

Changing Paradigms of Socio - Political Participation Impact of Internet and Mobile Phones on Youth in Anantnag, J&K

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Abstract

The mobile Internet has become one of the most important technologies in the last decade. It has become a decisive force for socio political participation throughout the world. The communication technology has helped to change the world into a proverbial 'global village'. There is a paradigm shift in utilizing the communication technology among people especially youth as they are becoming more and more active participants in the process of communication rather than being passive audience of mass media messages. The present paper includes the results of a research carried out to analyze the accessibility, usage patterns and socio political implications of Mobile phones and Internet among youth in District Anantnag of J&K state. The paper illustrates the changing patterns of political participation and extent of media penetration in the lives of people more specifically among youth of Anantnag.

Keywords: Mobile Phone, Internet, Youth, Social Networking

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INTRODUCTION

Communication technology is a set of activities which facilitates electronic means for the processing, transmission and display of information (Cairncross, 1998). Media penetration in India has seen enormous progress in the recent years with advancements in technology and coverage, catering to a wide range of media audience in terms of language, region, religion and content. A robust economic growth, growing literate population and consumer spending power have contributed to an expanding consumer base of various forms of mass media – newspapers, radio and television. The new media such as the Internet and mobile phones have also made significant inroads since the early 2000s. Internet has integrated services of email, instant messaging, file transfer, and, most prominently, the interlinked pages of the Web. The Internet has fast become a key instrument for the exercise of the right to freedom of expression especially in a democratic setup like India. It combines within one medium both the right to receive as well as the right to express and disseminate information, ideas and opinions, be it in the form of writing, audio or video.

As a vehicle for expression, the Internet serves various functions. It is simultaneously a publishing tool and a communications tool, allowing millions around the world to communicate instantaneously cost effectively. It brings the ability to broadcast to an audience of millions within the reach of everyone who has access to a computer and a telephone line; it serves as a huge

multi-media library and therefore emerged as an important educational tool, with universities offering courses over the Internet. Governments use it to make information available and even public health services have gone online to provide self help information. Increasingly, traditional media such as newspapers and radio stations are also going 'online', thus enriching Internet content, providing a bridge between the 'paper-world' and 'cyber world' and ensuring world wide access to local papers. In addition, the Internet has developed an important entertainment function, providing for example online movies, games or music events. It has also developed a crucial commercial function, with more and more businesses trading over the Internet, selling everything from computers to holidays to flowers.

Internet emerged in India in 1996. India has the world's second- largest mobile phone user base with over 1026.66 million users as of February 2016. It has the world's second largest Internet user-base with over 460.21million as of July 1 2016. The number of broadband connections in India has seen a continuous growth since the beginning of 2006. At the end of February 2016, total broadband connections in the country have reached 131.49. Broadband in India is more expensive as compared to 'Western Europe'/ 'United Kingdom' and 'United States'. India is the 10th largest country in the world in terms of broadband Internet users in 2014. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been experiencing a steady increase in the number of internet users. The figure for March 2015 was 3.34 million and by the end of June it reached 3.53 million. The total number of mobile subscribers in J & K reached 9.6 million in June 2015. (TRAI June 2016)

The introduction of mobile phones has revolutionized the ideologies of people regarding mass media. Mobile phones introduce a range of new possibilities for the use and production of media, as well as for personal networking and communication, political activism, and economic development. This has made the global village concepts more strong and authenticated. The recent mobile appliances have reduced the human effort in each and every sector of life. The mobile phones have totally changed the concepts of social relationships. The availability of Internet in mobile phones has made it more spicy and interesting. Mobile Internet is considerably more accessible to the people than computer-based Internet access, and they are choosing to use the Internet primarily for mobile instant messaging and other characteristic forms of mobile media use. People can now chat and share their ideas, thoughts, beliefs etc on their mobile phones.

Mobiles and Internet in Kashmir

Mobile phones have made their entry very recently in the state of Jammu & Kashmir. However, in a short span of less than one decade, this technology has revolutionized the whole media scene of the state. Contrary to other forms of communication, this media device has made its entry to everyone's home irrespective of their economic, social, and family status.

