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Public relations: Scope and Challenges in Digital Era
Majority of the mass media in the present day world, which now appear through the World Wide Web is counted and calculated through algorithms. You are under the invisible surveillance of these programs, which traces your behavior and nomenclature of media consumption and day today uses. You are intelligently studied and monitored for a global market database. What are algorithms? How are they going to change your interactions in a mediated world?

Algorithms are becoming omnipresent in the digitally enhanced online and mobile media. The explosive expansion of the new media catalyzed the growth and development of the algorithm culture in the news desks. They have already started the gate keeping and 'preferred highlighting' of news and information. One need not be a computer programmer to understand and use algorithms. It is simple and straight in keying and providing the preferred words and images to the already programmed and purchased package. It does the work like a robot with artificial intelligence in placing, highlighting, positioning, promoting and even killing out or blackening of the news, information, data or images one want in one's news media webpage or personal blogs. In short it acts as a cruel editor who is mechanical devoid of any human emotions.

Algorithms are automated semantic media structures or languages programmed and prototyped to imitate and scrutinized. Literally it paves the way for a totally mechanical unnatural and inhuman automated journalism in the web. From photo editing to snippet writing, headline crafting to lay out near are the days that algorithms will dictate our media world. It will calculate the text based on quantitative measuring tools. A world of prototypes and artificial intelligence will be created by data intensive media algorithms. Everything can be interpreted, calculated and enumerated in the terms of numerical through algorithms, creating a total information world of quantitative analysis.

Algorithms will regulate, monitor, control and prevent the media sphere through internet. They will enhance certain news stories to pop up frequently and grab the attention of the netizen, where as they can literally kill and make powerless other stories which you don’t like and is against the interest of your organization. Google, Yahoo, Bing, Facebook, Ello, Instagram, YouTube all started using algorithms intelligently. Multinational news corporations like New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Huffington Post, Salon, Slate, Business Insider, Economic Times started using algorithms in promoting and propagating destined news stories with commercial interests.

Algorithms will touch all the information in the knowledge spectrum. It will monitor, analyze, and evaluate all the information in the web which you produce, consume, update, disseminate and kill. It will ignite the speed of knowledge transmission and will challenge the power centers. It will create truths and kill truths. It will distort, manipulate, magnify, minimize, monitor and modify all the information according to the whims and fancies of the master. It will
create virtual reality into mediated reality and vice versa. One day it may rewrite our perceptions in a massive manner. It can make our life easy and worse on the platforms of social and economic interests.

Journalists nowadays are compelled to use algorithms to promote their personal blogs through the home page of the news media in which they are employed. This promotion is often done besides their regular news stories and reporting assignments. Most visited, shared, commented, tagged, downloaded news stories and photographs can be easily traced and positioned with the help of algorithms. This immense power can be used both for the ideological and commercial interests of the news media and the owners. Freedom of the web media is only for those who own it. So as ethical hacking is growing due to this reality of ownership. You can pick up a fight with a new media owner, who buys domains in bundles, provided you are a specialist in programming and algorithmic patterns of his media ownership.

Algorithms can become a double edged sword. It can even alert the web host or the administrator while you are trying to remove/ delete or spam something which you have already uploaded or contributed. This can help the owner to charge you for removing or promotion in the web. It can be a response, comment or an image of your own. In short it will take away your freedom to edit or delete your own contributions. Hence people who control the algorithms will control the content. This was once the job of editorial desk, agenda setters, gatekeepers and human censors. The borderless web world leads to unlimited flourishing and floundering of the journalism based on the quality and also on the number of most priced domains owned.

As algorithm works on artificial intelligence, it does not have any emotions and personalized agenda. It obeys its master’s words for the perfect execution of the command. Algorithms are dehumanized artificial intelligence in the virtual world for perfect surveillance, monitoring and filtering. Therefore algorithms do not have a personal space for delay or bias. This somehow reduces the power structure of the journalists and reporters and will give more and unlimited power to the media managers. In the near future human editors will be replaced by algorithms. Media organizations will only require content creators who can tune in with the algorithmic requirements.

Algorithms can be made powerless by journalists only through studying, analyzing, observing and describing the digitalized patterns / structures of the algorithms used and then intelligently super scribing them with words, phrases and usages which are unfamiliar and which will cross over the selective program agenda and absolute filtering of the algorithms. As it obeys the master’s words perfectly, algorithms will be accountable and transparent in the technical sense. Using algorithms in news dissemination and promotion can be a risky business. Encoding the structure and pattern of algorithms can be easily done by intelligent programmers. Hence they can infiltrate and hack into your media and agenda and can make changes in it. Once Facebook was accused of such a crime and they were compelled to change or remodel their algorithmic pattern.

Algorithms can be used to kill the news diversity and heterogeneous news contents. News media corporates will never reveal about the algorithmic patterns which they prioritize. Hence the choice of the news consumers will be controlled and can be limited without much publicity. On the other hand, algorithms can create a smooth and speedy search of related content and matters on the web, as nowadays we experience the pop up of related similar contents on our search. Yes another platform for homogenized sharing.

This issue of the Journal of Media Watch includes articles from different communication disciplines. This issue is one of the voluminous issues in our seven years of struggle and existence. We have always maintained the fairness, objectivity, representation and balance.
Jan Boehmer and Michael B. Friedman explore one of the interesting areas of media psycho analysis. The article analyzes the dissemination of fear messages using social media during presidential election campaigns. It explores how democrats and republicans scared a nation even during the elections.

Chandra Clark and Shuhua Zhou analyze the anatomy of fake video news releases. The article examines how the ideals and morals of the fourth estate are being compromised in the mad rush of exclusives and breaking news.

Mohd Hamdan bin Adnan makes an inquiry into the public relations practices of the Malaysian government. East Malaysian state of Sabha has been taken as the sample for this interesting research. The article explores how the marginalized get cheated in the organized government public relations and rumor mills.

Darshana Liyanage from Sri Lanka peeps into the grey area of advertising ethics in Sri Lankan ad world and compares it with the trend in north east India. It examines how the giant advertising corporates manipulate race and ethnicities.

Pisapat Youkongpun focuses on the promotion of identity and culture in the rural remote areas of the eastern Thailand. It is an ethnographic action research reflecting the idea of ‘hyperlocal’ media in eastern Thailand. It pictures the grass root level empowerment and affirmative action through mass media.

Radhe Krishan from the Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies focuses his submission on public relations through an upper platform of hyper active social media. The article explores how the social media change the game in the public relations’ practice in the subcontinent.

Jyoti Raghavan introduces the concept of branding unity, communal harmony and patriotism in the public service advertisements in India. It finds that the new nexus is formed by arousing the emotional appeals and lateral communications in the public service advertisings.

Mahendra Kumar Padhy diverts his research skills towards the primary area of grass root level public health communication and advocacy advertising. He writes on fear appeals in the anti-smoking advertisements. It analyzes how the message decoding occurs in the wider media context in the Asian spectrum.

Sudha Venkataswamy argues for the upliftment of one of the most important sectors in our daily social life- primary education. She makes an enquiry into the digital access and inequality among primary school children in rural Coimbatore.

M. Rabindranath and Sujay Kapil analyse the hidden power relations between the scarcity of good drinking water and the Arab springs through social media. This research paper points to a set of new observation on the emerging lower-middle class with high education, self-constructed status, wider world views and global dreams and how it helps them to raise their voice and change the autocratic set up in the Arab world.

Umesh Arya investigates into the discriminatory and predatory practices of the mainstream commercialized news media in creating a complete black out on the union territories of India. It examines how the news media kill the aspirations of a population by supporting vested economic interests. News media’s biased leanings to cater to the regional aspirations and ‘preference to the power center’ are well exposed in this research.

Manish Verma’s article analyzes the path breaking contributions of technology in the field of public relations. Manish interrogates into the spectrum of web -based media tools like blogs, podcasts, online video and social networks and finds that such media tools have opened a platform for voicing corporate social responsibility, publicity and promotions in a holistic manner.
Sharing Fear via Facebook: A Lesson in Political Public Relations

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Our study compared the use of fear messages on Facebook by Barack Obama and Mitt Romney during the 2012 U.S. presidential elections. Results show that written fear messages embedded in photographs posted on Facebook by both candidates affected the degree to which those photographs were shared. More specifically, photographs containing written fear messages were shared more often than photographs not containing written fear messages. Furthermore, while the challenging candidate, Mitt Romney, used more photographs containing fear messages, the increase in shares was consistent across candidates. Implications regarding information distribution within communities, public relations practitioners specializing in political campaigning and society as a whole are discussed.

Keywords: Content analysis, social media, 2012 election, protection, motivation theory

An informed public is essential for a democracy to function, particularly when the citizenry believes that the information they are consuming is accurate. Traditionally, citizens have acquired the information required to make informed decisions about political candidates, current issues and the policies they may support from traditional media (Althaus, 1998; Bartels, 1996). However, today, citizens are increasingly turning to social media (Olmstead, Mitchell, & Rosenstiel, 2011). Americans spend more time on social networks and blogs than on any other type of website (Nielsen, 2012).

The emergence of social networking sites, such as Facebook, has not only allowed the public to encounter and discuss political information in a novel way, but has also made it easier for public relations practitioners, especially those specializing in politics, to circumvent traditional media gatekeepers and disseminate their candidate’s messages directly to the audiences they want to influence. The ability to deliver uncensored messages directly to their desired audiences allows public relations practitioners to spread messages on behalf of their candidates unhindered. One particularly potent public relations strategy is the use of already established communities on Facebook to inspire fear through photographs. This is of particular interest as Facebook can acts as a multiplier by reaching the not only the audience that was already following the candidates, but also their friends that previously remained unreached. A potential consequence of using Facebook to

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disseminate and promote fear messages throughout receivers’ communities is that even more people will vote for the candidate with the most convincing fear message rather than the candidate with the soundest policies.

To better understand the potential effects of this strategy, we analyzed photographs from the Facebook pages of both U.S. presidential candidates, Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, during the 2012 U.S. presidential campaign to determine how photographs containing written fear messages regarding a potential threat from the opposing candidate’s policies were shared on Facebook. The results of the present study have wide ranging implications for theory and practice. The results may help to explain why some messages travel through social networks more widely than others. Furthermore, this study is of high practical value for public relations practitioners seeking effective strategies to spread messages on behalf of their clients and can also be used by communication and political science researchers as a base from which to measure the ability of other campaigns to deliver their messages to potential voters. Results of the present study can also be replicated in other fields such as health communication, advertising, and journalism as they relate to the perceptions and behavior changes due to the distribution of content through social media.

**Theoretical Framework**

When explaining Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) Rogers (1975) asserts that when faced with a fearful message, people will assess the probability that the threat of not acting will have on their lives and therefore try to protect them by taking actions to prevent the potential threat from becoming reality. The principles of PMT have been utilized in various types of campaigns ranging from the environment (Neuwirth, Dunwoody, & Griffin, 2000; Rogers & Prentice-Dunn, 1997) and nuclear disarmament activism (Neuwirth, Dunwoody, & Griffin, 2000; Axelrod & Newton, 1991) to condom use (Neuwirth, Dunwoody, & Griffin, 2000; Tanner, Hunt, & Eppright, 1991; Eppright, Tanner, & Hunt, 1994) and physical exercise (Neuwirth, Dunwoody, & Griffin, 2000; Stanley & Maddux, 1986; Fruin, Pratt, & Owen, 1992), as well as computer and Internet security (Anderson & Agarwal, 2010). Typically, messages following PMT not only portray a particular threat, but also a particular way of action that the receiver could take in order to prevent the threat. Floyd, Prentice-Dunn, and Rogers (2000) conclude that facilitating PMT is an effective strategy because of its ability to arouse and direct the receiver of a message toward a particular activity.

This makes the strategic use of PMT very appealing for public relations practitioners. They can employ PMT to effectively direct attention toward a particular topic while at the same time suggesting to the message receiver what he or she needs to do in order to intervene and prevent the perceived threat from becoming reality. In the context of the present study, the ability to create a message fearful enough to arouse an individual to share it with their own Facebook communities is key for public relations practitioners who are looking for assistance from other interested parties in spreading messages for their political candidate clients. However, while it has long been recognized that political campaigns are designed to prey on voters’ emotions (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1965), researchers have only recently found support for the notion that fear messages affect behaviors. Cueing fear does not only facilitate persuasion (Brader, 2005), but “fear-inducing charges made by a credible
source also reduce the attacked candidate’s actual vote count” (Calantone & Warshaw, 1985, p. 627). In a meta-analytic review of negative political campaigns, which often include fear appeals, Lau, Sigelman and Brown Rovner (2007) found that, despite some inconsistencies, in more than two out of every three studies on this topic, a decline in affect for the target candidate of a negative campaign occurred. Furthermore, negative campaigns have been found “to be more memorable and stimulative of knowledge about the campaign” (Lau, Sigelman, & Rovner, 2007, p. 1176). However, Lloyd (2008) concluded that political brands’ use of negative campaigning and fear appeals generally offers only short-term gains.

Fear Messages, Photographs and Social Media

Despite the wide-ranging uses of PMT and the broad adoption of social networking sites among both the public and the political realm, researchers have yet to investigate how fear messages might be used by political campaigns on social networking sites such as Facebook. This is especially true when it comes to written fear messages within photographs. Generally, individuals believe that the events portrayed in a photograph are an accurate representation of reality (Brosius, Donsbach, & Birk, 1996) and this belief allows them to imagine that they, on some level, are experiencing the event occurring in the picture (Harriman & Lucaites, 2002). If the stimuli (e.g., photographs) are emotional enough, the message recipient may feel compelled to take all possible steps to alleviate the fear from becoming a reality. In this case one step would be to share the message with their communities or people they associate with in an effort to convince them to vote for their preferred candidate.

The likelihood of this occurring is greater when the power of text is combined with images. According to Hallahan (1999) the combination of words and photographs helps make a complicated idea easier to understand. This combination also makes it easier to remember the words associated with the pictures (Kulhavy et al., 1993), which in this case is the threat. Therefore, including a written fear message within a photograph is a more powerful tool in terms of inducing fear, and may be more successful in encouraging message recipients to share the threatening message.

Hypothesis

H1: Photographs from both Barak Obama and Mitt Romney’s Facebook pages that contain written fear messages will be shared more often than photographs from both Barak Obama and Mitt Romney’s Facebook pages without written fear messages.

Definitions

Generally speaking, “fear is a negatively valenced emotion, accompanied by a high level of arousal, and is elicited by a threat that is perceived to be significant and personally relevant” (Witte 1992; Easterling & Leventhal, 1989; Lang, 1984; Ortony & Turner, 1990). Threats can include the impeding danger of actual harm to our general lifestyles and freedoms (Cialdini, 2001). In this study, the stimuli, a photograph containing a fear message, is presented in a threatening “this-can-happen-to-you” manner (Ray & Wilkie, 1970) and tries to make the threat applicable to the respondent (Witte, 1992). Furthermore, fear messages in the PMT framework should suggest a specific response, such as engaging in a specific behavior to prevent the threat from becoming reality. Neuwirth, Dunwoody, and Griffin (2000) concluded
that a fear message must be instructive, meaning the recipient of the message must be able to conclude that the probability of the threat occurring is high and, in order to avoid the potential consequences, they must act on the advice given or implied by the messenger. In our study, the fear message implied that sharing the picture to encourage others to vote for the non-threatening candidate was a potential way of avoiding the danger stated in the message or the opposing candidate to reach power.

