

## **An analysis of students' orientation towards information channels**

**R NISHA, R ARUNACHALAM and TR SRIDEVI KRISHNAVENI**

**Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology  
Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore 641003 Tamil Nadu, India  
Email for correspondence: nisharaghavan19@gmail.com**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present paper deals with the students' orientation towards modern approaches in journalism, communication technologies and journalism. The study is an attempt to explore the media usage pattern among the postgraduate students of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. A sample size of 30 students pursuing master's programme under the directorate of Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development Studies was selected by random sampling technique with the prime objective of studying the media usage pattern of students with respect to television, newspaper, internet and other new media channels. Most of the respondents (90.00%) used mobile apps as their prime information channel. Whatsapp was the most popular social medium among little more than two-fifth of the students (43.33%) who preferred it the most among the other social media. Nearly half (46.67%) of the students preferred internet for online TV channels followed by web browsing (30.00%) and online newspaper (23.33%). Among the total respondents more than half (53.33%) of the students preferred English dailies followed by Tamil (40.00%). Exactly half (50.00%) of the students watched TV through home TV followed by mobile app (23.33%).

**Keywords:** Communication; journalism; technology; media; mobile apps; students

### **INTRODUCTION**

Social media has caused the traditional newspapers to get converged with internet. The development of mobile media technology forced the traditional media to adapt itself to new technologies in order to satisfy the new needs of media consumers.

Newspaper which is a static medium became more active when it entered the mobile media with applications. Indian newspaper industry is slated to grow manifold with growth rate circling around 6 per cent. The market share was projected to grow from Rs 56300 crore to Rs 92900 crore by the end of 2013 as per the research done by the Price Cooper ([https://www.academia.edu/3685742/Overview\\_of\\_Print\\_Media\\_Industry](https://www.academia.edu/3685742/Overview_of_Print_Media_Industry)).

Almost all of the English dailies are losing readership at a rate much faster than the rate of their growth including the biggies such as Times of India as has been reported by Indian Readership Survey 2009.

Applications and mobile web sites brought a new distribution form to the newspaper. New communication technologies and internet have changed the structure of journalism in the professional sense Kuyucu (2014). Newspaper first got transferred to computers and then to internet. Internet which changed all media made serious changes to the newspaper market. Social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter as well as web 2.0 applications like blogs and Google have changed the news industry and the journalism practice inside out. They have at present awesome possibilities and at the same time a high risk for errors.

Now a days the students are exposed to diverse media and have also varied preferences with regard to each medium. Journalism is a highly responsible job and at the same time highly interesting too (Bhalla 2010). People looking for a career in journalism should have a presentable and confident personality along with the ability to write and present information accurately and concisely.

Journalism is a real time tool to connect each and every individual with the world. It is also a highly invested sector now a days. Hence the sensitization towards journalism is very much essential. Proper knowledge and planning are required to effectively manage the journalism sector. With this objective this paper attempts to study the media usage pattern among the students of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu which was purposively selected in order to assess the varied utilisation pattern of media among the social science students. The students were utilising various information channels for different purposes in general and for educational and research purposes in particular.

A sample size of 30 students studying master's programmes in extension, economics and agri-business management degree programmes under the Directorate of Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development Studies were selected by random sampling technique. To conduct the research a structured interview schedule was prepared and administered to the respondents. Statistical tools such as frequency and percentage analysis were used for precise and meaningful analysis of the data.

## RESULTS and DISCUSSION

### Overall distribution of the students according to their information channel usage

The findings are shown in Table 1 (Fig 1). From the data it can be observed that most of the respondents (90.00%) used mobile apps as their prime information channel. As most of the student respondents possessed advanced handsets with 4G support and due to the

introduction of unlimited data packs for hassle-free internet connectivity students found it easier to seek information through mobile apps. Sixty per cent of the respondents preferred to seek information through internet connected to digital devices like laptop or desktop etc. Agricultural education system in the university provided higher scope for internet and ICT usage throughout the academic period hence most of the agricultural students pursuing master's degree possessed laptops which might be the reason for considerable proportion of respondents using internet through ICT tools for seeking any information. More than half of the respondents (53.33%) preferred television their prime communication tool. Radio was the least used mass communication tool by the students whereas newspaper was used to certain extent. Majority of the respondents were hostellers who did not have access to radios or transistors. Hostels were provided with televisions with DTH connections which contributed to the hike in proportion of respondents using television as an important information channel.

### Social media usage behaviour

The data given in Table 2 depict that Whatsapp was the most popular social medium among little more than two-fifth of the students (43.33%) who preferred it the most among the other social media. The second position was occupied by Facebook with nearly one-third of the respondents (30.00%) followed by Twitter with one-fifth of the respondents (20.00%). Viber was used by a negligible amount of the respondents (6.67%). Whatsapp was preferred as it was highly personalized than Facebook considering the user-friendly nature and other features such as consuming less data and less power and its compatibility with any handset. It provided many privacy and security options. Also it had multipurpose usage other than what other social media possessed like sharing of messages, photos, videos, graphics interchange format etc. It also supported voice calls and video calls. At the same time

Table 1. Overall distribution of the students according to their information channel usage behaviour

Category	Media									
	Newspaper		Radio		TV		Mobile Apps		Internet	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Low	5	16.67	2	56.67	4	13.34	0	0.00	4	13.33
Medium	12	40.00	11	36.67	10	33.33	3	10.00	8	26.67
High	13	43.33	17	6.67	16	53.33	27	90.00	18	60.00
Total	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100