Anantnag is one among the beautiful locations of J&K and being a part of the conflict region, media technology also faced big challenges and in the first decade of 21st century had no access to the new media technologies like Internet, mobile phones, and the satellite networks. Fortunately the recent developments in the circumstances of the area have invited the attention of various

media industries like Airtel, Aircel, Vodafone, Reliance etc to start mobile services in the region. In a very short span of time the network providers have reached almost every nook and corner of the area. The introduction of mobile Internet has made it more popular in the study area and the advent of the social networking sites has added one more category to the basic needs of human beings that is the networking need.

OBJECTIVES

- To evaluate the accessibility and usage patterns of mobile phone and internet among the youth in Anantnag, J & K
- To study the socio political implications of mobile phone and Internet
- To consider media penetration in the lives of the youth in Anantnag
- To explore the changing pattern of political participation

METHODOLOGY

The empirical evidence for the current paper is primarily gathered by employing triangulation method. Here both qualitative as well as quantitative methods have been employed for data collection keeping the diverse objectives of the study in consideration. The basic methodology, which the researcher adopted, is the Survey method. A structured questionnaire has been used for the purpose of collection of data. Wherever the situation demanded in the case of illiterate respondents, questionnaire was converted into interview schedule. The questionnaire contained both open ended as well as close ended questions to get a varied range of responses. The questionnaires were personally administered to the respondents by the researcher. For the accomplishment of objectives of the study, Kashmiri youth (15-30 yrs of age) residing within the geographical limits of Anantnag district were selected through stratified sampling employed by followed by random sampling. The total sample size is 300 youth selected from the six tehsils of the district.

FINDINGS

Media have a vital place in the lives of people in Anantnag. Besides the gap in media exposure among Media rich and media poor (urban and rural), Media has made its entry in everyone's life. The introduction of the mobile phone technology and mobile Internet has changed the media preferences of the people in general and that of the young generation in particular.

Table 1 Mobile Phone Penetration

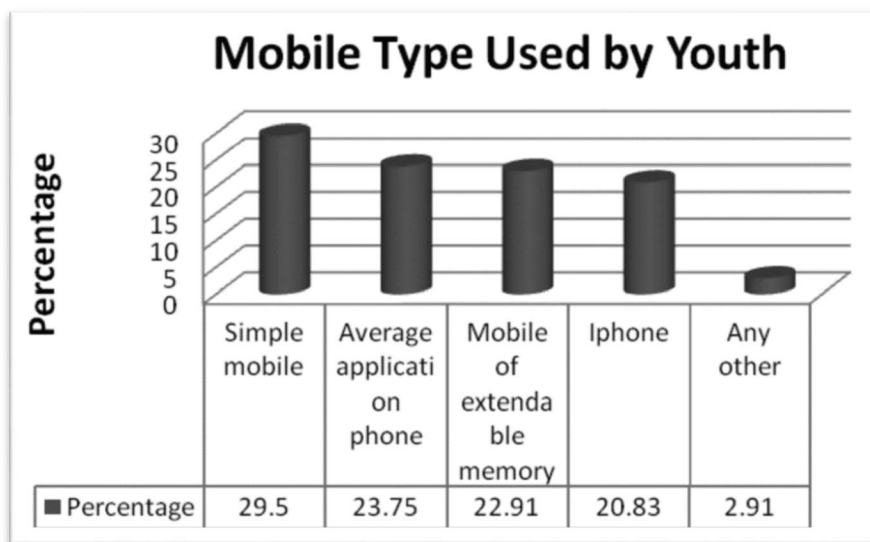
Sl.No.	Respos e	f	%
1	Yes	240	80
2	No	60	20
	Total	300	100

Anantnag seems no exception to the modern communication technology as the study reveals that 80% of the respondents possess their own mobile phones while as the rest 20% don't have mobiles. During the research it was found economic condition is a big hindrance in purchasing a mobile hand set. In addition to this conservative social structure keeps a good portion of the youth especially girls away from this technology.