In sum, this study identified a fear message as any photograph containing a message that suggests unfavorable consequences for the individual viewing the photograph if the opposing candidate is elected. More specifically, fear messages in the present study suggested that a vote for the opposing candidate would lead to him enacting policies suggested in the photograph’s text. This should motivate the individual to share the photograph with their communities to help spread the word in an effort to avoid the fearful consequence.

Method
Content analysis was used for this study because it allowed for the entire population of photographs containing written fear messages on both Mitt Romney and Barack Obama’s Facebook pages to be completely scrutinized. Content analysis enabled us to objectively examine the population of photographs and determine which pictures embedded with text contained fear messages. Content analysis was also appropriate because it was the only method to determine if messages are consistent with the definitions derived from PMT, which states that fear messages should contain an actionable solution suggested in the message to avoid the fear-inducing object or action from occurring. The main limitation of this design is that it cannot predict whether or not these fear messages actually resulted in altered perceptions about the candidates and ultimately reader’s voting behavior. Such changes in voting behavior could include for these partisans, not only a greater likelihood to vote themselves, but also a greater likelihood of trying to persuade neutral parties to their point of view in order to change their voting behavior as well.

Data analyzed in the present study consisted of a total of 395 photographs from Mitt Romney’s and Barack Obama’s Facebook pages that contained words. The photographs selected for Mitt Romney were posted on his campaign’s Facebook page from August 27, 2012 (the official start date of the Republican National Convention) through November 5, 2012 (the day before election day). The photographs selected for Barack Obama were posted on his campaign’s Facebook page from September 4, 2012 (the official start of the Democratic National Convention) through November 5, 2012. The start dates of the conventions were chosen because that was when both men officially became their party’s presidential candidate. The end date of November 5, 2012 was chosen because it was the last official day of the campaign as Election Day was November 6, 2012.

Reliability
An inter-coder reliability test was conducted on the entire population of 395 photographs for whether or not they had a written fear message. The population consisted of 109 photographs from Barack Obama’s Facebook page and 286 photographs from Mitt Romney’s Facebook page. Both Scott’s pi tests correcting for chance agreement and percentage of agreement were conducted. The Scott’s pi score was .96. The percentage agreement was 98 per cent.
Validity

One question that arises from the study is whether the words and topics making up the fear messages within the photographs were fear inducing. While the present study could not assess whether individuals who viewed photographs embedded with written fear messages actually experienced fear, prior research suggests that in order to be fear inducing, a message doesn’t have to contain gruesome content (O’Keefe, 1990), but rather must speak to a critical issue apparent during the time and the environment in which the message is presented.

Zaluzec (2010) found that campaign advertisements in both the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections did exactly that by using appeals that reflected the main issues of their respective time periods. In the case of the present study, the messages used by both political candidates included threats such as “unemployment will rise”, “jobs will not be created”, and “freedoms will be lost” if the opposing candidate won the election. All of these topics were highly relevant to the American people during the time of the election. A USA-Today/Gallup poll (USA-Today/Gallup, 2012) conducted during this period of time found that Americans were most worried about unemployment and federal budget deficits, and viewed the economic crisis as the most important problem facing the country. More specifically, in the months prior to the 2012 presidential election, 72 percent of Americans named an economic issue when asked about America’s biggest challenges (USA-Today/Gallup, 2012). Therefore, it’s reasonable to assume that a message emphasizing the prevalent worries of Americans will lead to an increased perception of significance and personal relevance of the issue under question and therefore will induce fear. The higher the perceived threat, the greater the fear experience (Witte & Allen, 2000) and in turn the greater the motivation of individuals to act in order to protect themselves (Rimal & Real, 2003).

In addition, the Facebook environment is a particularly good fit to induce fear reactions. Ray and Wilkie (1970) state that the impact of a fear message is greatest, when the environment in which it is presented is supportive of the message’s recommendation (in this case, sharing the photograph to persuade others to vote), if the action is not too difficult to undertake and if there is little time delay between the message’s recommendation and the according action. All those characteristics apply to Facebook. Finally, studies have shown that political advertisements, when they appeal to the emotions of the viewer, can “change the way citizens get involved and make choices” (Brader, 2005, p. 388). Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that (i) the messages identified as fear messages in the present study actually induced fear, and (ii) that those messages have a better chance of being shared.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study examined the entire population of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney’s Facebook photographs containing words either written within the photograph, on a poster, body part, food item, or nature from August 27, 2012 through November 5, 2012 for Mitt Romney and from September 4, 2012 through November 5, 2012 for Barack Obama. The population of content consists of 395 photographs containing written messages. 109 of the photographs come from Barack Obama (42 of them were coded as containing a fear message) and 286 come from Mitt Romney (including 144 fear messages). The dependent variable for the present study is the total number of Facebook shares associated with each photograph as it
is displayed with the photograph on Facebook.

During data collection, photographs were stored as screen shots just as they appeared if a person had seen them on Facebook, including the number of shares associated with each posted photograph. Each photograph was saved on a secure hard drive in two separate groups entitled, “Mitt Romney Facebook Photographs” and “Barack Obama Facebook Photographs.” Each photograph was then saved and labeled with its own unique number and identifier, until all photographs were assigned an identification number, allowing for any disagreement to be easily traced.

The hypothesis of the present study was assessed by comparing the mean of shares for both fear and non-fear messages. However, the study also assessed the size of the effect that fear messages had on the average number of shares. To assess the size of this effect, the number of shares of no-fear messages was used as a standard for comparison, then the percentage increase or decrease in the average number of shares was computed based on the average amount of shares associated with fear messages (Zeldes & Fico, 2010). For example, if the average number of shares for a photograph without a written fear message was 20, and the average number of shares for a photograph containing a written fear message was 30, then the photograph containing the written fear message got a 50% boost in the average number of shares.

\[
\text{Example of effect size calculation} \quad \frac{30 - 20}{20} = \frac{10}{20} = 50\%
\]

These assessments were first performed for all photographs and then separately for each of the candidates’ photographs to illuminate any differences. In addition, the mean of shares for both fear and non-fear messages was calculated for both candidates individually and then compared. Because the study used the total population of relevant pictures, inferential statistics were unnecessary.

**Results**

The first goal of this study was to determine whether or not photographs containing written fear messages were shared more often than those without written fear messages. Results show that the mean of the shares for photographs from both candidates’ Facebook pages with written fear messages (11,370) is higher than the mean of shares for photographs from both candidates’ Facebook pages without written fear messages (8,487). More specifically, photographs containing fear messages were shared 34% more than photographs without a fear message. These results lend support for the main hypothesis of this research.

**Table 1. Mean of shares across candidates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fear Message</th>
<th>No Fear Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Shares</td>
<td>11,370</td>
<td>8,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (Messages)</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When looking at the individual candidates separately, it became evident that there were considerable differences in terms of how frequently both candidates used photographs containing written fear messages on their Facebook pages. The present study finds that while the incumbent, Barack Obama, used fear messages in 38.5 per cent of the posted photographs, the challenger, Mitt Romney, used fear messages in 54.4 per cent of the analyzed photographs. Interestingly though, the effect on sharing was consistent across candidates. Taking the varying audience sizes of both candidates into account¹, photographs containing a fear message were consistently shared more often than photographs without a fear message. More specifically, photographs containing written fear messages were almost equally more shared among both candidates’ communities. The effect size for Romney’s photographs with fear messages was on average shared 61.2% more often than those without fear messages, while the effect size for photographs with written fear messages on Obama’s Facebook page was shared 59.4 per cent more often than photographs without a written fear message.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Obama</th>
<th>Romney</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear, M (SD)</td>
<td>8.5 (5.5)</td>
<td>5.3 (9.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Fear, M (SD)</td>
<td>5.4 (13)</td>
<td>3.3 (5.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (Fear, No Fear)</td>
<td>109 (42, 67)</td>
<td>285 (144, 141)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2. Shares per 10,000 Facebook fans**

**Discussion and Future Research**

The results of the study lend further support for Protection Motivation Theory, specifically, the applicability of PMT to the realm of political campaigns’ use of photographs within social media, and especially Facebook. This not only broadens the range of this established theory, but also potentially helps improve the understanding of human behavior in general. Testing the applicability of established theories from other domains (e.g. interpersonal communication, advertising) in a new environment is an important step in understanding the dynamics that drive human behavior within a world of social media. Essentially, the present study demonstrates that a visual fear message can have a significant effect in social media communities in terms of sharing the message, thus allowing for the message to spread farther among members of the community and potentially beyond.

Even more intriguing, this effect seems to be universal among different communities. Despite a considerable difference in the amount of fear messages used by each candidate (38.5 per cent for Obama, 54.4 per cent for Romney), the effect sizes were nearly identical for both Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. This indicates that visual fear messages resonate equally well with both the democratic and republican communities - and that they might be general for even broader parts of the population. Therefore, this finding might help explain why some messages spread through a social media environment much more quickly and farther than others. It shows that some messages have more potential to “go viral” due to certain characteristics inherent to the message, and that one of those characteristics can be the presence of a visual fear message. Finally, the universality of these results contradicts prior research that suggested “negative campaigning should be relatively effective for
challengers, while positive campaigning is more effective for incumbents” (Lau & Pomper, 2002, p. 74).

However, while the results of the present study show a significant increase in shares for photographs containing a fear message and therefore provide support for Protection Motivation Theory, the limitations inherent in the use of content analysis apply. More specifically, the conducted research cannot determine whether individuals who viewed fear messages actually experienced fear. In order to shed more light on this phenomenon, future studies could start with analyzing the comments associated with the visual fear messages to test whether they contain linguistic indicators of fear. This would provide further support for PMT.

**Implications for Public Relations**

From a strategic perspective, any future political candidate who wants to broadly disseminate his or her message would be wise to do so with a visual fear message because, as results indicate, there is a higher probability of that message being spread (e.g. shared) to other Facebook communities. This allows the candidate not only to be more memorable (Lau et al., 2007), but also to have his or her position on an issue seen by more people than the intended target audience. Additionally, public relations practitioners can utilize visual fear messages in the same manner in order to influence their intended audiences, as well as to enlist community members to help spread their messages. The presence of a written fear message in a photograph seemed to play a role in peoples’ decisions to share that photograph with their friends allowing the message to be seen by significantly more individuals. More specifically, photographs that contained written fear messages were shared far more frequently than those without a written fear message. The conclusion is that fear messaging via Facebook works and is a very powerful tool, especially when combined with a photograph.

The results of this study necessitates further study regarding the role photographs play in the persuasion process and whether or not it is the written message or the image itself that plays a greater role. Experiments could expose individuals to different message/photograph combinations and see whether it is certain properties of the picture itself, the written fear message, or the combination of both that promotes sharing. This could ultimately help public relations practitioners to develop a more focused and cogent strategy for future political campaigns. Another limitation of the present study is that content analysis cannot predict the behaviors of individuals that took place outside of the manifest content analyzed in the present study. In this case, it remains unclear whether being exposed to a fear message on Facebook ultimately led to a change in voting behavior. Future research could employ survey methodology to access whether a change in individuals’ intended voting behavior occurred.

Finally, while this study has shown that in a presidential campaign, photographs containing written fear messages will be shared more often than photographs without written fear messages, more studies need to be done to determine if this is the case with other political, social advocacy and public relations campaigns. Additionally, it would be interesting to determine if the increased sharing is a result of American culture or if this is a human behavioral phenomenon.
Notes
1 A discrepancy was discovered with ten Obama photographs collected by both researchers that may have been the result of where the data was collected. One researcher downloaded photographs while in Michigan and the other in Minnesota. It either means that each state was targeted with different photographs and written messages or that this was simply a mechanical error in downloading pictures. However, the amount of shares was minimal and had very little impact on the results. There were no discrepancies with any of the Romney photographs.
2 The Facebook pages of both candidates displayed a different amount of users who clicked the “LIKE” button on the main Facebook page of the candidates. While Barack Obama’s Facebook page had 33,393,795 fans by the end of the sampling period, the page of Mitt Romney indicated 12,006,137 fans. Since only those Facebook users who are fans of a particular page are able to see the candidate’s posts in their personal news feed, the potential audiences for both candidates - and subsequently the number of people who have the ability to share a candidates’ message - differ between Obama and Romney. In order to enable comparisons across candidates, the ratio of people who actually shared a photograph was calculated from the potential audience by dividing the number of people who shared a photograph by the number of people that are fans of that candidate’s page.

References


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Fake News? A Survey on Video News Releases and their Implications on Journalistic Ethics, Independence and Credibility of Broadcast News

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University of Alabama, USA

The traditional lines between journalism and public relations are now intertwined and public relations practitioners have an influential role on the content consumers see every day in newspapers and on news broadcasts. This survey looked at video news releases and their implications about journalists’ ethics, integrity, independence and credibility. 533 participants from three different populations (average viewers, communication college students, and journalists) responded to a 54-question survey that employed two predictors (i) level of experience and (ii) years of journalism experience. The results indicated that average viewers found the use of video news releases (VNRs) more unethical than journalists and communication students, although experienced journalists believed VNR use is having an impact on journalistic independence in news. Implications are discussed.

Keywords: VNR, public relations, news, journalistic independence

The influence of public relations on the function of the news media is one that merits further research than what has already been conducted (Curtin & Rhodenbaugh, 2001; Davis, 2000; Jain & Winner, 2013; Lee & Hong, 2012). Video news releases are just one of the many media tools that public relations professionals are using to get their message included in newscasts (Kioussis et al., 2006; Len-Ríos et al., 2009; Lewis, Williams & Franklin, 2008). The issue came to a head for the FCC after a video news release paid for by the Bush administration in January 2004 aired in totality or at least a portion of a VNR on 40 local television stations in 33 markets around the country (Uebelherr, 2004). The VNR featured people paid to pose as journalists praising the benefits of the 2003 White House-backed Medicare law, which offered to help elderly Americans pay for their prescription medicines. The videos ended with the voice of a woman saying, “In Washington, I’m Karen Ryan reporting.”

In April 2005, the FCC called for a review of the use of video news releases over the issue of the nondisclosure of attribution. Commissioners unanimously clarified rules applying to broadcasters, saying they must disclose to the viewer “the nature, source, and sponsorship” of video news releases, but they did not specify what form the disclosure must take (Ahrens, 2005; Hughes, 2006). In a public notice to broadcasters, the FCC also reminded...
station owners that the maximum fine for each violation of nondisclosure of sponsored items was $32,500 (Ahrens, 2005; Hughes, 2006).

It did not take long for media watchdog groups to start their own queries into the practice of VNR use. The Center for Media and Democracy engaged in a ten-month investigation and found that 77 television stations aired 36 video news releases in that time span. It also identified 98 separate instances where VNRs or related satellite interviews were aired without disclosure to viewers that the footage shown by the station was provided by third parties (Farsetta & Price, 2006).

The practice by public relations practitioners, government, pharmaceutical companies, corporations, educational institutions, etc., of providing video news releases is not a new one in the public relations field. The problem for the TV news industry is not that these video news stories are supplied for them. Stations can legitimately use all or portions of the video for free, but they are bound only by their journalistic codes of ethics to disclose if they got it from a source other than their employees (Ahrens, 2005; McFarland, 2005). The other current problem is that because of station’s shrinking budgets and bigger news holes, producers are confusing the audience when they air produced VNRs within the normal news content and do not attribute who supplied the content (Ahrens, 2005; McFarland, 2005).

