Digital Consumption Pattern and Impacts of Social Media: Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Rabi N. Subudhi

Abstract Dependence on digital media has increased manifold during the COVID—pandemic lockdowns, across the globe. Most of the offices and academic institutions started operating, on ‘work-from-home’ mode, on digital platform. Even senior citizens, non-working homemakers and kids spent more time in social (networking and communication) media. The ‘difficult times’ of COVID—pandemic has also shown the world the ‘different times’ and the difference in our preferred way of functioning. The ‘digital consumption pattern’ changed substantially, both by its scale and by diversity. The present paper discusses the issue of ‘effectiveness and impact’ of ‘digital medium’ on ‘digital life’ of its users (/digital consumers), particularly during this extended lockdown. The objective is to discuss issues relating to the ‘effect of extended/longer use of net, during this pandemic, for academic and professional activities from home, continuously’. The study is about the life in virtual world, particularly during this extended lockdown. The paper adopts a method of descriptive statistical analysis, covering different categories of users of Eastern India. Using a structured questionnaire method, descriptive primary data, relating to digital consumption, were collected from around 1350 respondents, from Odisha and its neighbouring states. Result shows how different categories prefer and use their preferred social media. Study finds a significant contribution of Internet-based social media (SM), countering ‘social isolation’ of senior citizens.

Keywords Social impacts · Statistical analysis · Digital consumption · Social media · Internet consumption pattern

1 Introduction

Gone are the days when benefit of computers and Internet was limited to qualified technocrats and professionals. As computing devices have become affordable and user-friendly, over the years, the digital divide (of those who are capable of using
computers and the rest, those who are not using it) is being abridged very fast. Availability of most of the services through mobile applications, available in smart phones, in a very user-friendly manner, has taken millions of non-users to users of Internet. We shall call such ‘users’, for the purpose of this research article, as ‘consumers’ of Internet, or the digital consumers.

It is of academic interest to study the digital consumption pattern of diverse categories of users, particularly in Eastern India. It is more interesting to study, if and how ‘digital diversity’ and ‘digital consumption pattern’ has changed during this unprecedented COVID lockdown.

This paper, after review of existing literature, analyses a primary data set of over 1300 Internet users, from different categories, from Odisha and neighbouring states (of Eastern India). It adopts a descriptive statistical analysis method.

2 Review of Literature

Kulesz [15], in his study on ‘digital technology on cultural diversity’, opines that ‘digital technology acts as an opportunity in chain of consumption, production and distribution’. The author identified contrast of culture across countries, where every country focused on ‘socio-economic engagement’. Serrano and Brusco [17] focussed on social, demographic and economic aspects related to digital divide. The social networking through Internet brings digital inclusion and enhances the scope of e-commerce, e-government services. The digital awareness and training along with effective policies and regulations are suggested by authors to minimize the barrier of exclusion. Nayak and Krishnamurthy focus on digital technology used in inclusive social health models of BPO customers. The result of the qualitative exploratory research is that the digital technology is helpful in strategic management of customer satisfaction, dealing with risk and benefits of both insurer and policy maker. The authors choose participants from different medias through virtual interviews and find that the ‘culture and subculture also influence digital music’. Gvili and Levy [9] study on e-Word Of Mouth (WOM) and attitudinal differences. The study is based on examining 864 participants of different social networks and ANOVA is used to test the differences in attitudes and structural equation model to test e-Word Of Mouth (WOM) attitude model. The conclusion is on the basis of differences in channels, the attitudes towards WOM are different. Goldsmith and Lafferty [16] have studied on the response of consumers regarding the effectiveness of advertisement through Internet. They have also focused on advantages and disadvantages associated with online ads.