Mobile Phone Type Preferences

Different mobile companies like Nokia, Samsung and Sony Ericson are trying their markets in the study area which provide a varied range of mobile phones according to the needs and desires of the customers ranging from simple handset to a multipurpose Iphone. In addition to these, Chinese phones also attract a good number of customers because of their cheap rates. Furthermore, the sample for this study has been selected from a mixed economy which is in turn responsible for the varied range of mobile phone preferences among the youth of this area.

Graph 1



Note: Only 240 respondents are considered out of 300 as the rest 60 respondents don't possess mobile phones

The study reveals that majority of the youth possess simple mobile phones as is evident from the tabulated data that 30% of the respondents possess simple mobile phones. Moreover, the collected data reveals that 24% of the respondents possess mobile phones of average range, 23% possess mobiles of extendable memory, 21% of the respondents have got Iphone, while as the 3% possess mobiles of different qualities.

Time Spent on Mobile Phone per Day

The study has revealed that mobile phones consume good amount of time of the youth in this area, as is evident from the tabulated data that 52% of the respondents spend more than two hours of their time on mobile phones which is the real indication of mobile phone penetration in the lives of youth. The study further reveals that 21% of the respondents remain busy with their mobile phones for about two hours. However, 15% of the respondents consume up to one hour on mobile phones, and the rest 12% spend less than 30 minutes in using mobile phones.

Graph – 2

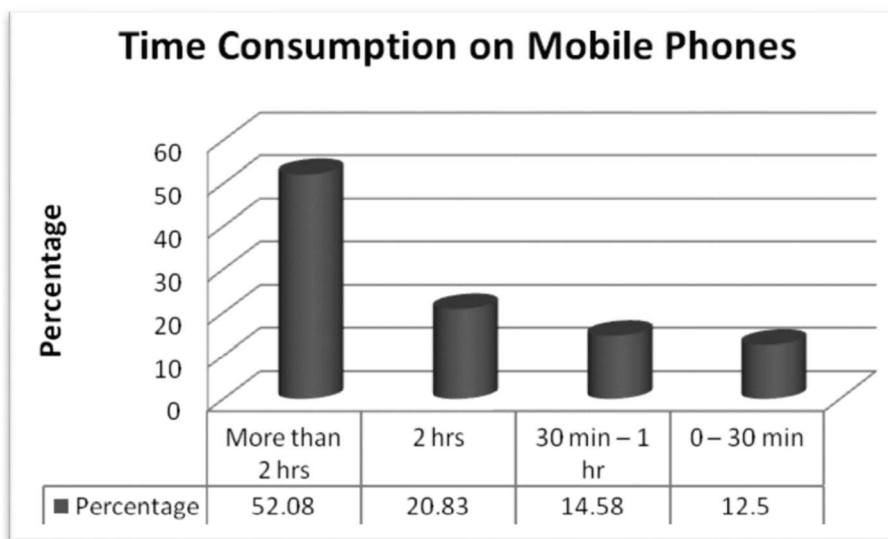


Table 2: Purpose of Using Mobile Phone

Sl No.	Purpose	f	%
1	Talk with friends & relatives	70	29.16
2	Social networking	60	25
3	Listen music & watch videos	45	18.75
4	Use educational applications	25	10.41
5	All the above features	40	16.66
	Total	240	100

Note: Only 240 respondents are considered out of 300 as the rest 60 respondents don't possess mobile phones