Fake news is not limited exclusively to broadcast television. Internet websites are the new home for these specifically targeted audio and video messages. They are targeted to a variety of audiences through web syndication, YouTube, social media, strategic placements in broadcast, cable, and site-based media in retail outlets, hospitals, and airplanes. Some clients even opt for “guaranteed placement,” in which PR firms and production houses pay media channels outright to carry what they call “branded journalism” (Sourcewatch, 2008). The question is that if people are confusing these video news releases with independently produced news, what are the implications for perceived journalistic ethics, integrity, independence and credibility of news?

Advocates for media literacy say strides are being made, but non-attribution in print and broadcast still exist. To what extent communications sources outside the newsroom influence the news making process remains an important question within our changing media environment. Now with the government and the broadcast industry under fire for their use of video news releases, the results of this study will indicate how three different populations think the news industry is doing when it comes to the use of VNRs and how their use impacts how we feel about them.

**Literature Review**

A video news release is a client-sponsored video that presents a controlled message using a news angle, broadcast style writing, and production practices (Aronson, Spetner, & Ames, 2007; Tewksbury, Jensen & Coe, 2011). A VNR is also referred to as an electronic press release or an electronic press kit (EPK), and it is generally regarded as the television form of the printed press release (Machill, Beiler & Schmutz, 2006). Harmon and White (2001) found that VNRs promoting health and safety topics were aired the most by local broadcast stations and that VNRs are commonly used unedited by small understaffed regional television stations that have limited budgets for news production. However, they are also disseminated
to networks, such as FOX, and its affiliates through a video feed service (Barstow & Stein, 2005). Cable operator CNN has a similar feed service, which it uses to distribute releases to 750 stations in the United States and Canada (Barstow & Stein, 2005).

Production of VNRs is a sizable industry. One of its largest players, Medialink Worldwide Inc., has about 200 employees, with offices in New York and London. It produces and distributes about 1,000 video news releases a year, most commissioned by major corporations (Medialink, 2009). The list of other major corporations that distribute VNRs worldwide is fairly lengthy and it includes giants such as WestGlen Communications, DWJ, D S Simon Productions, KEF Media Associates, Multivu, etc. There are also hundreds of VNRs released each year by smaller companies, educational institutions like colleges, political groups, and non-profit organizations who have a message that they want to share with a targeted audience.

**Journalistic Concepts**

Critics of VNR use are concerned that it may jeopardize the profession and how the general public views journalists, and their ethics, integrity, independence, and credibility (Aiello & Proffitt, 2008; Broaddus, Harmon & Mounts, 2011; Connolly-Ahern, Grantham & Cabrera-Baukus, 2010; Lewis & Zhong, 2013). These concepts are the foundations of the profession and what its founders, watchdog groups, and aspiring journalists purport the profession to be at its highest levels.

The issue of journalistic ethics is at the heart of the VNR debate. A journalist’s ethical background and training helps him make judgments about particular situations that can impact many people. For example, he must weigh many news-making decisions on a daily basis that could mean the difference in how a person’s reputation is reported.

Viewers and readers alike also want to know that they get their news information from a source that has a certain level of integrity. Not every news organization is believed to be honest all the time for a variety of reasons. Some people may perceive a loss of integrity if a station gives too much time to a certain politician or to an issue that is not treated objectively. When several high-profile reporting mistakes occur that bring embarrassment to one media organization, it can affect the integrity of all media whether they are associated with what happened or not.

On the other hand, it is hard for any broadcast or newspaper outlet to be independent of economic restraints. In the current market, we are seeing layoffs, furloughs and stations combining news sources to still produce the same amount of newscast time effectively and efficiently with fewer people (Gold & James, 2008). This decline in manpower also means an increase in the material used from sources other than a station’s own generated material. Those outside sources usually come in the form of VNRs supplied by public relations professionals, advertisers, and politicians who have a vested interest in spreading their message through the media.

The credibility of a journalist basically means how much someone trusts in his reporting skills and his ability to gather all the right information to give a full sense of the story (Tong, 2014). Certain names of media organizations bring to mind different levels of credibility based on their past reporting practices and accuracy ratings.
All the above mentioned concepts, journalistic ethics, integrity, independence, and credibility are possible areas that VNRs may have a direct impact and they will be investigated in this project.

Regarding ethics, one’s gender, education, family, social and personal experiences, and religious background may all have an influence in their judgment of ethics. We wonder that, compared to the average individual, a student journalist, who is receiving an education on ethical decision making and a working journalist, who are making these decision on a daily basis, will have the same perception on VNR use and their implications. News is a profession that encounters ethical dilemmas on a daily basis including conflict of interests, live coverage of breaking news, accuracy issues, juvenile coverage, and influence from the advertising and sales departments (Hanson, 2002).

VNRs are viewed as a growing ethical problem because stations’ shrinking budgets and bigger news holes are making the use of VNRs more attractive to newsroom executives. However, the more experience an individual has with public relations generated material; the more likely he is to identify it as such. Most people have seen VNRs, but they may not recognize them as prepackaged material produced by public relations professionals. The reason is because it has the same production values as a typical broadcast news package that airs within the boundaries of a 30-minute daily newscast. However, we assume that the more training and the more experience that an industry professional has with evaluating VNRs, the more he will be able to determine when they are being used unethically. If the individual newsroom employee knows the standards set forth by his professional organizations and its organization, he will know what action to take when the decision is made to use it in a newscast. Therefore the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis**

**H1:** The more industry experience a journalist has, the more likely the individual perceives VNR use to be unethical.

Similarly, newsroom employees are knowledgeable about how they should treat public relations material. They are aware of all the outside influences because they are aware of all the different forms available for them to use. Whether it is a press release or a video news release, journalists are charged with checking the facts and labeling their sources. It is the veteran journalist who knows that if he does not face every story with the knowledge that he will stay true to the core mission of the basis of journalism and its professional codes, there will be a loss of journalistic integrity that so many organizations are trying to restore.

**H2:** As an individual’s industry experience increases, the more likely the individual believes that VNR use will negatively affect journalistic integrity.

While journalistic independence may be one of the guiding principles at the heart of the role as truth seekers, it also serves as an ethical compass (Rodgers, 2011; Singer, 2010; Steele, 1987). The concept can tell us where we can find some balance when it comes to the influences of our own self interest, internal and external competition, and deadline pressures. The principle of independence can also guide journalists in their responsibility to the public.
It is public relations practitioners who provide the numerous video news releases (VNRs) and press releases that flood a newsroom via fax machines, emails, radio actuality lines, and regional and national satellite news feeds (Machill, Beiler, & Schmutz, 2006). This type of public relations material is not going away anytime soon because of the market value it adds for the hospital or company. For example, a story called “Same Day Teeth” about a quicker way of doing lower-jaw dental implants was put out by the Mayo Clinic news service. The news service was started in 2000, and its weekly Medical Edge stories go out to 130 TV stations in the U.S. and Canada. That one story resulted in 175 calls, 23 scheduled appointments, and downstream revenue estimated at $345,000 (Lieberman, 2007). The Mayo Clinic’s media relations manager, Lee Aase, noted that 8.6 million people watched the December 2001 Medical Edge stories. The value was greater than ten times the cost of producing the shows (Lieberman, 2007).

Professionals or companies know that these types of pitches by health care companies, corporations, and government entities are just one way they can supplement their local station’s income. While, they are aware of what giving in to the influence of others means, broadcasters also know it infringes on their effort to be an independent media organization.

H3: As an individual’s industry experience increases, the more likely the individual believes that VNR use lowers journalistic independence.

Since the mid 1990’s, the topic of credibility for journalists has been a big one; not only because of the popularity of television, but, also due to the increased use of the Internet as an information source (Curtin, 1999). The Internet and its accessibility to information has opened up plenty of discussion concerning the sources of a story and the credibility of the experts people are quoting.

With the airing of any type of news content comes responsibility. Thus broadcasting anything that is questionable without accuracy, expert sources, or proper attribution to contributing sources can detract from a journalist’s credibility. With the speed of publishing and getting items to air, there is an increasing pressure to get the story out quickly while also making sure it is correct.

The decision to air a video news release can be a big decision these days for news directors because of all the attention it has brought to the credibility of news stations that use them without attribution or run them “as is.” Following the Karen Ryan Medicare incident and the attention the New York Times brought to VNRs, now numerous bloggers, websites, and watchdog groups assess their own media colleagues and rate how journalists are impacting the credibility factor for viewers and readers.

When we assume that even the most experienced journalist can vouch for the accuracy of images that neither he nor his staff produced, it becomes a path of assumption that can threaten professional credibility with colleagues, peers, and the audience (Adrine, 2002).

H4: The more industry experience an individual has, the more likely that individual believes that VNR use affects a station’s credibility.
Method
This study employed a survey to assess how people feel about the perception of video news releases and how they are used in local news broadcasts. The 54-question survey was administered through the web-based survey research engine Survey Monkey to collect data. The survey included an explanation of a VNR along with a website link to an example on www.youtube.com so a participant could view one in its entirety. Besides demographic data, the survey questions focused on journalists and their ethics, integrity, professionalism, independence, credibility, commercialization. Not all data are reported here as those related to professionalism and commercializations are reported elsewhere.

Procedures and Materials
The participants were emailed an invitation as part of the Survey Monkey software that included the link to the survey and asked to willingly participate. For the study, 584 people from three different populations were recruited through directed emails and invitations. The three populations are communication students, news professionals, and average news viewers. Communication college students were recruited from four universities in the southeast. Average viewers were recruited through churches. Professional broadcasters were recruited by the principal investigator through a list of active media at television stations and media organizations. All participants were told that the survey would take approximately 5-7 minutes.

Of the total of 584 participants, 51 were excluded from the sample because at least 10 items for two dependent variables were not answered resulting in 91 per cent of participants who completed the survey. Included in the analysis were a total of 114 journalists, 108 college students, and 311 average viewers willingly participated in the study.

More females (60 per cent) than males (40 per cent) took part in the survey. Patricipants’ ages were reported as ages 19-25 (39 per cent), 26-35 (18 per cent), 36-50 (27 per cent), 51-60 (12 per cent), and 61 and over (3 per cent). In terms of ethnicity, the majority of the participants were White/Caucasian (88.7 per cent), with Black/African-American (8.3 per cent) being the second largest group, and others made up the rest of the sample. In terms of political views, participants indicated they were very conservative (14.6 per cent); moderately conservative (40.9 per cent); middle of the road (24.6 per cent); moderately liberal (15.6 per cent); and very liberal (4.3 per cent). In other words, this sample resembled a normal one.

The focus on the three different populations was to illustrate the difference in levels of exposure and understanding of the concepts that have an impact on journalists. For example, the average viewer may watch television for hours daily but may never think of the implications of the many issues such as ethics, integrity, independence, and credibility. The communication student may be more aware of those same issues because of the in-class training, courses, and internships he may take, but is more likely to believe that the news professional who deals with decisions each day will have the most experience in evaluating how the use of video news releases can have an impact on one’s career.

Measurement
In relation to the use of video news releases and their impact on journalistic ethics, integrity, independence and credibility, at least four statements on a five-point Likert scale
were designed to measure each concept. The number 5 indicated that they “strongly agree” and the number 1 indicated that they “strongly disagree.” The scale was designed by the researcher to measure the perceptions an individual has of the impact of VNR use on the six journalistic concepts analyzed in this study.

To measure journalistic ethics, five statements were designed to measure respondents’ agreement on a 5-point Likert scale. These questions included “It is unethical for video news releases to be included in news content,” “It is acceptable for commercial messages to be included in news content if they are labeled with words on the television screen,” “It is unethical for a television news organization to air video news releases without them being labeled as such,” “It is unethical for a television news organization to air video news releases without oral attribution,” and “Television stations are sacrificing their ethics by using video news releases.” Reliability tests indicated a Cronbach’s alpha of .754. The five items were therefore summed, and an index was created for analysis.

To measure journalistic integrity, six statements were designed to measure respondents’ agreement on a 5-point Likert scale. These questions included: “Broadcasters jeopardize their individual integrity if they use any form of a video news release,” “Broadcasters are running the chance of damaging the integrity of their profession by using video news releases,” “Local television stations may use portions of a video news release to help tell a story,” “Broadcasters are being lazy if they use a video news release to supplement the content in their newscast,” “Broadcasters are deceiving the audience when they pass off video news releases as their own,” and “A VNR is okay to use if the narration is replaced by a TV station reporter.” Reliability tests indicated a Cronbach’s alpha of .790. The six items were therefore summed, and an index was created for analysis.

To measure journalistic independence, five statements included: “Journalists who use video news releases may be sacrificing their independence for corporate interests,” “By using video news releases, journalists allow others to make content decisions for them,” “I believe if a video news release provides information that helps solve a problem, it does not jeopardize the station’s independence,” “I believe local television stations are under a lot of pressure to put out video content supplied by the government,” and “The use of video news releases can serve the viewers’ interests.” Reliability tests indicated a Cronbach’s alpha of .711. The five items were therefore summed, and an index was created for analysis.

To measure credibility, four statements were designed to measure respondents’ agreement on a 5-point Likert scale. These questions included: “If a television news program includes a story with footage not produced by the news organization, it should be labeled with words on the television screen,” “If a television news program includes a story with footage not produced by the news organization, it should be attributed to orally by the anchors and news reporters,” “I would trust a local television station more if producers used words on the television screen to label video not produced by the news organization,” and “I would trust a local television station more if anchors and reporters used oral attribution to bring attention to stories not produced by the news organization.” Reliability tests indicated a Cronbach’s alpha of .745. The four items were therefore summed, and an index was created for analysis. The original scale had more items, but after running reliability tests, a few items were eliminated to achieve higher reliability.
Results

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the more industry experience an individual has, the more likely the individual perceives VNR use to be unethical. First, with the level of experience as a predictor, results indicated a person’s level of industry experience had a significant effect on ethics, $F(2, 530) = 4.90, p < .01, \varepsilon^2 = .02$. Post hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that the subsample average viewers (M = 3.37, SD = 0.66) perceived VNR use to be more unethical than students (M = 3.14, SD = 0.56). However, there was no other group difference.

Based on the number of self-reported years in journalism, there was no significant effect on ethics, $F(2, 530) = .00, p < .904, \varepsilon^2 = .00$. Hence, H1 was not supported and partial results indicated an opposite direction of the prediction; whereas, average viewers perceive the use of VNRs to be more unethical than college students and journalists.

