and Broadcast.

There is thus, concurrence in Uses and Gratification Model and how the consumers' needs are being satisfied with the use of New Media. This also implies that the industry serves the needs model by understanding its consumers' needs and meeting that demand. Furthermore, this implies that there is social cognition happening from mass media. Also, the data has helped understand the effectiveness of communication mediums vis-à-vis their reach and desired focus. It has also thrown light on the construct of the new age consumers and their media selection and usage.

The efficiency framework model was assistive to understand the level of efficiency of consumers with regards to usage of various New Media tools. It has helped to comprehend if the consumers stick to a particular medium because it is easier and less time consuming and requires minimal efforts. The spiral of silence theory helps to understand how New Media serve much the same purpose as traditional media, as it makes people feel equipped to state their views, and hence people with no voices, find one with this tool.

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