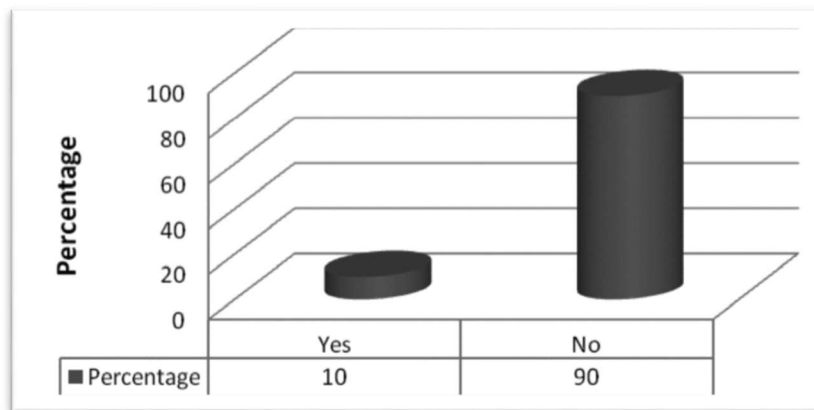
As the sample selected for the present study comprises of youth belonging to the age group of 15-30 years which is more vibrant and enthusiastic section of the population and plays a greater role in determining the purpose of using mobile phones. The tabulated data has revealed that a good portion 29% of the respondents use this device solely for talking to their friends and relatives; while as 25% of them use it for social networking purposes. The study has further

revealed that 19% of the respondents spend their time for listening music and watching videos on their mobile phones. Moreover, 10% of the respondents take benefits of the educational applications installed in their mobile phones while as 17% of the respondents use all the mentioned categories on their mobiles in order to take maximum benefits.

Broadband Access

The study has revealed that only 10% of the respondents possess broadband connections at their home, while the rest 90% don't have access to the broadband technology at home. The findings clearly show that major section of the population prefers mobile Internet over the Broadband as mobile Internet is easily accessible.

Graph – 3 Broadband Access at Home



Net Access via Mobile Phone

The study has revealed that, majority of the respondents have access to Internet through their mobile phones as is evident from the tabulated data that 67% have access to the Internet via their mobiles, while the rest 33% don't have this facility. The data shows a great development in the extent of Internet access as the figures drawn out of this research are quite higher than the figures collected by the researcher in 2010.

Graph – 4

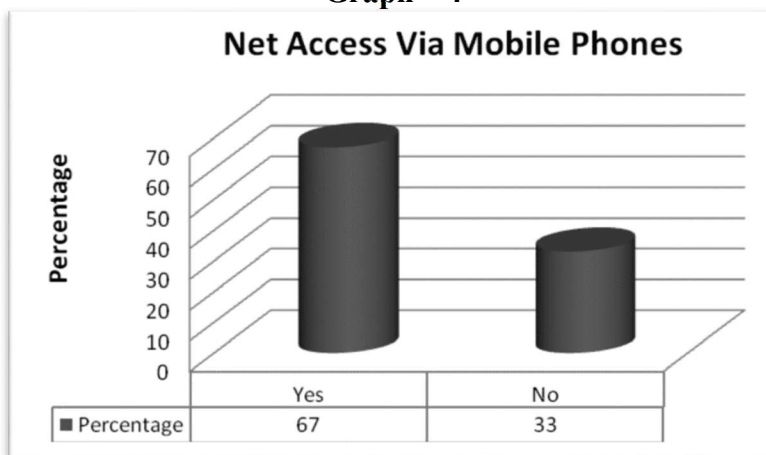


Table 3 Frequency of Internet Browsing

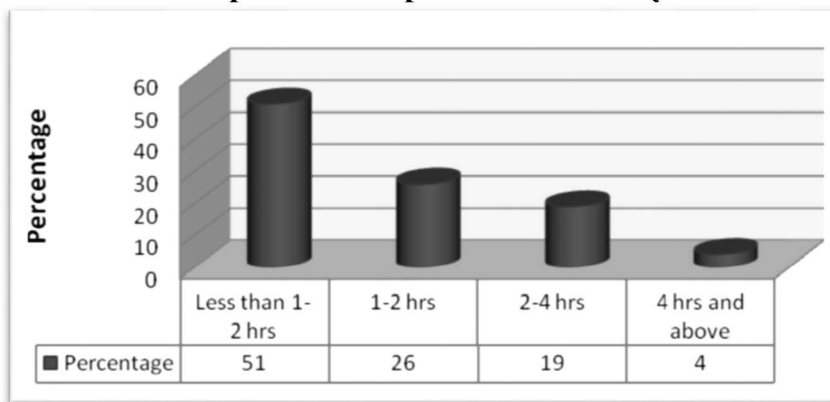
Sl No.	Response	f	%
1	Yes	204	68
If yes	Daily	80	39.21
	Occasionally	87	42.64
	Sometimes	37	18.13
2	No	96	32
	Total	300	100