No support was found for Hypothesis 2. It predicted that as an individual’s industry experience increases, the more likely the individual believes that VNR use will negatively affect journalistic integrity. First, with the level of experience as a predictor, results indicated there was no significant impact on journalistic integrity, $F(2, 530) = 1.76, p < .174, \varepsilon^2 = .01$. On the other hand, based on their number of years in journalism, a person’s experience did not have a significant effect on integrity, $F(2, 530) = .47, p < .628, \varepsilon^2 = .002$. There was no group difference with either predictor.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the more industry experience an individual has, the more likely the individual believes that improper VNR use lowers journalistic independence. First, with the level of experience as a predictor, results indicated a significant effect on journalistic independence, $F(2, 530) = 21.76, p < .001, \varepsilon^2 = .08$. Post hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that the subsamples communication college students (M = 3.08, SD = 0.51) and average viewers (M = 3.19, SD = 0.57) perceived VNR use to have more of an impact on

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Table 1. Level of experience: Means and standard deviations for the dependent variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of experience</th>
<th>JN</th>
<th>STU</th>
<th>AV</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\varepsilon^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>3.32 (.71)</td>
<td>3.14 (.56)</td>
<td>3.37 (.66)</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>3.04 (.76)</td>
<td>3.00 (.57)</td>
<td>3.12 (.60)</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>2.76 (.72)</td>
<td>3.08 (.51)</td>
<td>3.19 (.57)</td>
<td>21.76</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>3.38 (.77)</td>
<td>3.50 (.63)</td>
<td>3.50 (.60)</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. JN = Journalist, STU = College Communication Student, AV = Average Viewer, F = Variance between subjects, p = significance $p < .01$, $\varepsilon^2$ = power. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

Table 2. Years of experience: Means and standard deviations for the dependent variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>JN</th>
<th>STU</th>
<th>AV</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\varepsilon^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>3.31 (.67)</td>
<td>3.29 (.63)</td>
<td>3.33 (.72)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.904</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>3.09 (.60)</td>
<td>3.06 (.60)</td>
<td>3.02 (.79)</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.628</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>3.17 (.55)</td>
<td>2.93 (.55)</td>
<td>2.69 (.76)</td>
<td>24.99</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>3.50 (.61)</td>
<td>3.36 (.69)</td>
<td>3.46 (.78)</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.373</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. JN = Journalist, STU = College Communication Student, AV = Average Viewer, F = Variance between subjects, p = significance $p < .01$, $\varepsilon^2$ = power. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.
journalist independence than journalists ($M = 2.76, SD = 0.72$). For a person’s self-reported journalism experience, results also indicated a significant effect on journalistic independence, $F(2, 530) = 24.99, p < .001, \varepsilon^2 = .09$. Post hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that journalists ($M = 3.17, SD = .55$) are more in favor of the belief that VNR use lowers journalistic independence than students ($M = 2.93, SD = .55$) and average viewers ($M = 2.69, SD = .76$). Hence, H3 was partially supported. While the journalists compared to the other populations in this study do not perceive VNR use to lower journalistic independence as much, when years of experience are added as a predictor, they do view it as a concern.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the more industry experience an individual has, the more likely an individual believes that VNR use negatively affects a station’s credibility. The first predictor of level of experience did not indicate a significant effect on a station’s credibility, $F(2, 530) = 1.59, p < .205, \varepsilon^2 = .01$. With the predictor of a journalist’s years of experience, there was also not a significant effect on credibility, $F(2, 530) = .99, p < .373, \varepsilon^2 = .004$. No group difference was reported in the population subsamples. Hence, no support was found for H4.

Conclusions
The desire to learn more about how different people perceive the use of video news releases in broadcast news served as the motivation for this research. The majority of previous research relating to the impact of public relations on news content (Curtin & Rhodenbaugh, 2001; Davis, 2000; Harmon & White, 2001; Jain & Winner, 2013; Lee & Hong, 2012; Lieberman, 2007; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Sourcewatch, 2008; Turk, 1986) discusses how many times stories written and produced by public relations specialists appear in newspapers or in a television newscast. The survey employed in this study attempted to analyze how people perceived the impact of VNR use on concepts of journalistic ethics, integrity, independence, and credibility.

In general, the differing levels of experience for this study indicated that average viewers do not have differing views from college students and journalists when it comes to the founding concepts they believe journalists should have. In analyzing the concepts of integrity and credibility, no significant difference was found in the groups. However, when it comes to ethics and journalistic independence, there are some significant differences in how the different populations perceive the concepts.

Since the results showed that average viewers perceive VNR use to be more unethical than college students and journalists, we may conclude that more ethical training may be necessary in our college journalism programs. It seems that the amount of VNRs that are available to a newsroom through satellite feeds, network affiliations, and Internet downloads may have also jaded journalists’ judgments and may be such a common influence that without constant reminders by the stations, journalists may not view them as a different form than other local, network, or cable news stories. The results could also indicate that journalists feel they attribute VNRs the way they were trained whether in the classroom or on-the-job. Therefore, they may feel they have no ethical dilemmas to consider.

For the concepts of journalistic independence, the level of experience and years of experience proved to be interesting. The average viewers and college students viewed VNR use to have a greater effect on journalistic independence. Then when a journalist’s
years of experience were analyzed, it was the journalists who felt that VNRs were having an impact. From these results, we can conclude that journalists who had dealt with these situations more and understood the implications more had stronger perceptions than students and average viewers of how government and corporations can impact a newsroom’s content.

There were obvious limitations in this study. The researcher did not clearly differentiate the concepts of integrity, independence, and credibility and they could possibly be considered similar by the participants. Future studies should look into more direct measures for each concept to ensure that participants generally understand the difference.

Other limitations include the need to assess other predictors of the dependent variables that were gathered and not gathered in the survey data. Future studies, for example, can use a composite measure of a person’s ethical background to see if it’s a better predictor of their perceptions of VNR use on the journalistic concepts studied here.

Also, more predictors not included in this study can be analyzed that might give a better assessment of why average viewers, communication college students, and journalists perceive journalists the way they do. Exposure to other forms of media such as the Internet, newspapers, magazines, etc., might also reveal how or if greater exposure to news, in general, influences perceptions of VNR usage. In general, an analysis including more variables and additional statistical tests might reveal why the hypotheses proposed here were not supported and had some mixed results.

This study was an initial step to spur more interest into this area of research and to add to our understanding of what people think of the impact of VNRs on the concepts journalists are believed to possess. As our media world continues to expand, the extent of the influence of a press release, a VNR, and a PR specialist can be viewed as limitless.

Hence, this is an area of study that merits further research to study the impact of how it impacts young and veteran journalists.

References


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Perception of Government Public Relations Practice by the People in Sabah: A Public Opinion Survey

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This survey focuses on how the people in Sabah perceived Malaysia’s governmental public relations practice and their perception of the government based upon it. It includes how the different types of mass media and its content that they expose themselves to have influence their image of the nation administration as well as its policies and implementations. Also included are how their own experience with the various government agencies has impacted their views with regard to those authorities specifically and the government generally. Method used for this public opinion survey is the random sampling technique. Respondents selected were 600 people based on four categories. All of them were located in and around Kota Kinabalu and chosen randomly. For the interview a structured questionnaire was prepared and pilot tested on 40 respondents with ten from each category. This survey finding further revealed that the media the public chose and exposed themselves to, do impact their perception of the government and its public relations, positively or negatively, depending on its content. However, the survey found that the impact was rather moderate with about half of the respondents declaring positively and the remainder not so positive and a few negatively.

Keywords: Democracy, government, government public relations, media, opinion survey, public opinion

In today’s world where practicing a democratic form of government is considered a mandatory practice for nations, neglecting democracy can be perceived as unfit to govern. Therefore, an effective and ethical government public relations practice (GPR) must become a necessity and not mere luxury anymore. In the past government public relations is much maligned and perceived to be wasteful and self-serving.

Now, government public relations are proven to provide several essential services that can be utilised to advance the substantive mission of governments and its agencies in ways that save money, time and effort. Hence, in similar manner as budgeting, human resource, strategic planning, and performance assessment, public relations must be included in the contemporary governments’ toolbox. This is because currently it is believed that by using unorthodox yet cost effective measures, public relations professionals can enhance the utilisation of governmental goods and services, promote voluntary compliance with new policies and legislations, improve media relations, and strengthen the standing of the

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government and its agencies with the people at large. Therefore, in Malaysia, public relations in government should have a natural and welcoming role as good governance reflect sensitivity to public opinion and the belief that it work best when citizens are well-informed.

On the other hand, Baskin, Aronoff and Lattimore (1997) believed that the most basic function of government public relations are to help define and achieve government objectives and programmes, to enhance government responsiveness and services, and to provide the public with sufficient information to permit self-government. It includes promoting cooperation and confidence between citizens and their government. This in turn requires government to be accessible, accountable, consistent, and to uphold integrity which is again the top task of government public relation (GPR).

Simultaneously, today governments are expected to provide high quality services that citizens appreciate or value; advocate increasing managerial autonomy, particularly by reducing central agency controls; demand, measure and reward both organisational and individual performance; recognise the importance of providing the human and technological resources that managers require to meet their performance targets, and is receptive to competition and remains open-minded about which public responsibilities should be performed by civil servants as opposed to the private sector (Mohd Hamdan, 2010, pg 59).

According to the Department of Information the philosophical basis of Malaysia’s GPR and communication is based on the Federal Constitution. The Constitution guarantees the citizens certain fundamental rights while prescribing their duties and obligations to the state and society. Even non-citizens have their rights, for example, equality before the law (https://www.kpwkm.gov.my).

As Malaysia follows a system of government that is based on democratic principles that respect the rights of individuals, including their opinions, the government is by popular consent. Under a system where general elections are held every five years, the government has to seek a fresh mandate from the people when it wishes to be returned. As such, any government in Malaysia must justify its policies and actions to the people and have a positive image if it wants to retain its position. This means any government in Malaysia must practice good government public relations with two-way communication and interactive relationship to win the heart and mind of the people. Further, this means government public relations Officers (GPRO) must be a media expert in terms of usage and relationship.

In Malaysia the Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture (MICCM) operates and co-ordinates all government’s mass media activities, particularly through its three main departments – Broadcasting, Information and the National Film Board (Filem Negara). In fact, the MICCM is responsible in planning, implementation is responsible in planning, implementation and coordination on all policies related to three vital sectors; namely information, communications and culture. The vision of MICCM is to be the pioneer in promoting the 1 Malaysia Concept based on the National Principles to achieve a harmonious and gracious nation. The Ministry’s main aspiration is to enhance Malaysia as a global ICT hub in the region, to ensure information from all sources of media is accurate and precise and to preserve thus promotes Malaysia’s heritage and culture to the World (https://www.kpwkm.gov.my).

In most government campaigns the mass media are fully utilised. Included are radio and television as well as newspapers and magazines. Further included are mobile units of
the Department of Information who not only give talks all over the country but also organise shows, exhibitions and printed literature. However, according to a former Director General of the Department of Information Mohd Kaus Salleh (1990) the mass media played a crucial role in helping the government to explain to the people. Also, the media shape and condition the attitudes, beliefs and values of the people. Thus, mass media are an essential ally of any government wanting to cultivate and sustain their positive image and position. Without adequate positive media coverage any government may not be optimally visible and having a good image.

Today, the social media is also fully utilised. In fact, to get to the young the social media have become an effective channel. In the last two elections one of the main reason for the opposition political parties doing very well was attributed to their effective use of social media. Thus, the need for GPRO to be computer and Internet savvy is imperative.

Therefore, with the media very rapidly becoming increasingly sophisticated with better penetration and pervasiveness as well as being able to be customised, personalised and interactive their influence are boosted tremendously making it a boon and a bane for public relations professionals, especially for those serving governments. In a government practicing good governance it surely would be a boon while for those working for less than democratic it would be bane for it would be almost impossible to contain or manage information. This is particularly so for the social media. The ability to work well with the media and to be an expert at utilising social media is an increasing challenge for government public relations anywhere in the world. Therefore, this survey includes examining the impact of mass media on GPR as perceived by the Sabah respondents.

Methodology, Demographics, Objectives and Concepts
The methodology used for this study is random survey of which an opinion poll is conducted. It is a survey of public opinion from a particular sample. This opinion poll is designed to represent the opinions of a selected population of which the respondents are chosen at random. An interpersonal interviews approach is conducted using a series of questions and then extrapolating generalities in a ration within confidence intervals. This method is used because it best suits situations where not much information is available about the population and data collection can be efficiently conducted on randomly distributed items, or where the cost of sampling is small enough to make efficiency less important than simplicity. The principle of simple random sampling is that every object has the same probability of being chosen. However, for the purpose of this study biases associated with responses, wording of questions and coverage were taken into account.

The survey was conducted with the help of 50 students taking the Government Public Relations course in the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). Together with the writer they have helped formulate the questionnaires and pre test it with the four categories of respondents numbering 40 persons with 20 males and 20 females. Based on the pre-test, the questionnaires were fine tuned to meet the set objectives. The Statistical Packages for Social Sciences or SPSS was used to analyse the survey findings.

For this study 600 respondents in around Kota Kinabalu were chosen at random. They were divided into 300 males and 300 females and sub-categorised into 150 students of
higher learning, 150 civil servants, 150 private sectors personnel and 150 self-employed. About 72 per cent of the respondents were Malays and indigenous people, 15.5 per cent were Chinese and 12.5 per cent considered at others which include Indians, Eurasians, etc. In terms of age, 37.6 per cent (207 people) of the respondents were between 18 to 24 years old, 38 per cent (230 persons) were between 26 to 40 years old, 20.6 per cent (125 persons) were between 41 to 60 years old, and 3.8 per cent (23 persons) was above 61 per cent years.

Relating to income, 35.1 per cent (107 persons) earns below RM1000, 41.9 per cent (254 persons) earns between RM1001 to RM3000, 18.3 per cent (111 persons) earns between RM3001 to RM5000, 3.5 per cent (21 persons) earns between RM5001 to RM10,000, and 1.2 per cent (7 persons) earns above RM10,000.

Religious wise, 58.3 per cent (347 persons) are Muslims, 17.7 per cent (107 persons) are Christians, 15.8 per cent are Buddhists, and 8.3 per cent are considered others which include Taoism, animisms, etc. As for residential location, 42.2 per cent (250 persons) stays in urban areas, 31.7 per cent (192 persons) in housing estates, and 26.1 per cent (158 persons) in rural areas.

The objectives of the opinion survey are to determine (i) the impact of media exposure on the perception of government and it public relations practice (GPR); (ii) the credibility of the mass media and its impact on respondents’ perception of the government and its GPR; (iii) the influence of GPRO on public opinion; (iv) the level of GPRO success on creating and sustaining the positive image of the government; and (v) the level of GPR success in explaining Vision 2020 and 1Malaysia to Malaysians.

Some of the key concepts that are needed to be explained for this survey include democracy, government, government public relations, media, opinion survey, public opinion and theories relating to public relations and change.

Democracy is a form of government in which all citizens of age (Malaysia 21 years old) can vote their representatives to parliament or state assembly during the national, state or by-elections. All eligible citizens participate equally, either directly or indirectly through elected representatives, in the proposal, development, and creation of laws. Thus, it is a form of government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the citizens and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system.

A government is the system by which a nation or community is organised, governed or administered. Today, it also refers to the particular executive in control of a state at a given time. Furthermore, government is occasionally used in English as a synonym for governance. Government normally consists of legislators, administrators, and arbitrators. It is the means by which state policy is enforced, as well as the mechanism for determining the policy of the state. A form of government, or form of state governance, refers to the set of political systems and institutions that make up the organisation of a specific government. Government of any kind currently affects every human activity in many important ways. For this reason, political scientists generally argue that government should not be studied by itself, but should be studied along with anthropology, economics, history, philosophy, science, and sociology. Variant of government is constitutional monarchy; a system of governance that has a monarch, but one whose powers are limited by law or by a formal constitution, such as that in Malaysia.
Government public relations (GPR) like all PR activities is to build a reputation earning the understanding, goodwill and support as well as influence and sustain public opinion and behaviour that benefits the government or organisation concerned. GPR generally involves a planned and sustained effort with an integrated and dialogic communication plus an interactive approach to establish the desired effect without compromising public interest. Hence, GPR can be defined as “The art and science of reputation management utilising integrated, interactive, dialogic and ethical communication and activities to enhance government’s image and winning citizens supports based on beneficial relationships, sustainability and public interest” (Mohd Hamdan, 2010, pg 24). Today’s GPR should not only be an image maker or information source or mouthpiece but also government “ears” and “eyes” and be able to advice regarding public opinion.