Internet is the affordable means of communication and transactions along with entertainment and work-related information. ‘It creates digital inclusion as in organizations older adults learn technical skill from young volunteers and build a sense of community feeling’. Illingworth et al. [13] have made cost–benefit analysis of Internet. As a marketing and communication tool, how Internet influences the
perceptions and beliefs of non-profit organizations. They have concluded that irrespective of size and level, Internet is very useful, cost-effective and time-effective marketing weapon for organizations. The virtual experience influences the perception of consumers and their pattern of consumption of products and services are changed. Dwivedi, Bobek and Zabukovsek have studied on online teaching and learning. They have viewed that the teacher-centric environment is shifted to student centric. By analysing online learning behaviour of 152 postgraduate students, the author concluded that if the online teaching progresses according to the syllabus, there would be enhancement in the scope of engagement of students. Internet has enough power to run and control the entire organization by focusing on storing, transmitting and retrieving data. It influences the perception of members of organization and helps to enhance knowledge with updated information. Internet has converted the old organizational system with new organizational setup and new technology.

3 Access of Internet Across Generations

According to Koch, Internet provides a social platform of connectivity of people based on usages of Internet, preferences and concern of privacy. Every generation has its own wants, which can be easily fulfilled with the help of different apps or smart phones or other webs of digital device or Internet. Vrakl states that Internet is used by Gen-X, Gen-Y and Boomers to make a congruency across them. Boomers stay connected with their millennial children and their friends through Facebook and email with mobile phones and computers. Though Xers do not get enough time to spend with their friends because of their profession, they use Facebook, YouTube, mail, etc. to be connected and they prefer flexible schedule of work and work-from-home. Both Gen-X and Gen-Y adopt Internet as a smooth medium of communication and social interaction, and at the same time, they prefer online buying by using Internet to visit the shop. Viens views that according to Global Web Index, nearly 114,000 of diversified generations use Internet to be connected socially. 4.4 billion of people of the world are using Internet through multiple devices. Kamber states about the adults’ digital world with digital culture and immigration of digital technology. Their digital life makes them more ambitious, responsible and updated with the world as compared to other generations who embrace digital life. According to Harris, Baby Boomers use Internet not just like other adult generations. They utilize Internet for checking mails, political news, economic situation, online-banking transaction and weather-related information, etc. rather adult generations (Gen-X, Gen-y and Gen-Z) spend enough time with Internet for instant messaging, videos, charting, etc. Davenport states about the use of Internet by different generations in organizations. Traditionalists or Veterans prefer face-to-face and oral or written communication to Internet. Boomers use email for communication, but more use phone and fax. Gen-X quickly adapt technology and regular user of Internet. According to Harris et al. (2017), customers of different cohort prefer different patterns of grocery shopping. E-grocery is both time and cost effective for technically sound and busy customers,
whereas traditional super market is preferred by many customers who meet their friends and relatives and get varieties of products while making shopping as traditional market creates crowd and a broad based. Normalini focuses on Internet banking in Malaysia through cross-sectional study by the respondents using online banking. The author also states that Millennials are born and brought up in the era of online transactions and very adaptive with technology. Internet banking converts the traditional banking system to millennium banking trend with the help of which customers can access their accounts through online wherever in the world. They usually bridge the communication gap between Boomers and Millennials. Millennials use Internet from very early stage of life. They use short and sweet communication medium like WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, etc. and get immediate and easy response. As generations are different, their characteristics and ideologies are different and digital technology provides a common link to make them together.