The research has revealed that that majority of the respondents 68% browse Internet for one or the other purposes while as the rest 32% don't browse Internet at all. The study has further revealed that among the Internet browsing respondents 39.21% of them browse it on daily basis, 18% browse it sometimes and the rest 43% browse net on occasional basis.

Time spent on Internet

Keeping in view the cost factor of Internet using either via mobile or broadband service, majority of the youth of this area prefer to use Internet only for a limited duration as is evident from the tabulated data. A substantial portion 50% of the respondents uses Internet only for half an hour daily. The study has further revealed that only 4% of the respondents are the heavy users of the Internet. However, 26% of the respondents spend 1-2 hours of their time on Internet and the rest 19% use 2-4 hours of their time on Internet.

Graph -5 Time Spent on Internet by Youth



Purpose of Browsing Internet

It is evident from the research that a good portion of youth of the study area use Internet for social networking. This argument is supported by the data which reveals that 46% of the respondents prefer social networking on their mobile phones. The study has further revealed that 19% of the respondents use Internet for information, 14% for education, and 12% use Internet for entertainment. Moreover, 9% of the respondents use Internet for information, education and entertainment.

Table 4 Purpose of Internet Browsing

Sl. No.	Purpose	f	%
1	Education	28	13.72
2	Information	39	19.11
3	Entertainment	24	11.76
4	Networking	94	46.07
5	All of above	19	9.31
	Total	204	100

Social Media Network Preferences of Youth

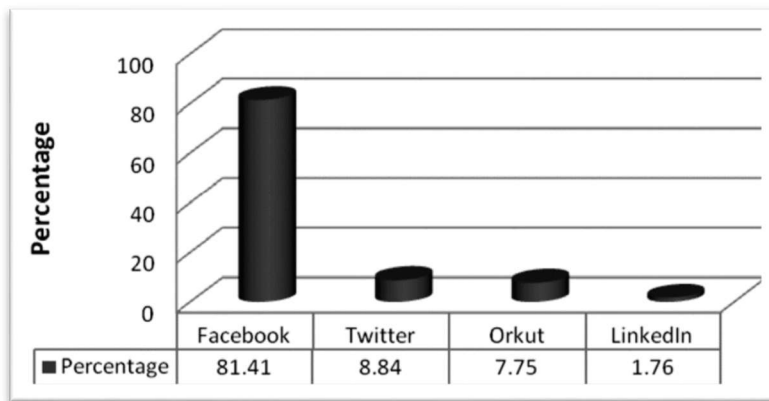
Table 5 Social Media Preferences

Sl No.	Preference	f	%
1	Facebook	92	81.41
2	Twitter	10	8.84
3	Orkut	9	7.96
4	LinkedIn	2	1.76
5	Any other	0	0
	Total	113	100%

Note: Only 113 respondents are considered out of 204 as the rest don't use social networking sites

The study has revealed that Facebook enjoys tremendous popularity among youth in the study area. This is evident from the collected data that 81% of the respondents, among social networking users, use facebook for networking purposes. Furthermore, it was found that facebook is not a choice of educated youth only however, uneducated youth also utilize it according to their needs and interests. The study further reveals that twitter follows facebook by attracting 9% of the respondents which in turn is followed by Orkut having 8% of the respondents on its side. LinkedIn shares the least 2% of the respondents. It is evident that facebook is more popular among the youth and a negligible percentage of them are aware of the other social networking sites.

Graph – 6 Social Networking preference by Youth



Purpose of using SNS

The study has revealed that youth in Anantnag use social networking sites for various purposes ranging from chatting to image/video uploading. This is evident from the tabulated data that 33% of the respondents use SNS for posting current events and happenings, 32% upload images/ videos on these sites while 28% of the respondents keep themselves busy in chatting whereas 7% takes benefit of all the mentioned features of social networking.