Media in this study refers to communication channels through which information, news, entertainment, education, data, or promotional messages are disseminated to the general public or targeted audiences. It includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium like newspapers, magazines, television, radio, billboards, direct mail, telephone, fax, and internet or social media. Media is essential public relations avenues through which messages are transmitted to target publics using appropriate channels.

Media is the plural of medium and can take a plural or singular verb, depending on the sense intended. Also, it refers to all the organizations, such as television, radio, and newspapers that provide news and information for the public, or the people who do this work. In this study, social media refers to social interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Here, the social media is recognised to differ from conventional media in many ways, including quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy and permanence.

Opinion in this study refers to views or judgements formed about matters commonly considered to be subjective which is not necessarily based on knowledge or proof but rather the result of emotion or interpretation of facts. In this study opinion can also refer to a belief or judgement that rests on grounds inadequate to produce complete certainty or a personal view, attitude or appraisal. An opinion is not a fact. This is because opinions are either not falsifiable, or the opinion has not been proven or verified. If it later becomes proven or verified, it is no longer an opinion, but a fact.

Public opinion is the aggregate of individual attitudes or beliefs held by respondents or target publics about a particular issue or topic. The tide of public opinion becomes very crucial during campaigns or elections and raging controversies. For the purpose of this study public opinion refers to the aggregate of opinions held by respondents on the selected topics. Public opinion poll refers to the measurement of the respondents’ beliefs or feelings of selected issues or topics. The measures are obtained by interviewing respondents from selected population using chosen sampling methods. Usually a standardised questionnaire is prepared for the purpose.

For the purpose of this study the public information specialist theory of public relations is used. According to this theory the primary objective of public relations is to disseminate information. Basically it is one-way communication, source to receiver, and truth is crucial. It is generally practiced by governments, and business social organisations.
Another communication theory that is usually associated with government public relations practice is the change theory. For modern society it is believed that change occurs as the consequences of social interaction, education and communication. It is believed that the changes can either be positive or negative. Generally, the positive outcome is because of effective planning and implementation while the negative ones are considered as unintended consequences or unexpected side effects due to ineffective planning and implementation.

Another communication theory that is being utilised for this study is the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). This theory explains people usage of media for their needs and gratifications. It states what people do with media rather than what media do to them. The UGT seeks to understand why and how people actively select specific media to satisfy specific needs. It focuses on “what do people do with the media. This is contradictory to the magic bullet theory which states the audience is passive. According to UGT, it is not so. People utilises the media for their specific needs. Thus it has a user or audience-centred approach. It believes even for interpersonal communication people refer to the media for the topic they discuss with themselves. They gain more knowledge and that is knowledge is obtained by using media for reference.

The UGT also suggests that audiences activities ranges. Thomas E. Ruggiero (2009) in his report, “Uses and Gratifications Theory in the 21st Century”, indicates that, “different individuals tend to display different types and amounts of activity in different communication settings and at different times in the communication process”. According to him this would be dependent on what level income, stress and attachment to media.

Even though the UGT focuses on the audiences and neglect to consider the power of the media, this study noted that: the media have the power to shape and direct human lives, media houses are profit oriented, are affected by ownership and control, the content is determined by media owners and audiences are subjected to their views.

UGT has a heuristic value today as it gives us a perspective through which a number of ideas and theories about media choice, consumption, and even impact can be viewed. Also, it include gratifications sought (GS) versus gratifications obtained (GO) result. However, the GS that audiences seek do not always result in GO. This study seeks to know what occurs in the Sabah context.

Consumers’ Media Habits
Generally the respondents in and around Kota Kinabalu nearly fully expose themselves to the mass media that are available to them. Their most favourite mass media is television with 92.4 per cent saying that they watch TV with 7.6 per cent said they do not. This is closely followed by the social media with 92.3 per cent and 7.7 per cent not so. In third place are newspapers with 79.5 per cent reading it daily and 20.5 per cent do not. Closely in fourth position is radio with 78.5 per cent listening to it and the rest ignoring it.

In terms of the most believed or credible mass media by respondents the newspapers top the rest with 23.6 per cent stating so. This is followed by television with 22.4 per cent, radio with 21.3 per cent and lastly with social media with 16.8 per cent.

In terms of moderately believed the social media had the most mentioned with 70.6 per cent. This is followed by radio with 66.7 per cent, newspapers with 66.7 per cent and television with 55.6 per cent. The mass media that is least believed is television with 20.3
per cent of the respondents stating it. This is followed by the social media with 16.8 per cent
not trusting it, radio with 12 per cent and newspapers with 10.4 per cent.

According to the respondents the most influential mass media is the social media
with 41.1 per cent believing so. This is followed by television with 35.6 per cent, newspapers
14.4 per cent and radio at 8.9 per cent. The finding showed that the mass media impact on
the public in the Kota Kinabalu area generally is not very significant as the highest media
only scored at 41.1 per cent in relation to influence. This is despite the fact that nearly all the
respondents exposed themselves to many forms of mass media.

Regarding the differences in relations to gender preferences towards the media it is
rather varied. For example, the percentages for most believing in the newspapers between
male and female showed that the difference is 14.1 per cent. That is, 24.6 per cent of the
males strongly believe in the newspapers as oppose to the women with only 10.5 per cent.
As for moderately believing in the newspapers 34 per cent of the female said so as compared
to 31.6 per cent of the males. In terms of disbelieving the newspapers 6.3 per cent females
claimed so as oppose for 4.1 per cent males.

In terms of most believing in radio the differences between male and female is
minimal with only 1.8 per cent percent variation. That is, female at 10.6 per cent and male at
8.8 per cent. For moderately believing in the radio the differences between male and
female is also minimal. That is, 34.2 per cent for female and 33.2 per cent for male. It is
almost similar for disbelieving in the radio with 6.1 per cent for male and 6 per cent for male.
Regarding television, the differences between male and female for strongly believing in it is
minimal, that is 10.6 per cent for female and 10 per cent male. The difference for moderately
believing in television is also minimal with 30.6 per cent female and 25.5 per cent male. It is
also almost similar for the television disbelievers, with 11.6 per cent for male and 8.8 per
cent female.

The differences for very strongly believing in the social media between male and
female are not very significant. That is 9 per cent for male and 6 per cent for female.
Regarding moderately believing the social media the female had 38.3 per cent and the male
at 33 per cent. As for disbelieving the social media, the differences are also minimal. That is,
6.5 per cent for female and 6.3 per cent for male.

The mass media that is perceived as very pro government is television with half the
respondents claiming it. May be this is related as to why television is having the lowest
credibility with 20.3 per cent not believing it. The newspapers are considered the second
most pro government mass media with 34.2 per cent of the respondents perceiving it, followed
by social media with 8.6 per cent and radio at 7.1 per cent.

The mass media that is considered as very anti government is the social media with
78.9 per cent believing so. Second position fell to newspapers with 10.2 per cent, third place
to television with 8.6 per cent and finally radio 2.3 per cent. With the exception of social
media which is perceived as very anti government the rest are considered as being neutral
or pro government.

Yet on the question of the mass media that is most neutral to government the social
media held pole position with 58.4 per cent. It is followed by radio with 22.4 per cent,
television with 11.4 per cent and newspapers with 7.8 per cent.
The mass media that is considered as most suitable for government communication or channels for disseminating its information is television with 39.3 per cent thought so. This is followed by newspapers at 30.9 per cent, social media at 24.1 per cent and radio with 5.8 per cent. Television is most suited for disseminating government information as 50 per cent of the respondents believed that it is the most pro government media.

As to the top media to access government information the social media has the highest score with 55.1 per cent. One of the main factors for this is that all the government agencies have their own homepage and that many of the top government officials have their own homepage or Twitter. Even Prime Minister Dato’ Seri Najib is active on Twitter and Facebook. The Deputy Prime Minister and the other top politicians including from the oppositions are also very active in the social media which include Facebook and Twitter. This finding showed that it is worth for the government agencies and officials including politicians to make the extra effort to improve their homepage as well as updating it as frequently as possible and making it more attractive.

The second most accessed media for government information is television with 21.1 per cent said so. Yet, television is claimed by half of the respondents as the most pro government media as well most suited to disseminate government information as said by 39.3 per cent of them. The newspapers are used by 18.8 per cent of respondents to obtain government information as compared to radio with only 5.9 per cent. As radio is one of the government instruments to reach rural folks as well as the poorer citizens more studies should be conducted to discover how it can be further enhanced to reach their target listeners.

In fact, the capabilities of all the government media must be improved to enhance their performance in reaching their beneficiary publics as their usage is rather low or unsatisfactory. The media that most create a positive image of the government is the newspapers as said by 31.8 per cent of the respondents. This is followed by television with 22.9 per cent, social media with 20.3 per cent and radio with 19.3 per cent. Looking at the percentages it is clear that the media generally has not created a positive impression of the government.

In fact, the media is generally considered as more neutral in forming a positive image of the government. The social media is perceived as the most neutral with 61 per cent. This is followed by the newspapers with 53.6 per cent and radio and television with 53 per cent each.

In terms of the media creating a negative image of the government it is radio and television that scored the highest with 22.6 per cent each. The social media scored 19.1 per cent while the newspapers received 15.1 per cent. It is interesting to note that radio and television is considered the most in contributing to the negative image of the government as both are perceived as crucial media in delivering national information and policies. One can say that because both are considered as vital government propaganda tools before the coming of the social media. Also, before private radio and television were introduced the government had full monopoly over them. However, more research is needed to verify its status as an important media for the government and how it can improve its effectiveness as an instrument for state communication.
Respondents Perception of GPR

Of the 600 respondents only 29.5 per cent or 179 respondents said that they have come into contact with government public relations officers (GPRO). The rest or 421 (60.5 per cent) respondents admitted of not having any contact or experience with GPRO.

Nevertheless, 9.1 per cent of the respondents perceived that their experiences dealing with GPRO as very satisfying, while 16.2 per cent felt it as satisfying. However, a significant number of the respondents or 41.1 per cent claimed it as satisfying while the rest or 33.7 per cent said not satisfying.

On the effectiveness of GPRO most of the respondents or 39.1 per cent perceived that they are less effective as compared to 36.6 saying that they are effective. Of the remainder, 15.2 per cent said that the GPRO are ineffective and 8.1 per cent believed they are very effective. It can be noted that slightly less than half of the respondent believed that the GPRO is effective while just more than half of the respondents felt that it is ineffective. Hence, the urgent need to take the appropriate steps to improve the effectiveness of GPRO. This includes their media relations.

On GPRO experiences, 42.6 per cent claimed that they are not so experience while 42.4 per cent believed that they have the required experiences. Of the rest, 11 per cent felt that the GPRO are not experience while 4 per cent perceived them as very experience.

On GPRO training, 47.4 per cent felt that they are trained, 37.8 per cent not so trained, 8.6 per cent not trained at all while 5.3 per cent as well trained.

On Malaysia’s GPRO being proactive, 47.2 per cent felt that they are so while 40.9 per cent said they are less proactive. Of the rest, 7.9 per cent claimed that the GPRO as not proactive and the 3 per cent as being very proactive.

On the ability of the GPRO to enhance the relationship between the people and the government, 45.5 per cent felt that they have succeeded while 37 per cent believed as less successful. Only 13.4 per cent claimed as not successful and 3.1 per cent as being very successful.

On the ability of Malaysia’s GPRO to enhance communication between the government and the people, 44.4 per cent believed that they have been successful while 35.6 per cent felt that they have not been so successful. The remaining 14 per cent said not successful at all and 5 per cent claimed as very successful and 1 per cent unsure.

Regarding Malaysia’s GPRO ability to convey important government information and policies to the people, 39.8 per cent of the respondents believed that they have been successful and 35.3 per cent less successful. Of the rest, 13.5 per cent felt not successful and 10.4 per cent as very successful and 1 per cent as unsure.

On the ability of Malaysia’s GPRO to influence public opinion, 43.7 per cent believed that they have been successful while 37.5 per cent said less successful. In fact, 12.9 per cent felt that they have been very successful. Only 5 per cent claimed failure and 0.9 per cent as unsure.

Regarding the success of Malaysia’s GPRO to inculcate the spirit of 1Malaysia to Malaysians, 39.1 per cent of the respondents said that they have been successful while 37.1 per cent claimed not so successful. Only 11.7 per cent of the respondents felt not successful at all while 11.1 per cent believed as very successful and 1 per cent unsure.
Relating to the capability of Malaysia’s GPRO to convey development messages to the people, 35.5 per cent of the respondents felt that they have succeeded and 44.6 per cent as not so successful. On the other hand, 10.7 per cent suggested that the GPRO have been very successful and 8.3 per cent as failed and 0.9 per cent unsure.

Pertaining to the success of Malaysia’s GPRO to convey Vision 2020 messages to the people 40.8 per cent of the respondents believed that they are and 39.3 per cent as not so successful. The rest or 9.9 per cent felt that they have been very successful, 9.1 consider them failure and 0.9 per cent as hazy.

On the success of Malaysia’s GPRO to sustain the positive image of the government 42.2 per cent of the respondents believed so while 35.3 per cent as not so successful. The remaining 11.9 per cent claimed they have been very successful and 9.6 per cent as unsuccessful while 1 per cent unclear.

Perception of GPR Based on Occupation and Status
Based on occupation and status the study found that those working in government and private sectors believed that GPRO are effective, each at 41.3 per cent. The rest of them are unsure or give no response. Thus, it can be said that more than half of them felt that the GPRO is less than effective and that there is the need to improve their effectiveness and visibility.

The perception is lower for the self-employed and students. Only 38 per cent of the employed opine that the GPRO is effective and students with only 35 per cent. The rest of them say they are not clear or do not response. Thus, the GPRO have to work harder with more creativity to enhance their effectiveness with the two groups.

In term of experiences, 54 per cent of student respondents opine that the GPRO have the experience, 51 per cent of government respondents say so, 40.6 per cent of the private sectors believing similarly and the self-employed with 38 per cent. Again it can be said that on the average less than half of the respondents feel that the GPRO have the required experiences to make them effective PR practitioners.

Relating to GPRO being well trained 53.4 per cent of the government respondents feel that they are well trained while the rest say not so. For the private sector 42 per cent opine the GPRO are well trained and the rest say not well trained. Surprisingly, 56.6 per cent of the self-employed perceive the GPRO as well trained as the remainder not so. The students do not give any response to this question.

Regarding GPRO being proactive the response generally are almost similar for all four groups with students opining 50.6 per cent, government respondents 50 per cent, private sectors 42 per cent and the self-employed at 48 per cent. The finding clearly reveals that GPRO need to be more proactive in conducting their duties as PRO.

Relating to GPRO ability to enhance communication between the government and its people the response to all four groups are almost similar with the self-employed the highest at 50.6 per cent and the private sector lowest at 42.6 per cent. In between are government respondents at 49.3 per cent and students at 46.6 per cent. Again, the GPRO abilities are seen as very average in their effort to increase communication between the government and the people.
On the ability of the GPRO to communicate important government information to the people the rating get lower, especially with the government and private sector respondents. That is, 32.6 per cent for government respondents and 38 per cent private sector. For the self-employed it is at 48.4 per cent and students at 46.6 per cent.

The ability of the GPRO to convey development messages is generally considered average with the government respondents giving 63.7 per cent. This is followed by 44.6 per cent of the self-employed, 43.3 per cent of the private sectors and 41.4 per cent of the students.

Almost similar result is offered for the GPRO competency in communicating Malaysia’s Vision 2020. As for the government respondents 63.7 per cent claim so. This is followed by the private sector respondents with 48 per cent believing that the GPRO can succeed in conveying the Vision 2020 messages, the students and the self-employed at 46 per cent each.