4 Impact of Internet on Business-Management

In organizations for smooth communication, strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation, to achieve the goals and objectives, Internet plays very vital role. The apps like: Skype, Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc. are helpful to share information with customers, venders, staffs and other stake holders connected any corner of the world. Business to business and business (B2B) to customer (B2C) all transactions can run with online and within a fraction of time. The manual works and time taking transactions have become quicker with the help of software like: QuickBooks and Wave Accounting, etc. These help companies to handle timely transactions, storing and retrieving valuable data, error detection and automatic routine tasks. The setup of online stores are possible with e-commerce which can easily upload information related to product, services, prices and features for customers through advertisement and marketing around the world. The business research and analysis work and focusing on movements of competitors are possible for business intelligence platform and online updating of information. The document-signing services for clients and employees, Internet enabled camera for knowing happenings of organizations, sensory security alarm, etc. are the helping tools from Internet to business. The online payments like ATM, Paytm, credit card, debit card, etc. create a broad scope for business and customers enjoy branded products near to their door bells through online delivery from amazon, flip cart, snap deal, etc. The online food delivery to online groceries, medicines and other consumer products is easily come to us with a simple order. At the same time, many organizations now opt for e-recruitment, online interview through video conference, assign online tasks and measuring online performance. To monitor performance of employees, the applications like SAP, Workday, etc. are very useful and the organizations arrange training and development programs after identifying the weaknesses of employees. The modern versions of Microsoft Office helps in preparing presentation, writing business letters, sending mail, etc. through Internet makes the administrative work effective. Similarly, cloud storage
plays very significant role to store and protect data of companies. By using Internet Relay Chat (IRT), the organizations arrange virtual meetings, new ideas are shared across members, new products are developed and services are carried out. It is no matter from which region or geographic location they belong, but they are easily connected with each other. Similarly, the research and development works can run smoothly with the help of online libraries. The service sectors enjoy wide range of e-services in different businesses like, IT firms, banking, insurance, trading, travelling, tourism, education, entertainment, restaurant, consultancy, real estate, recruitment, career, research and development, online publications, etc. There are virtual markets of buyers and sellers and online order and delivery of products. The primary purpose is to save time, money, effort and improvement of quality of life.

5 Impact of Internet on Kids, Adolescents and Adults

The Internet is the source of entertainment and learning with fun device for kids to adults. The school-going children and college students use social media for their education, project work and research-related activities. The students of each generation easily get educational application form, online test, online admission, projects through online, online classes, research tools, reading techniques, e-learning etc. educational institutions, colleges and universities spend a large amount of money for digital setup, teaching and reading. Learning of kids, adults, Gen-X, Gen-Y and Boomers all easily access information related to their studies and retrieve and utilize these as and when required. There are specific applications like: Webx, Zoom, Google Meet, etc. which do not need boundaries of institutions. Students can easily learn their lessons related to normal courses, extracurricular activities, technology, science, arts and sports or games, etc. Internet helps in educating pupils according to their needs, helps to enhance their knowledge and develop their skills. The main barrier in the education is lack of information and expenses associated with education. Internet has made the education affordable for students and they can get updated information regarding their studies. They can learn and relearn their lessons through YouTube tutorial videos and other apps. It is also interactive for teachers, students and peers group by using new technique of teaching and learning through animation, colourful slides and images. Similarly, learning through multimedia by different apps like BYJU’s (from pre-kindergarten—class 12), ABC mouse.com (age 2–8), Epic (age 2–12) and many others for kids rather than traditional method of classroom notes, pen–paper or slates create more fun and interest among them. For them, reading is just like a play not a task and they compete with their friends to complete it. Parents can also aware of the performance of their children and conscious for their studies. Internet spreads education across the globe for each generation and every community.
6  Internet Service Providers (ISP) in India During This COVID-19 Lockdown

During this pandemic, almost all the ISPs in India are trying their best possible way to provide unlimited Internet service to their customers and companies. It is also challenging for those as there is heavy competition. In India, Internet Service Provider (ISP) provides broadband speed which is growing during this time.

According to Global Digital Report 2019, total number of Internet users are 4.4 billion that means YouTube users account for 45% world’s entire online population. According to Alexa, YouTube has the second position in the world, just after the Facebook. Users are spending 13 minutes 18 s in a daily basis on this site as of late 2019 with compare to 8 min 41 s in the 2018. Alexa has also declared that each visitor on an average involves in YouTube 6.5-page views. The following data table shows about the monthly active users in the social platform which was released on January 2019:

| Social platforms | Active users (in millions) |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| Facebook         | 2271                      |
| YouTube          | 1900                      |
| WhatsApp         | 1500                      |
| FB Messenger     | 1300                      |
| Instagram        | 1000                      |
| Tiktok           | 500                       |
| Twitter          | 326                       |
| LinkedIn         | 303                       |
| Skype            | 300                       |
| Snapchat         | 207                       |

7  Objective and Methodology of Primary Data Collection

We wanted to study, taking a large sample, as part of this research objective, the ‘digital consumption pattern and diversity’ of Internet users. The specific research objective is to understand ‘role of different demographic attributes’ with ‘Internet use pattern’ of different categories of users.