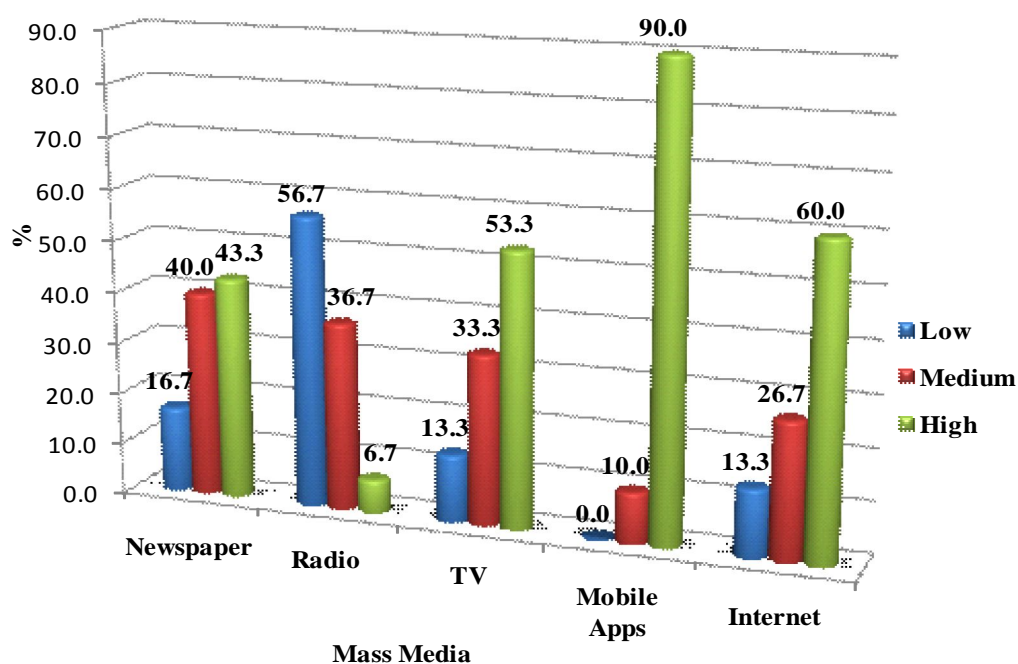


Fig 1. Overall distribution of the students according to their information channel usage behaviour

it also provided facility to update the real time feelings through status option.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to the usage of social media

Preferred dailies	f	%
Facebook	9.00	30.00
Whatsapp	13.00	43.33
Twitter	6.00	20.00
Viber	2.00	6.67
Total	30.00	100.00

#### Online information channel usage behaviour

The data given in Table 3 depict that nearly half (46.67%) of the students preferred internet for online TV channels followed by web browsing (30.00%) and online newspaper (23.33%). Nearly two-third of the respondents (67.00%) were found to be females who were very much interested in TV serials and programmes hence it could be a reason for the highest proportion of respondents to be the viewers of online TV.

Agricultural education system provided higher scope for internet usage for getting latest information, collecting material, preparing assignments, making

references etc. This would have contributed to the next highest proportion of respondents stating that they used online channels for web browsing.

Students were found to have low level of reading behaviour and being in hostels they had limited access to newspapers. Hence this could be a reason to have a minimum proportion of respondents using internet for online newspaper.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to the online information channel usage behaviour

Preferred dailies	f	%
Web browsing	9.00	30.00
Online TV	14.00	46.67
Online newspaper	7.00	23.33
Total	30.00	100.00

#### Students' preferences for dailies

Table 4 infers that among the total respondents more than half (53.33%) of the students preferred English dailies followed by Tamil (40.00%) and other magazines (6.67%) as the respondents were of the opinion that the frequency of technical articles was higher in English as compared to Tamil dailies. They reported that they could improve their language

proficiency by reading English newspapers. They also felt that the accuracy and credibility of the news was higher in the English dailies.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents according to their preference for dailies

Preferred dailies	f	%
Tamil dailies	12.00	40.00
English dailies	16.00	53.33
Other magazines	2.00	6.67
Total	30.00	100.00

### Television watching behaviour

Data given in Table 5 depict that exactly half (50.00%) of the students watched TV through Home TV followed by mobile App (23.33%), home and hostel TV (16.67%) and hostel TV (10.00%). It was found that the students did not prefer much to mingle in a homogenous group. They preferred to watch television at home and through handset the most as they could experience a higher level of freedom and privacy. Nearly one-sixth of the respondents preferred to enjoy their leisure time by watching TV at hostel by accommodating and adjusting with a heterogeneous groups.

Table 5. Distribution of respondents according to television watching behaviour

Channel	f	%
Home TV	15.00	50.00
Hostel TV	3.00	10.00
Home and hostel TV	5.00	16.67
Mobile APP	7.00	23.33
Total	30.00	100.00

## CONCLUSION

Journalists confirmed that they were beginning to leverage on social media to gather stories and have started using news aggregators and subscribing to rich site summary (RSS) feeds and blogs to assist them in their work. Meanwhile news managers and editors surveyed showed that while Facebook and micro-blog Twitter were used for news gathering especially during breaking news stories there was still some hesitation in using social media platforms to distribute content for the fear of losing control of the information.

Journalism is not dead but merely adapting; the journalists of the future need to reinvent themselves meaning that they need to care about where audience are and how they are going to reach those audience whether they are online, in print, broadcast, mobile or social media platforms. But it is hoped by industry practitioners that values will be preserved and upheld as accuracy, proportionality and fairness as time-honored journalistic values are well worth adoption by those conversing through social networks. Useful too would be journalism's emphasis on including a broad range of voices.

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