Relating to GPRO ability to enhance relationship between the government and its citizens the finding is also almost similar for the four groups with the government respondents as the highest with 56.6 per cent and the private sectors lowest at 43.3 per cent. In between are students with 48 per cent and self-employed at 44 per cent. Again the finding shows that the GPRO have much to do to enhance relationship between government and citizens.

Regarding the capability to inculcate the spirit of 1Malaysia, 52 per cent of the self-employed believe that the GPRO can succeed to do so. This is followed by 46.7 per cent of students feeling so, 43.3 per cent of government respondents and 39.3 per cent of the private sector respondents. Even though the ability of the GPRO to inculcate the spirit of 1Malaysia is perceived as less than average this does not mean it is not accepted by Malaysians. What it means is that the GPRO have to work harder to enhance the acceptance and practice of 1Malaysia.

On the ability of the GPRO to sustain the positive image of the government all four categories do not think much of it. The highest rating for it is stated by the students with 49.3 per cent of them thinking so. This is followed by the self-employed with 42 per cent, the government respondents with 41.3 per cent and lastly the private sector with 38 per cent. This again showed that GPRO have a lot to do to sustain the positive image of the government.

On the ability of the GPRO to influence public opinion the evaluation is also moderate. Of the government respondents 45.4 believe that GPRO can influence the public or citizens. This is followed by the student respondents with 44.5 per cent, self-employed with 43 per cent and the private sectors with 42 per cent. Clearly, GPRO must take heed of its ability to persuade or mould public opinion if it is to be influential with the Prime Minister.

**Perception of GPR Practice in Sabah**

Government public relations practice in Sabah can be said to be moderate or average with 9.5 per cent saying it is excellent and 41.5 per cent believing it is good. On the other hand, 45 per cent say it is not good enough and 4 per cent as inadequate. Hence, it can be said that GPR practice in Sabah is about average. So, much should be done to enhance GPR practice in Sabah to make it more effective.
Not surprisingly, a significant number of respondents recommended that government officers and especially those in the Information Departments should take more public relations courses to improve their effectiveness. This is recommended by 81.5 per cent of the respondents while 17.6 per cent felt it is not needed and the rest are unsure or indifferent.

Almost similar finding is revealed for Sabah politicians with regard to GPR. Only 9 per cent of the respondents believe that the politician practice of GPR in Sabah is excellent. Slightly less than half of the respondents or 44.6 per cent say that it is good. Of the remaining respondents, 37.5 per cent say it is not good enough while 8.9 per cent opine it as not good at all. Thus, it can be said that politicians in Sabah GPR is only average and thus really need to improve their PR capabilities.

Unsurprisingly, a majority or 82.2 per cent of the respondents urged Sabah politicians to attend courses in public relations while 16.5 per cent said not need and 1.3 per cent unsure.

Comparing GPR practice with PR practice in the private sector, 46.7 per cent of the 600 respondents claim that the government PR practice is more effective compared to 53.3 per cent saying no. Almost similar result is revealed when comparing GPR with PR practice of the non-governmental organisations. That is 43.2 per cent of the respondents believing that GPR practice is more effective than the PR practice of the NGOs with 56.8 per cent claiming no. The comparisons with regard to PR practice effectiveness revealed that GPRO really need to upgrade their expertise and skill to ensure that the government and the public are well serve by them. However, it must be admitted that GPR practice is much more complex than the private and NGOs PR as it serve two masters, which is the government and the public.

Conclusion
Generally, it can be said that the respondents in Kota Kinabalu are exposed to many communication forms and channel of mass media and they do make use of them for information, interactions and entertainments. It proves the USG theory that the respondents seek the various communication channels or media in accordance to their own needs and circumstances. The study also proves that the respondents are not fully influence by the media that they expose themselves to or have chosen to do so. With this, the impact of the media in projecting the government image is not very apparent or significant.

However, the moderate or even minimal effects of the media do not mean that the GPR is not meeting its desired objectives. It can mean that more need to be done to realise the success of the objectives by reviewing the communication or media strategies and selecting the ones with the best chances of meeting the objectives. What is clear is that the GPRO must know their communication channels very well and which are the favourites of their target groups so that the media can be used optimally for the intended publics so that the desired objectives can be achieved.

The study also reveals that the different media have varied impact on the respondents. It depends on why the respondents use it and how they utilise it depending on their needs and circumstances. Also, it have been noted that the different messages can create its individual impact upon the targeted publics. From the study it can be implied that such effect
can occur. So, it is critical for the GPRO to take the appropriate steps for ensuring meeting their objectives.

The study showed that the credibility of the Malaysian mass media is just slightly above average with regards to the respondents’ evaluation of it. This can be said to have led to the moderate impact of media exposure on the perception of government and its GPR practice. So, it is very apparent that urgent step should be taken to enhance its credibility and the chances for success. This should include regular evaluation or research to increase the GPRO capabilities.

According to the response of the respondents Malaysia’s GPR practice can fall under the category of the public information specialist theory of PR. This is because its primary objectives are to disseminate information from sources (government agencies) to receivers (target publics) which are usually one-way communication or not so interactive while truth is vital if not essential. In Malaysia case, the messages are clear and focus like Vision 2020, 1Malaysia, Transformation Programs and the various policies as well development projects. To ensure the success of these government policies, programs, projects and many more the GPR plans and implementations are usually put in place with the Information Department given the lead and the coordination functions. Both the mass media and interpersonal communication are utilised to ensure their success as well as to sustain in not enhancing the positive image of the government.

Yet, despite the large fund and the expertise put in place the outcome as noted from this study has not been very encouraging. So, there is the need for more evaluations and studies to overcome the poor outcome and to improve the performances of the GPRO. It can include through better training and appropriate experiences for the GPRO. In this effort, the public universities offering communication specialisations should be sought to help in this effort.

This study also proves that the change theory can be very useful in studying the impact of GPR. It is true that in modern society change occurs from social interaction, communication and education. The study can conclude that for government efforts positive outcome generally is due to effective planning and implementation as well as good GPR while negative ones are unintended consequences or unexpected side effects because of poor planning and implementation plus weak PR. Thus, there is the urgent need to improve and strengthen GPR.

Another communication theory that is usually associated with government public relations practice is the change theory. For modern society it is believed that change occurs resulting from social interaction, education and communication and it can either be positive or negative. Generally, the positive outcome is because of effective planning and implementation while the negative ones are considered as unintended consequences or unexpected side effects due to ineffective planning and implementation.

This study further showed that the media and the GPRO do influence public opinion. The study reveals that 12.9 per cent of the respondents believe that the GPRO have been very successful in influencing public opinion while 43.7 per cent feel that it is successful. Only 5 per cent claim GPRO fail to do so and the rest either unsure or no response.

Government PR practice at the Federal or Sabah state level is perceived by the respondents as almost similar in terms of effectiveness and ineffectiveness. That is, with 51

40
per cent saying it is excellent or good while the rest or 41 per cent feel it is poor or weak. Thus, it is perceived as moderate or average in strength and implementation.

The findings are almost expected because it is generally perceived that the GPR strategies or campaigns are almost all from the Federal level including the funding. Rarely is it perceived that the PR campaigns in Sabah are planned and implemented by the Sabah state government. Hence, it is timely that the state governments in Malaysia should be involved in planning and implementing GPR as well as evaluating their performances or achievements even though they are conceived at the Federal level.

One of the most positive findings of the study is that more than 80 per cent of the respondents recommended that the GPRO and even politicians are given more training and experiences so that they can be more effective in their duties or tasks. This shows that most of the respondents realised the importance of effective and ethical plus interactive GPR practice for Malaysia. So, it is hope that the relevant government agencies take heed of the respondents’ recommendations as it is not only PR but also very true as their voice is essential for successful GPR.

**References**


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Advertising and Ethnicities: A Comparative Study of Sri Lanka and Northeast India

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Ethnicity has become a key interest of advertisers in diverse societies. Contrary to the popular argument that ethnic identities are threatened by the intensified influence of media and consumer culture, they have become the core sites of representation and reproduction of ethnic identities. It is arguable that in today’s (mass) mediated societies there are no ways of imagining ethnicities without the media’s influence and impact on them. Advertising, no longer a mere commercial activity, is an important component of popular culture and hence plays a crucial part in the social and cultural life of our times. Sri Lanka has long been a country of communal unrest, which culminated in a civil war. Northeast India is a region where a number of conflicting identities are in a constant battle of production and reproduction. The ways the ethnic identities are represented in advertisements in these two societies are worthy of studying in this context. When ad-makers segment a market for a particular brand, they mostly rely on ethnic identities. As a result, advertisements too become a site of reproduction of ethnic identities. This paper is intended to identify and analyze the ways of representations of ethnic identities in advertisements in Northeast India and Sri Lanka by a comparative reading of a sample of print and electronic advertisements.

Keywords: Ethnic marketing, imagining, representation, reproduction, text

On many occasions, clients have asked us to not take faces from northeast India stating that they do not represent the entire country and may end up confusing the viewers…Show me a regular ad film campaign where you have seen a north eastern face Ram Subramanian, founder and director Handloom Picture Company. (Tewari, 2014)

For Sri Lankan advertising agencies, the issue is not balancing local ethnic types, but speaking to Sri Lankans by way of actors who are either Sri Lankan in a generic way or recognizably Sinhala. Steven Kemper (2001, p. 59)

Both in India and Sri Lanka advertising is probably the most visible multinational industry; in both countries, all most all the leading multinational advertising agencies are in operation. As such, no doubt, as an industry it plays a leading role in multinational capitalism. However, advertising is not only a business, industry, or a commercial activity but also a social, cultural, and political phenomenon as has been analyzed by many social and cultural theorists, ranging
from Raymond Williams (2009) to Jean Baudrillard (2001). Despite being a multinational industry, advertising differs from country to country, region to region, allowing the construction of phrases like “European advertising”, “US advertising”, and “Indian advertising” etc. The country or regional specificities in advertising, is not a mere matter of country of origin but rather, deals with the different ways that the global is negotiated with the local in each country or region. Accordingly, advertising in any country, is about being global and local simultaneously. How advertising articulates ethnic ideologies in diverse societies is an important part of this local-global negotiation.

Sri Lanka has long been a country of communal unrest, which culminated in a civil war fought between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) (which self-declared themselves the sole representatives of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, after politically and militarily defeating the rival Tamil political/military groups), and the government forces. (For a detailed discussion on the ethnic crisis and civil war in Sri Lanka see: Tambiah, 1986; De Silva, 2012; DeVotta, 2004; Thiranagama, 2011.) The country now is facing the international community’s demand for investigations on war crimes/human rights violations during the last phase of the war. Divided across the ethnic lines yet united by legislations and constitution, the country, after five years of the end of civil war, is still meandering without a proper vision and mechanism for post-war reconciliation. Moreover, the recent rise of ethno-religious fundamentalist groups and hate campaigns against the Muslim minority (for a detailed discussion see: Stein, 2014; Gugler, 2013; Senaratne, 2014) have casted a cloud over the peace and harmony in the country.

India also is a country of ethnic diversity and ethnic unrest. Especially, Northeast India is a land for different ethnic groups and “the Northeast”, the “troubled periphery” (Bhaumik, 2009), “has been and continues to be a hotbed of ethnic, religious, linguistic and economic tension” (Barua, 2005, p. 231), now facing “insurgencies or separatist movements from over 50 groups…revolve around language and ethnicity, tribal rivalry, migration, control over local resources, access to water, and more significantly, a widespread feeling of exploitation and alienation from the Indian state” (Haokip, 2012, p. 222).

Given that both Sri Lanka and Northeast India are lands of contest of ethnic ideologies, senses and sentiments of self-respect and beyond that, right of separation and self-determination, the ideologies and violence of separatism versus national integration, make it interesting to study how advertising operates in these two lands. Also, how an industry of multinational capitalism links the global ways of consumption with the local ways of belongingness/alienation. As such, this paper intends to understand the ways in which ethnic ideologies are represented, negotiated, reconstructed, articulated, and contested in advertising in Sri Lanka and Northeast India. The focus of the paper is mainly on the most recent advertising campaigns, although it shuffle between historical examples and contemporary times for the betterment of the discussion. The secondary materials are used in contextualizing the socio-cultural relevance of advertising campaigns while a sample of advertisements is used as primary materials. In deciphering the meanings of selected advertisements a mixed method of textual reading, which includes the illuminations of semiotics, discourse analysis, hermeneutics and content analysis for the most part, is applied. As such, this is not a semiotic analysis or a discourse analysis of advertising per se. Rather, it emphasizes the importance
of a mixed method textual reading, having freedom to go beyond the limit of a particular single method.

Advertising and Ethnicities
In a broader view, advertising, all over the world, shows two kinds of people: “people similar to us” and “people different from us”. These two spans over all the models of representations like gender, class, ethnic, regional etc. Ethnic representation in advertising appears in three forms: the first, which targets the same ethnic group/s represented in, the second, which targets a different ethnic group/s than the represented, and the third, which targets to campaign across ethnicities. However, these three forms involve the subtle dichotomy of self/other, in which non-representation also becomes a way of representation. To segment a market on ethnic basis is “ethnic marketing/advertising” and to segment a market across the ethnic boundaries is “cross-cultural marketing/advertising”. These two are the “targeted versus one voice” (Business and Finanace, 2011) that marketing/advertising practitioners debate on. Although this two models make sense as marketing/advertising strategies, it is not a simple matter of “targeted versus one” when it comes to the theme of representation.

Advertising that targets the same ethnic group/community that has been represented in the campaign is the most common type of ethnic representation in advertising. This involves with many forms such as featuring the people (including the celebrities) from a particular ethnic group, depicting culture specificities, lifestyles, etc. One common ethnic ad type is “copycat” ads, which again can take many different forms. A radio jingle translated into a local language can reach a particular community not only passing the message but also giving the sense of being addressed by their own language. Print ads and television commercials (TVCs) that replace the originally used models with ethnic models are also types of copycat advertising.

Anthony J Cortse argues that the copycat advertising is ethnocentric as it “mistakenly assumes that African Americans and Latinos are simply dark-skinned white people” (2008, p. 96). This argument is sociologically valid as the “originals” always are the Whites (or the dominant groups/communities). However, as the question of representation does not involve only with the self (us) but also with the other (them), the copycat advertising brings an important dimension of ethnic representation. To put it simply, it may not be an apt response to the questions like “why them only?” and “why not us?” but, in case, to the question “why differently?”. Although the issue of stereotyping is in the core of the academic discourse on representation, we should not ignore that the image of a community that it wants to see and show the other/s is always not “as it is”, but rather “as it want to” or “according to its fantasy”.

In fact, the copycat advertising is a primary model of ethnic advertising. The developed forms of ethnic advertising today engage with the ethnicity more complex and subtle ways. “Social reality” model as termed by Cortse (2008), attempts to bring a “true picture” of the ethnic group concerned, and beyond that links the feelings, attitudes, histories, of the community with brands. Here, ethnic advertising becomes more an active site of representation and reproduction of ethnic identities. Unlike in copycat advertising, this model is inseparable from market researches. As Roberta J. Astroff argues,
“[T]exts” of market research can be analyzed and understood by analogy to ethnographies. They share the ethnographic text’s nature as an “invention, not representation of cultures”, and the result of a process of cultural production. Market researches produce a market by identifying, naming, and defining a culture as a market segment. (Astroff, 1994, p. 103)

Representation and reproduction have close ties; any attempt at representation is an attempt at reproduction. When an advertising campaign targets a particular ethnic group, representing them in the campaign and segments a market, it is, in fact, creating a market segment and reproducing ethnicity. In other words, both the market segment and the ethnicity are reproduced in the process of market segmenting for advertising. As a result, ethnic advertising that targets the same ethnic community represented/reproduced in the campaign becomes not the outcome but the source of ethnic imagination. “If anthropology is understood as ‘writing culture’, what advertising ‘writes’ ends up producing culture” (Kemper, 2003, p. 52).