For this, anybody using Internet, by any computing device, including smart phones, formed the target population for this study. We limited the primary data collection to states of Eastern India, particularly Odisha and its neighbouring states. A convenience sampling approach was adopted and a structured questionnaire was canvassed, by both physical and online survey, guided and administered by specially
trained investigators, for this research project. We circulated around 1400 printed questionnaires and sent soft copies to over 400 contacts, from different categories of Internet users, from different age groups.

Finally, (a little over) 1030 printed questionnaires and 320 online questionnaires were received, duly filled in. So, for our statistical analysis of primary data, the sample size is 1350. After filtering, editing and data validation, descriptive statistical data analysis was carried out by using SPSS (version 24).

8 Data Analysis

The following tables first give a summary statistics of ‘uses-profile’ of respondents and their response to relevant key questions, as applicable to the specific objective of this research paper. Table 1 and Fig. 1 give statistics about usual mode of connecting to Internet, highest being ‘through personal mobile data’, with 96% of sample responses. WiFi (which includes both at own homes and/or office connections) is also used in high frequency (with 42% respondents using it).

Next, we studied the purpose, why and how Internet is used (by our target population, represented by a sample of 1350 respondents). As respondents had the ‘multiple-choice’ option in questionnaire, we have (as shown in Table 2 and also in Fig. 2) many ‘purpose’ with very high percentage of use, exceeding 70% of cases. Most common use (or purpose of using Internet) is found to be ‘communication’ and ‘entertainment’ purposes (with 95% and 91%, respectively).

| Connection source          | f (no.) | %  |
|----------------------------|---------|----|
| Personal mobile data       | 1301    | 0.96|
| Broadband connection       | 260     | 0.19|
| Shared WiFi                | 565     | 0.42|
| Public WiFi                | 247     | 0.18|

Percentages are calculated by diving respective frequencies by 1350, the sample size.
Table 2  Purpose of use of Internet

| Purpose of use                  | f (no.) | %    |
|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Entertainment_a                | 1229    | 0.91 |
| Communication_b                | 1289    | 0.95 |
| Video_c                        | 535     | 0.4  |
| Education_d                    | 846     | 0.63 |
| Work and research_e            | 990     | 0.73 |
| Personal finance_f             | 505     | 0.37 |
| Current events_g               | 907     | 0.67 |
| Online booking_h               | 758     | 0.56 |
| Online shopping_i              | 1028    | 0.76 |
| Video-audio download_j         | 849     | 0.63 |

Percentages are calculated by diving respective frequencies by 1350, the sample size.

Fig. 2  Purpose of use of Internet

We asked respondents, to know if they ‘felt necessity of recharging net-pack’ same day, when day-limit got exhausted/exceeded. Majority response to this question, as shown in Fig. 3, was ‘3-less important’, while there were cases/sections of users who felt it (recharging) ‘1. very important’ and ‘2. important’. What we understand from this observation, whenever there is a ‘need’, users would not mind ‘recharging the net-pack’ again same day.

We had checked first, if users (our respondents) exceeded daily data limit, and how often they experienced this. As shown in Fig. 4, many people/respondents exceeded ‘sometimes’ (coded as 3). Next, to understand, how deeply/intensely users use Internet, we tried to check it by asking following two questions:

– Do you feel like checking messages/mails, even late at night? (Fig. 5)
– Do you sometimes forget ‘pending urgent work’, while using Internet ‘intensely’? (Fig. 6).
It is interesting to observe (as shown in respective figures) that there are plenty of such examples, where people (represented by the respondents of our sample) ‘sometimes’ check messages late at night and also have forgotten (sometimes) ‘important work’.