Graph – 7 Purpose of Using SMS by Youth

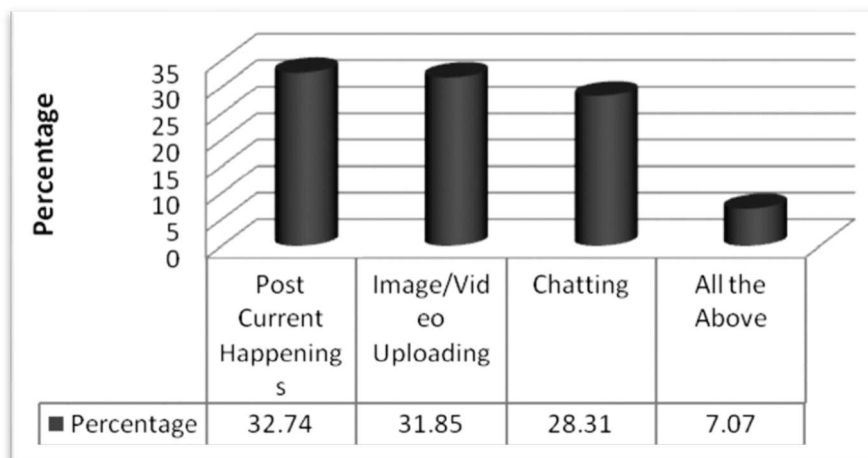


Table-6 Did Social Networking Changed Life of Youth?

Sl No.	Response	f	%
1	Yes	102	90.26
2	No	11	9.37
	Total	113	100

Note: only 113 respondents are considered out of 204 as the rest don't use social networking sites

Social networking has penetrated the lives of major portion of the population in Anantnag. As it is evident from that most of the respondents 90% felt changes in their lives due to social networking in one or the other Main Outcome of Social Networking Some years ago people of this area were restricted only to their homes and their social circle was confined to their relatives and the community. But due to advancements in the media technology people have found opportunities to widen their social sphere. The present research supports this argument as majority of the respondents 73% believe that social networking widens the social sphere of the people especially youth.

Table 7 Main Outcome of Social Networking Sites

Sl. No.	Outcome	f	%
1	Widens social sphere	82	72.56
2	Leads to good governance	17	15.04
3	Leads to social disorder & disturbances	6	5.3
4	Revenue generation	8	7.07
	Total	113	100

Note: only 113 respondents are considered out of 204 as the rest don't use social networking sites.

Furthermore, it was found that social networking leads to good governance as is evident from the tabulated data that 15% of the respondents believe that social networking leads to good governance of a region. Moreover, 7% of the respondents treat it as a source of revenue generation while as for the rest 5% says it causes social disorder and disturbances.

Social Networking and Media Democracy

Social networking has changed the media scenario throughout the world and is treated as the most preferred medium of communication. It was found that social networking has penetrated in the lives of the inhabitants of Anantnag and has changed the perception of people regarding mass communication. The study has further revealed that majority of the respondents 78% feel that social networking has a great role in media democracy while 22% do not think so.

Table 8 Does Social media supports Media Democracy?

S No.	Response	f	%
1	Yes	88	77.87
2	No	25	22.12
	Total	113	100

Note: only 113 respondents are considered out of 204 as the rest don't use social networking sites

Youth and Restrictions on Social Networking Access

Being a part of the conflict region, social networking in Anantnag faces timely curbs from the authorities because of law and order problems. This is the reason why most of the youth cannot use social networking sites as freely as it is used in the other parts of the world. This argument is supported by the tabulated data which reveals that more than 83% of the respondents feel that they have been denied the freedom of social networking.