The second way in which advertising engages ethnicity is by depicting a particular ethnic group in a campaign, targeting a different ethnic group. This form is frequently criticized for stereotyping ethnic groups for the gaze and (sadistic, humiliating, sexist, etc.) pleasure of another (most of the time, the dominant) ethnic group. Nonetheless, the other side of the same coin, advertising that utilizes the supremacy (beauty/whiteness/luxury) of a dominant ethnic group for the gaze and pleasure of another ethnic group, can also be taken as a sub category of this form. This is well observable in beauty and cosmetic, cigarettes and alcohol, automobile, and real estate and housing advertising in many countries.

The third form of ethnic advertising targets across ethnic boundaries while keeping ethnic representation as a matter of interest in the advertising campaign. Known as cross-cultural advertising, this category, perhaps, is getting more prominence in advertising in diverse societies. In a sense, it seems like using racial and ethnic prejudices for advertising is becoming old-fashioned while promoting ethnic harmony and respecting differences is becoming the new trend. Hence, it also seems like advertising has become the most prominent and practical site of multiculturalism with this form of multicultural advertising. Nevertheless, the criticism of multiculturalism gains much validity when it comes to this new trend of multicultural advertising. “By containing diversity in a common grid, multiculturalism preserves the ethnocentric paradigm of commodity relations that generate particularisms in the experience of life-worlds within transnational capitalism. Cultural difference sells” (San Juan, 2002, p. 347). As Slavoj Žižek argues, this is a postmodern or reflexive racism:

Today’s ‘reflected’ racism, however, is paradoxically able to articulate itself in terms of direct respect for the other’s culture; was not the official argument for apartheid in the old South Africa that black culture should be preserved in its uniqueness, not dissipated in the Western melting-pot? Do not even today’s European racists, like Le Pen, emphasize how what they ask for is only the same right to cultural identity as Africans and others demand for themselves? (2000, p. 6)

As such, “the respect for differences” becomes disguised racism; “the fetishistic disavowal of cynicism: ‘I know very well that all ethnic cultures are equal in value, yet,
nevertheless, I will act as if mine is superior” (Myers, 2003). In his essay “Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism” Žižek declares:

And, of course, the ideal form of ideology of this global capitalism is multiculturalism, the attitude which, from a kind of empty global position, treats each local culture the way the colonizer treats colonized people – as “natives” whose mores are to be carefully studied and “respected.”…In other words, multiculturalism is a disavowed, inverted, self-referential form of racism, a “racism with distance” – it respects the Other’s identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed, “authentic” community towards which he, the multiculturalist, maintains a distance rendered possible by privileged universal position…the multiculturalist respect for the Other’s specificity is the very form of asserting one’s own superiority. (Žižek, 1997, p. 44)

Unlike the earlier forms of “racist” advertising, the new form “respects the differences”. This is best exemplified in advertising multinational fast food companies like McDonald and KFC. Nevertheless, the very process of these advertising campaigns transforms ethnicity to the “ethnic Thing”, objectifying “the Other”, reducing them to spectacles or objects. Again, what Žižek reminds us about multiculturalism well fits with this form of “multicultural advertising”:

The conflict about multiculturalism is already a conflict about *Leitkultur*:

Advertise and Ethnicity: Northeast India

Much has been written about “ethnicity in (the) Northeast India” (Agarawal, 1996; Hussain, 2004; Singh, 2008). Nonetheless, the problem lies in the core of the phrase making itself, which cannot be discussed within the limits of this paper. However, in short, “ethnicities” (despite of whether they fit into the academic definition of the concept or not) in the region as a multitude and “ethnicity” in the region as an entity, are to be problematized. Do the two women hockey players in *Chak de! India* (2007) represent an ethnic identity (of the Northeast) or a regional identity? Or, as in the most recent case of Mary Kom, does she represent an ethnic identity (of the Northeast) or a regional identity? Where does the line between ethnicity and regionality in the Northeast lay; first, for the people in the region, and second, for the people outside the region?

 Perhaps, cement advertising in the region is the prime site of ethnic representation that targets the ethnic groups in the region itself. The reason behind this can be that cement being a regional product often targets a local market. Nonetheless, given the multiplicity of the ethnic identities of the region, it is a difficult task for marketers/advertisers to segment the markets along the ethnic lines. The only exception is outdoor advertising (and to some extent print advertising too, given that the local language newspapers have a considerable readership), which is cheaper in comparison to the print and electronic advertising. (The
most noted case here is the Surya cement’s “Build fresh and Strong Assam” campaign, which targeted a single state and arguably, a single “ethnic” group too.) That is the reason behind local advertising agencies mostly depend on outdoor advertising while print and electronic advertising in the region are mostly designed by the major advertising agencies outside the region (defiantly, in the metropolises).

Mostly electronic advertisements that appear in local languages are dubbed in local languages (that too by non-local people) and regionally distributed. Although one can argue whether it comes under the advertising proper or not, the music video produced for Star cement (Srinivasan, 2010) is a pioneer work in this regional segmenting and regional representation targeted the region itself. The music video brought together four celebrities from four states of the region (along with one from the mainstream) to sing a multilingual song with the theme “our Northeast our Star”. Its appeal is to the development sentiments; portraying a positive picture of building Northeast (with cement). The music video is a collage of northeast’s ethnicities and cultures (although not each and every). Interestingly, the metaphor of collage is more suitable as it at the same time a whole as Northeast but clearly depicts differences too; differences are alive within the whole. This is very evident in the way those celebrities were separately used as a part of the campaign, especially in print media. For example, continued use of the cultural icon Bupen Hazarika (even after his death) in advertising Star cement, addresses different people and different sentiments at different levels.

An advanced step of ethno-regional segmenting is well exemplified in the Dalmia cement advertising campaign for its Northeast launch in 2013. If Star cement used four figures to represent the ethnic identities of the region, Dalmia focused on a single figure, Mary Kom, to represent the region and the people of the region and hence to segment the Northeast cement market. (For a detailed discussion on Dalmia cement campaign see: Esse & Liyanage, 2014).

The incredible India advertising campaign’s depiction of the Northeast India (Nair, 2014) is one of the best examples of bringing ethnicity to the field of advertising, by the other and for the other (the campaign targeted both the international and domestic tourist markets). There is a politics of phrase making, as it is a way and act of naming, projecting, manipulating, and even dominating. “Paradise unexplored” was the tagline that appeared in the advertisements. The question is, what really is unexplored in this “paradise”? As the visuals in the advertisements prove it is not only the land and the nature but the people and cultures too. Underlying this “unexplored” is the idea of “underdeveloped’ or less civilized as Duncan McDuie-Ra argues:

Images of tribal and other ethnic groups in tourism campaigns both construct and reflect dominant ways of seeing Northeast people. The portrayal of the Northeast for the tourism market reflects the three ‘un’ myths discussed by Echtner and Prasad (2003) in their analysis of the ways Third World destinations are represented to foreigners: ‘unchanged’, ‘unrestrained’, and ‘uncivilized’. Interestingly, in the case of the Northeast, these ‘un’ myths not only cater for foreign tourists but to the enormous domestic tourism market. (McDuie-Ra, 2012, p. 92)
If one reads the texts of the incredible India advertising campaign for the Northeast in comparison to the texts of the campaign for metropolis in the “incredible India” full campaign, this is very evident. As such, this branding of the Northeast as the “paradise unexplored”, not only brings the old wine in new bottles, but at the same time, beyond that, exemplifies how multiculturalism operates as a postmodern racism, asserting that “you are different. I respect your difference (but you are unexplored)”. The cynicism at its highest comes out; “the unexplored” is to be “explored” by (an outside) “explorer”! Here we witness, what Žižek (1997) terms as the “ethnic Thing…objectification of the Other”. This objectification is not the old racist objectification but a multicultural objectification:

Multiculturalism is a racism which empties its own position of all positive content (the multiculturalist is not a direct racist, he doesn’t oppose to the Other the particular values of his own culture), but nonetheless retains this position as the privileged empty point of universality from which one is able to appreciate (and depreciate) properly other particular cultures. (1997, p. 45)

A recent television commercial (TVC) for Nestle (NirvanaFilms, 2014) with the tagline “when goodness is shared over food life smiles”, is another good example of multicultural advertising, and hence objectification of the Northeast ethnicity. “We went with a girl from the Northeast, an area we usually don’t cast from, for I think we should break stereotypes” (Bareu, 2014) the South Asia president of the advertising agency who created the commercial said to the media. The advertisement shows how the hostile attitude of a little boy towards his adopted sister changes as they start sharing food. As shown in the commercial, the family is urban middle class and Hindi speaking and the adopted girl child is from the Northeast. The advertisement, on one level, is an attempt to exploit the anti-discrimination discourse and activism, and on another, brings the notion of “sharing” as a way of changing attitudes and relations. However, a deeper reading of the advertisement generates multitude meanings. The adopted child, being a girl, inter-texts the commercial with the social and media discourse of human trafficking, the idea that the Northeast is one of the regions infamous for human trafficking, and then, necessarily with the ideas of poverty and underdevelopment, which goes well with the theme of “sharing food”.

Metaphorically, the ad is depicting the Northeast as the adopted child of “mainland family”, as the girl is adopted to the urban middle class Hindi speaking family, so the Northeast to the mainland. As such, the ad places itself in the dominant discourse of national integration and its way of articulating the minorities or the marginalized communities, be it the “good” “patriotic” Muslim, or the “adopted child”, or any other “someone”. The integration does not mean different communities getting together to make one entity, but, rather, the way others place in the mainstream. The adopted girl child climbs trees, collects earthworms into bottle, steals food, and hence gains the curious interest of her brother. As it appeared in the media, “the client particularly wanted an oriental-looking child” (Tewari, 2014). One interesting aspect here is that in the popular “the Northeast” discourses there is a regional/ethnic resemblance. To represent the northeast is not just to represent a region but an ethnicity. In popular discourse, for the mainland, the Northeast is homogeneity, which can be trimmed down to one single ethnicity. This misconception highly depends on the physical features rather than cultural differences, and hence closer to race than ethnicity.
The TVC for the KBC 2014 launch (SET India, 2014) which is a brilliant example of advertising that simultaneously targets both the represented and other. The advertisement shows a young girl from the Northeast contesting in the popular television game show, been asked to name the country where Kohima is situated. She is given four options; China, Nepal, India, and Bhutan. The girl opts for an audience poll. The scene in the studio is parallel cuts to different audiences watching the show on the television; a family (most probably the family of the contestant), three waiters (among them one a Northeast Indian), two security guards (one a Northeast Indian), and two chefs (one a Northeast Indian). When she opts for an audience poll the viewers, who represent the “mainland” laughs at her as if she is ignorant of such a simple fact, while the viewers, who represent the Northeast, seem embarrassed about not only her ignorance but people’s ignorance of the region. When the quizzer, Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan, announces the results of the audience poll that 100 per cent has the answer India and everyone knows it, the contestant replies, “yes everyone knows that but how many acknowledge it”, sending a shocking message to the audience. Moreover, her response makes the embarrassed party relieved and the humiliating party embarrassed and hence their position and roles are reversed, which can broadly be read as a role change of “mainlanders” and “Northeasterners”. The commercial plays a hide-and-seek game over truths and lies, knowns and unknowns. In fact, the commercial is reflexive as the question itself is against the 100 per cent audience poll’s result that Kohima is in India. In the commercial, the contestant, Kohima, and Northeasterners watching the show on TV, are on one side, while the quizzer and rest are on the other side, polarized though the line of being or non-being in India. It is interesting as shown in the advertisement the “mainlanders” accept it as a matter of fact when the girl counter questions, “How many acknowledge it?”

The campaign for vim bar featuring the “world’s largest family” from Mizoram (VimIndia, Sabse Badi Family, Sabse Tez Vim, 2014; VimIndia, Breakfast with World’s Largest Family, 2014; VimIndia, Football with the Family, 2014; VimIndia, 160 Birthdays, 1 Family: Sabse Tez Vim, 2014; VimIndia, Lunch with the World’s Largest Family!, 2014) is, again, about the Northeasterner, “the stranger”. A Bollywood celebrity visits the largest family to introduce the particular brand to them. The campaign shows something “strange” from the Northeast to the mainland.

The Tata Salt advertising campaign featuring Mary Kom has applied a new technique of ethnic representation. On one level, as done in Dalmia, cement campaign, tries to depict Mary Kom as a single figure that can represent an ethnic entity. However, beyond that, on the other level, it tries to negotiate this particular “ethnic figure” with the “generic Indian figure”, which makes the whole campaign double positioned both in the nationality discourse and in the Northeast discourse simultaneously. The TVCs in the campaign mixes up scenes from movie and hence takes the advantage of the filmic transformation of Mary Kom to Priyanka Chopra.

For a long, the Northeast remained untouched by the advertising industry and was considered unsuitable for the “generic Indian” model of advertising. However, the recent interest of the industry in the region has made a new way of negotiation and contest of ethnic identities in the region. The Northeast was made a “frontier” by the British, then a “political and administrative entity” by the Indian State, then “an object of study” by the academic and media discourse, and now it is the time it is being made “a brand” by the advertising industry.
Advertising and Ethnicity: Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, all the leading advertising agencies are in Colombo capital, which stands for the political and ideological power of the Sinhala majority. (To put the civil war in a metaphor, it was a south (Colombo) versus north (Jaffna) war, as such.) Accordingly, “Colombo products” are predominantly Sinhala products. As Steven Kemper rightly argues,

[The striking character of Sri Lankan life is the near invisibility of Tamils in Sri Lankan public culture. The occasional advertisement aims at a Tamil audience, but the general assumption that Sri Lankan culture is Sinhala culture is replicated in Sri Lankan advertising practice. (2001, p. 59)]

The representation of the “generic Sri Lankan” in advertising in Sri Lanka is a matter of appearing as Sinhala than really being Sinhala. In fact, as Kemper reveals, the majority of the models used in advertising in 1990s were Burghers and Tamil male models overrepresented the industry. Moreover, not only Muslims and Bohras (a Shi’a Muslim community from Bombay, famous for their business success) appeared in Sri Lankan advertisements, in some cases, advertisements were produced in India using Indian models. The ethnic identity of the model was not a problem as far as he or she fits with figure of the “generic Sri Lankan”. “To cap off the irony, when Sri Lankan consumers look at newsprint and television, they see these models – whether they are Muslim, Tamil, Burgher, or Sinhala-as, ‘sophisticated Sinhala’” (2001, p. 67). Although, now the ethnic composition in advertising industry has changed, still this remains a reality.