As part of our exploratory study, we had asked for opinion on ‘availability in plenty’ of ‘adult contents’ in Internet, these days, and if it would badly affect ‘social life/relation’ of ‘individuals’. It was intentionally an indirect question, asking their
opinion about ‘use by other individuals, like members of their family’. Majority respondents confirmed with their response, as ‘1. Strongly agree’, ‘2. Agree’, saying, ‘yes, it will disturb social/family relation’ (Fig. 7).
9 Bi-variate Analysis

We have studied ‘statistical significance’ of possible association/dependence of a few inter-related factors, by using Pearson Chi-square tests.

**Hypothesis 1** People can watch (Internet) videos, while doing their (other) routine jobs, irrespective of age groups.

Table 3 gives the bi-variate table, showing ‘very high frequency’ of such ‘multi-tasking’, only for ‘young and adults’, within age group of 18–40 years. (Young) ‘Age’ has ‘significant’ relation/association with the other attribute (of watching and working, together), as shown in Table 4.

**Hypothesis 2** (H02): ‘Gender’ has no-role/association with ‘Internet-induced forgetfulness’.

Cross-tabulation was done to check (data in Table 5), if there is any ‘significant relation’ between ‘gender’ and ‘Internet-induced forgetfulness’. People are often found to be highly engrossed in the fascinating world of Internet and some times

| Age_2 | 1. Usually | 2. Sometimes | 3. Never | Total |
|-------|------------|--------------|----------|-------|
| <18   | 35         | 61           | 17       | 113   |
| 18–40 | 407        | 572          | 91       | 1071  |
| 41–60 | 26         | 56           | 31       | 113   |
| >60   | 15         | 24           | 6        | 45    |
| Total | 483        | 713          | 145      | 1342  |
Table 4  Chi-square values

|                        | Value | df | Significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------|-------|----|------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-square     | 44.275| 9  | 0.000                  |
| Likelihood ratio       | 36.750| 9  | 0.000                  |
| Linear-by-linear       | 4.639 | 1  | 0.031                  |
| association            |       |    |                        |
| N of valid cases       | 1342  |    |                        |

Table 5  Cross-tabulation: Gender versus ‘forgot my work, while doing Internet’

| Forgot_work_26        | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very often | Total |
|-----------------------|-------|--------|-----------|-------|------------|-------|
| Gender_3              |       |        |           |       |            |       |
| Male                  | 182   | 201    | 258       | 37    | 17         | 695   |
| Female                | 189   | 155    | 245       | 42    | 24         | 655   |
| Total                 | 371   | 356    | 503       | 79    | 41         | 1350  |

Chi-square = 6.65; p = 0.156; not significant

forget their important work. Does this happen equally with male and female? Has gender anything to do with this ‘forgetfulness’? Though we wanted to test it statistically, as per available data, it could not be found/established to be significant, as ‘p’ value exceeded 0.05.

**Hypothesis 3**  Gender has a role/association with SM-time spent.

Following bi-variate table (Table 6) gives data on frequency of use of social media (SM) sites/applications by both male and female categories. As the data show, and as the significance (Chi-square) test verifies, ‘time spent on social media (SM) sites/applications’ is not associated with ‘gender’, as per sample data.

**Hypothesis 4**  ‘Profession’ of user has an association/relation with ‘watching-while-working’ attribute of Internet users.

To test above hypothesis, bi-variate table was generated (as presented in Table 7), linking the said two attributes of Internet users (‘profession’ and ‘watching-while-working’). As shown in next Chi-square table (Table 8), it is found to be statistically significant.