Table 9 Freedom to Enjoy Social Networking

SI No.	Response	f	%
1	Yes	19	16.81
2	No	94	83.18
	Total	113	100

Note: only 113 respondents are considered out of 204 as the rest don't use social networking sites

Impact of the Political Unrest on Technological Opportunities

Due to the political turmoil in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, its media technology faced a number of hurdles to grow as stable institutions. People were unaware of the various forms of media except the traditional ones. Satellite TV, Internet, and mobile phones remained a dream for a long period of time. The present study reveals that majority of youth 78% in Anantnag believes that the political unrest has affected the opportunities of media technology for them to a great extent, while 14% of them are unaware about the relationship of political unrest and media technology.

Table 10 Relation between Political Unrest and Technological Opportunities

SI No.	Response	f	%
1	Yes	160	78.43
2	No	16	7.84
3	Don't know	28	13.72
	Total	204	100

Mobile Phones vis-à-vis Traditional Media

Internet and mobile phones have changed the media scene in the world. It has met the information and communication needs of the people throughout the world in general and India in particular. The introduction of mobile technology in Kashmir has revolutionized the media scene and usage patterns among people especially youth. Being a part of Kashmir, media in Anantnag has also developed to a large extent and is enjoying a good standard. The researcher found that majority of the respondents 63% rate mobile phones as an excellent means of communication as compared to the other forms of media. Furthermore, the research has revealed that 20% of the respondents feel mobile phones equally good as the other media forms while 5% treat mobile phone as a poor

medium of communication.

Table 11 Rating of Mobile Phones against Traditional Media

Sl No.	Response	Number	Frequency
1	Excellent	190	63.33
2	Equally good	60	20
3	Not so good	35	11.66
4	Poor	15	5
5	Any other	0	0
	Total	300	100

Youth Rating of Good Medium

Since the introduction of the mobile technology in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, people are more and more attracted towards this medium of communication because of various reasons. Each and every life matter is now determined by this very technology due to its multipurpose nature. The inbuilt networking applications have given a better edge to this media technology. This argument is supported by the collected data which reveals that 46% of the respondents treat mobile phones as the best medium of communication. This clearly indicates that mobile phones are very popular among the youth belonging to the age group of 15-30 years.

Table 12 Youth Preferences of Media

Sl No.	Response	f	%
1	Print	36	12
2	Radio	33	11
3	TV	63	21
4	Internet	30	10
5	Mobile phone	138	46
	Total	300	100

The study has further revealed that 21% of the respondents rate TV as their medium of interest, 12% like newspapers, 11% treat radio as the best medium for them while 10% prefer Internet as a good medium. Obviously mobile phone is the preference of majority of youth.

CONCLUSION

Internet has found ways to reach every section of the society and has directly influenced the life affairs of youth in one or the other way. Moreover the developments in the circumstances of the study area are inviting more and more media industries to invest. A decade earlier, the inhabitants of Anantnag were unaware of the media gadgets which were, on the other hand, much famous in other parts of the world. The introduction of mobile phones has proven beneficial to the young

generation of Anantnag. These developments have revolutionized the media scene of the study area as a whole. The varied range of handsets attract thousands of youth to this modern media technology. More than 50% of the respondents are heavy users of mobile phones which use it for various purposes ranging from talking to social networking. Internet via mobile phone is becoming very famous among the youth of Anantnag as 68% of them browse Internet through their mobile phones.

Networking is the main purpose of browsing Internet on mobile phones and facebook is the most preferred social networking site for this purpose. Youth in Anantnag are now using social networking as a means of protest in case of unfavorable conditions as the study area is a part of conflict region. Social networking has changed the perception of youth regarding mass communication. It resulted in a paradigm shift of youth from being passive receivers to distributors and producers of news. Moreover, the social networking has widened the social sphere of the young generation. It has influenced the ways of human communication and life style with popular culture changing the conventional socio- political culture of the study area. To be more precise social networking has given birth to networking culture. Youth, irrespective of the educational qualification and family background use social networking in order to fulfill their needs and desires. Social networking has a great influence on the culture of the society. Nevertheless youth feel that the present situation in Kashmir is restricting the technological opportunities for its inhabitants to a great extent.

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