Table 6  Cross-tabulation: Gender versus ‘time spent of social media/SNS’

| Gender_3 | Time spent social networking sites | Total |
|----------|-----------------------------------|-------|
|          | Frequently | Sometimes | Once/day | Rarely |       |
| Male     | 172        | 342       | 130      | 54     | 698   |
| Female   | 176        | 295       | 124      | 55     | 650   |
| Total    | 348        | 637       | 254      | 109    | 1348  |

Pearson Chi-square = 1.958; p = 0.581; not significant
**Table 7** Cross-tabulation: Profession versus ‘watch-while-working’

| Profession      | 1. Usually | 2. sometimes | 3. Never | Total |
|-----------------|------------|--------------|----------|-------|
| 1. Student      | 364        | 521          | 82       | 968   |
| 2. Service      | 57         | 107          | 30       | 194   |
| 3. Home maker   | 18         | 17           | 11       | 46    |
| 4. Business     | 28         | 44           | 19       | 91    |
| 5. Others       | 16         | 23           | 3        | 42    |
| Total           | 483        | 712          | 145      | 1341  |

**Table 8** Chi-square values (for data as given in Table 7):

|                          | Value   | df  | Significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------------|---------|-----|------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-square       | 32.361  | 12  | 0.001                  |
| Likelihood ratio         | 29.365  | 12  | 0.003                  |
| Linear-by-linear association | 6.408  | 1   | 0.011                  |
| No. of valid cases       | 1341    |     |                        |

**Hypothesis 5** Social media helps significantly countering the ‘isolation’ of senior citizens.

It is now seen in society that retired/senior citizens isolated, even within the family they live with. It is both social and psychological isolation. To cover this important issue, we had two specific questions: 1. If people feel and are aware that senior citizens ‘feel isolated’, and 2. If Internet-based social media (SM) engagements help senior citizens countering such ‘isolation’. Table 9 gives the bi-variate data, while Table 10 gives the result of Pearson Chi-square test. As shown in Table 9, there exists a significant relationship between the two attributes. Internet is a boon for the senior citizens, fighting ‘social isolation’.

**Table 9** Cross-tabulation: ‘Isolated senior citizens’ versus ‘social media usefulness’

| Lonely_Seniors | Social media helps emotional support | Total |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
|                | 1. No/NA                            | 2. Disagree | 3. Agree | 4. Strongly agree |  |
| 1. No/NA       | 74                                  | 20       | 93       | 27             |
| 2. Disagree    | 23                                  | 46       | 77       | 30             |
| 3. Agree       | 93                                  | 67       | 373      | 70             |
| 4. Strongly agree | 71                  | 44       | 168      | 73             |
| Total          | 261                                 | 177      | 711      | 200            | 1349 |
Table 10  Chi-square values (for data as given in Table 9)

|                         | Value   | df | Significance (2-sided) |
|-------------------------|---------|----|------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-square      | 92.209a | 9  | 0.000                  |
| Likelihood ratio        | 82.827  | 9  | 0.000                  |
| Linear-by-linear        | 15.751  | 1  | 0.000                  |
| association             |         |    |                        |
| No. of valid cases      | 1349    |    |                        |

10 Conclusion

During the COVID-19, many people used Internet for a much longer duration, for the purpose of entertainment, shopping and chatting and communicating with their near and dear ones, along with their routine jobs. This pandemic has forced the people to stay at home in the past few weeks and it is very difficult particularly for the kids, school and college going young generations. ‘Digital consumption’, particularly during this COVID-19 lockdown period, has been seen as a ‘catalyst’ for digital world. Digital and social media (DSM) were viewed differently and used differently, often converting it as an ‘enabler’ and ‘medium’ of official communications and e-learning requirements of concerned users.

The education of kids and young adults is done now by using different DSM platform and the ‘e-learning’ is now considered as the ‘new normal’. Users are also engaged in online playing, shopping, banking, health purpose and also for self-learning. As we find from our survey research, many (Internet) users are finding Internet-based social media as very part of their daily life. They go to bed and again wake-up with Internet, they often sleep with (Internet) connected devices. It is now ‘most common’ to find ‘multi-window’, ‘multi-tasking’ new-generation netizens, who are fortunately ‘concerned’ about senior citizen’s ‘isolation’ and also take a ‘mature view’ of adult contents available in Internet.

Long live Internet!

Acknowledgements  This paper is part of the ICSSR–IMPRESS funded research project of author. The author acknowledges the support and contribution of Prof. SC Das, Ms Sonalimayee Sahu and Ms Vandana Pattnaik.

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