Nevertheless, advertising is not a mere matter of faces and figures that appear in, rather, the ideologies it negotiates, articulates, and reconstructs through those faces and figures. While the faces and figures used in advertising themselves are ideologically embedded, advertising in Sri Lanka, during the war period, and especially, celebrating the victory over LTTE, as all other sites of dominant cultural production, was a part and parcel of, both as an agent of and respondent to, dominant ethnic ideologies and war-mentality. One good example is the increased usage of “lion” symbol in advertising. The lion is the symbol that represents the Sinhala people. Although it symbolizes the nation too, appearing in the national flag, in popular discourse lions are Sinhala people. In fact, in another metaphor, the war was between “lions” and “tigers”. It is ambiguously used both for the nationality and for Sinhala people; for example, Sri Lankan cricket team is often referred as “sinha patawu” (lion cubs) regardless of the fact that players belong to different ethnic communities. Interestingly, one advertising campaign for recruiting the soldiers to Sri Lankan army, which is predominantly a Sinhala force with four regiments named after Sinhala royalty, came with the tagline “sinha patawunge paradisya” (Lion cubs’ paradise) (De Mel, 2007, p. 72). The recurrence of lion symbol in advertising campaigns in Sri Lanka hence is highly ethno-ideological. Other than the lion symbol, there are a number of ethno-religious symbols that recur in advertisements in Sri Lanka, which include ancient cities, paddy fields, ancient reservoirs etc.

During the war, some advertising campaigns explicitly supported war and dominant ethnic ideologies:
[1]In a full-page advertisement taken out by MAS Holdings, a leading business group in the transnational apparel industry based in Colombo. On 7 June 2000, which was declared War Hero’s Day by the Peoples’ Alliance government, it took out a full-page advertisement depicting an idle sword leaning on a jakfruit with the question/slogan ‘Is the sword that is not for war, for chopping jakfruit?’ A verse in the advertisement warned the public that the time for idleness was over and that duty demanded all acts of terror be punished. In its singular address to the Sinhala public (it appeared in Sinhala even when published in the English language Daily News) and the referents of farmer, poet, monk and mother (icons of a circulating popular Sinhala culture), all of whom nurture the war hero, the Tamil and Muslim ethnic other remained a structuring absence. (De Mel, 2007, p. 84)

As De Mel cites, following the February 2002 Memorandum of Understanding signed by the then government of Sri Lanka and LTTE, and the ceasefire, some corporate advertisements appeared with the taglines such as “As peace enter Jaffna so we do!”, “Mother, now you’re not alone in Jaffna”, and “Now Jaffna is in our net” (2007, p. 85). These advertisements reflect the view that Jaffna as a territory regained. She further argues that the advertising industry celebrated the (temporary) peace in highly charged militaristic language. Some of the taglines as she cites are: “In times of war the only weapon you need is talent”, “Warning explosive ideas inside”, “Graveyard for bombed ideas”, and “Back with bang!” (2007, p. 85). Further, she argues:

War, as instrumentally used in these advertisements, was merely a witty punchline, its condition brought to us devoid of its substance. But the political economy of the sign of war, kept alive by the advertisements seemingly harmlessly in this way, had a use and exchange value that made war an available option during difficult peace negotiations if necessary, and a series of advertisements by the mobile phone operator Dialog GSM kept to this circulating economy/narrative of the preparedness for war. As chief sponsor of the Sri Lankan army’s rugby squad, one of Dialogue GSM’s advertisements depicted pictures from a rugby match and locker room as precise military-like manoeuvres on and off the field. Another in the series portrayed a memo with details of the squad’s game plan ratified with a seal stating in bold letters, ‘Attack approved.’ In this quotidianness of battle even during the ceasefire, the corporate sector played a key role in mediating war and peace as a militaristic continuum: the seduction of this trajectory precisely in its masking of the alliance between national security and global capital. (2007, p. 85)

Some advertising campaigns launched during the high time of war and celebrating the victory over the LTTE clearly depicts how the dominant ethnic ideologies and global capital converge. Depicting the military as “the saviors of the nation” and “rana wiruwo” (war heroes), was a common theme that brought into advertising campaigns (Heensare, 2009; 24frameslk, 2009). One among many programmes launched to hero-warship the military, “ranawiru real star”, a reality TV show, was sponsored by corporate advertising (DialogAxista, 2010).
Advertising in Sri Lanka, thus, has been and is continuing to be reflection of mono-ethnic national identity. Although there are rare examples of minorities represented in advertising, they too have subtexts of mono-ethnic nationality.

Conclusions
Advertising in Sri Lanka and Northeast India exemplify two distinct ways of negotiating ethnic ideologies. In Sri Lanka, advertising is more direct in its mono-ethnic model and in Northeast India, the new trend is multicultural advertising as evident by the recent interest in the region shown by ad-makers. However, both the forms are in line with the logic of global capitalism; in one context cultural dominancy sells while in the other cultural differences sell. In both cases, despite of the matter of visibility or non-visibility in advertising, the Other is an “ethnic Thing”. If the former is direct racism, the latter is “racism with a distance”. In the former context, the Other is the enemy, and in the latter the Other is the “folkloric spectacle” (Žižek, 1997, p. 44). In both cases, advertising is a site of ethnic ideologies too.

Notes
1 Although, “advertising” is a vaguely used word to refer to a number of activities and stuffs, my focus here is only on the corporate display advertising/advertisements.
2 This refers to the nation island of 65610 km² with a population of 20.23 MM and situated in the Indian Ocean, below the southern tip of India. However, note that my use of the term does not mean a social or cultural homogeneity, as my focus will mostly be on the Sinhala dominated areas of the country.
3 I will be using two terms in this paper; “Northeast” and “the Northeast”. By the first I refer to the “geographical area” (which is legitimized by “[t]he political process and ‘administrative convenience’” (Shimray, 2004) that covers the eight states; Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. By the second, I refer to the discursive construct of “the Northeast” as a socio-economic and cultural entity.
4 The demand of Tamils for political power appeared in different forms in post-colonial Sri Lanka. However, the shift from demand for a federal state to demand for separate state was the crucial turning point. LTTE was the strongest militant group, which fought for the cause of a separate state in Tamil Eelam (the areas that covers northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka) with a huge military and militant power that included suicide bombers.
5 The ethnic composition of population in Sri Lanka is as follows: Sinhalese 74.88%, Sri Lankan Tamils 11.21%, Sri Lankan Moors 9.23%, Indian Tamils 5.16, Malay 0.20, Burghers 0.18, others 0.14 (source: (Census of Population and Housing - 2012, 2012). The Indian Tamils, who are the descendants South Indian labourers brought by the British to work on the coffee and later on the tea plantations and live in the central highlands of the country, did not directly engaged in militant activities (Bass, 2013). They depend on trade union derived political parties for bargaining their demands.
6 Anthony J. Corte uses the term for “an ad using a white model is duplicated with a black or Latino model” (2008, p. 95).
7 The dominant culture.
8 Ironically this is the same superstar who made a mistake tweeting “Mary Kom!! wins boxing bout, insured (sic) a Bronze! What a story! A Mother of two from Assam, creates moment of pride for India!!”, for which he apologized later (Karmakar, 2012).
9 “Mindset” is a buzzword used in advertising and marketing, which refers to a particular ways of thinking of a community.
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Community-Based Media in Promoting Identity and Culture: A Case Study in Eastern Thailand

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This paper analyses the role of community-based media in information distribution in the Riverside community, a cultural tourism destination in Chanthaburi, Eastern Thailand. It has started to produce its own media, and to use social networks to promote itself to the nation. Exploring the role of community media produced by locals will reinforce the idea that community media have provided much more effective communication channels for local people in a community environment. By using ethnographic action research as a methodology, this research gains strength through a rich understanding of the community by following an ongoing research cycle of planning, doing, observing and reflecting. Moreover, this study reflects the idea of ‘hyperlocal’ media. With approximately one hundred households on which to focus, it is much easier for ‘hyperlocal’ to reach local people by providing local news, covering local politics and engaging people in the affairs relevant to their area.

Keywords: community-based media, hyperlocal, Thailand, the public sphere

This research focuses on the idea of multiple public spheres where locals have the ability to intensify their participation by creating alternative spaces in which they are able to speak in their own voices and express their cultures and identities using their own idioms and styles (Fraser, 1990). The Riverside community is one local community in Thailand which produces its own media to serve the community members’ needs, especially that of cultural preservation which is critical for the local tourism industry. It is essential to know how media activities can unite members in this community. With more than a hundred households in the community, each community-based media plays a significant role in creating, sustaining and promoting a strong community. Through the age of digital technology, ‘hyperlocal’ or ‘space of community’ issues on the internet have been much more influential for the local community sector in every country in Southeast Asia, including Thailand.

Methodology
The research employed a small and single case study of a community, centred on the Riverside community—a popular cultural tourism destination—in Chanthaburi, Eastern Thailand. This community is about 300 years old and today encompasses approximately one hundred households.

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A key element of my methodology will be ethnographic action research (EAR). EAR is a research method which integrates ethnography “presenting a culture” into the action research plan “developing a project. EAR is an approach that can be employed to develop the project through a rich understanding of the community (Tacchi et al., 2003; Tacchi et al., 2009). It follows a traditional action research cycle of planning, doing, observing, and reflecting which will be used to explore this in-depth case study. The research is designed to fit as much as possible into the everyday flow of village life to ensure maximum participation of community members with minimum disruption. This flexibility will encourage community members to speak freely about their views on alternative media and its impact on their lives. The aim of this research is to better understand the role of community media in this particular community.

The Public Sphere

The concept of the public sphere was originally elaborated in the book, The structural transformation of the public sphere, in 1962 by Jurgen Habermas, a German sociologist and philosopher in the tradition of critical theory and pragmatism. The public sphere is an arena where individuals come together and freely discuss what influences political action. As Habermas (1989) argues, capitalism requires a public space where information can be freely exchanged. Not only information about business but also culture and politics might be freely discussed. He argues that, in evolving public sphere institutions such as salons and coffee houses, conversation took place among equals whose private interests and inequalities were suspended. As a result, it allowed for rational discussion and debate on questions of state action and policy.

By ‘the public sphere’ we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body… Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions – about matters of general interest (Habermas, 1989, p. 49).

With guaranteed access for all citizens in the public sphere, Habermas believes that these characteristics can enrich and advance a democratic state. The public sphere was expanded into four dimensions: equality of access to the arena of debate; diversity of opinions and topics relevant to a particular debate; reciprocity or the degree of interaction between people involved in a debate; and the quality or degree to which participants contributed information relevant to the topic.

I suggest that the notion of the public sphere is a critical framework for analysing whether nowadays, society can reach its own expectations. It allows the researchers to test whether the freedom of expression and public opinion are realized or limited by the distribution of the media resources.

However, as time passes, rapid social changes, social developments, literacy growth and industrialization have decreased the importance of the public sphere, thus, challenging
the relevance of Habermas’s concept. A clear distinction between public and private, identified by Habermas, no longer exists. In the 21st century, there is no equality; reason is not the main and necessary basis for discussion and debate and all citizens cannot be guaranteed access to the public sphere anymore (Butsch, 2009). As a result, the idea of multiple public spheres is proposed by critics of Habermas’s theory like Nancy Fraser, an American critical theorist.

From Fraser’s point of view, the concept of the public sphere is not adequate for the current forms of democracy which exist in late capitalist societies. She does not agree with the four dimensions proposed by Habermas and identifies inequalities that continually operate in democratic societies (Fraser, 1990). She points out the absence of subordinate groups, including women and lower classes in bourgeois public sphere institutions (Calhoun, 1992). The “absence of reference to the complexities and contradictions of meaning productions” is used to describe Habermas’s idealization of the bourgeois public sphere (Dahlgren, 1991). Moreover, based on the notion that the common good should be promoted by rational debate in the public sphere, Fraser (1990) denies that there should be no restriction on topics debated and neither should there be a guarantee that the outcome of such debates will be for the public good.

Fraser (1990) considers that the idea of a multiplicity of publics is much more preferable to the concept of a single public sphere with each sphere likely to overlap to some extent. She argues that individuals have moved away from the universalizing ideal of a single public and participate in other spheres or overlapping public discourses. The move away from the ideal of a single public sphere is important in that it allows recognition of the public struggles and political innovations of marginalized groups outside traditional or state-sanctioned public spaces and mainstream discourses dominated by white bourgeois males (Squires, 2002). A single public sphere does not provide a space for subordinated groups in which they can discuss their own ideas and assumptions about the world. Minority group members have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics, or subaltern counterpublics, in recognition of the impossibility of keeping societal inequalities out of the public sphere process (Fraser, 1990).

In this sense, I argue that community-based media as multiple public spheres have the ability to intensify local people participation by creating alternative spaces in which people are able to speak in their own voices and to express their cultures and identities using their own idioms and styles, and at the same time, challenging the mainstream.

**Concept of Community**

Concepts of community in today’s academic discussions are wide and varied. From a system perspective, the term ‘community’ seems like a living creature, comprising different parts that represent specialized functions, activities, or interests, each operating within specific boundaries to meet community needs. As exemplified by Thompson and Kinne (2011), a healthy community has well-connected, interdependent sectors which share responsibility for recognizing and resolving problems and enhancing its well-being.

Community is a broad topic within sociology, and the social sciences generally. Sociology as a special science is defined as:’the study of social aggregates and groups in
their institutional organization, of institutions and their organization, and of the causes and consequences of changes in institutions and social organization” (Reiss, 1968, p. 1).

According to Bartle (2007), ‘community’ can be defined as a sociological construct based on a set of interactions and behaviours that have meanings and expectations between the community members. The actions are based on shared expectations, meanings, beliefs and values of individuals.

From the individual perspective, people have their own sense of community membership that is beyond the definitions of community applied by researchers and those in leadership positions. Minkler and Wallerstein (2004) assert that individuals may have a sense of belonging to more than one community, and their sense of membership which is changeable over time and may affect their participation in community activities.

It can be seen that each definition of community is directly influenced by people as the main characters. As a result, it is essential to know how many individuals fit the norms of a community’s construction.

Communities and Media Geographic Territory

Some communities are immersed in geographically defined areas, but today, individuals rely more and more on computer-mediated communications to access information, meet people, and make decisions that affect their lives. Today, there has been less interaction between neighbours according to Lee and Newby (1983, p. 57), “There may be little interaction between neighbours. Rather it is the nature of the relationships between people and the social networks of which they are a part that is often seen as one of the more significant aspects of community”.

In this way, communities do not have to be solidarity groups of densely populated neighbouring countries. They might exist as social networks of friends or cousins who do not even live in the same neighbourhoods. This is why the term ‘community’ has been problematic when related to media studies. The use of the term ‘community’ can no longer assume that the audiences necessarily reside in the same geographical territory as exemplified in Kristy Hess’s study, Breaking Boundaries. She asks an editor of a small online Australian newspaper about the readers of his site in Australia. He answers,

Who is our audience? It’s difficult question really and we are still guessing. There are the usual suspects”the people who live here, but ... increasingly there are many more readers who don’t live here, but they either most certainly once lived here, they still know someone who lives here ... or they want to come and live or work here (in Hess, 2013).

Instead of focusing on a geographic locality, nowadays, scholars have focused more on how media serve community by engaging participation, points of views and media activities (Eckert, 2000). Rather than a notion defined by place, I argue that the term ‘community’ can be interpreted as embracing social systems and relations which involve the sense of sharing of the same interests among people.
Community-Based Media
There have been suggestions to reconceptualise Habermas’s notion of the public sphere shown in many studies of community and Indigenous media in Australia and Canada and the South Pacific (Avison & Meadows, 2000; Forde, 1997). They state that rather than adopting the ideal single public sphere, the term of parallel and overlapping public spheres – space where people in the similar cultural backgrounds engage in the same interests and activities – should be more emphasized. The activity called “across lines cultural diversity” (Fraser, 1993, p. 13) emerges when people articulate their own discursive styles and formulate their positions on issues which are later extracted from their preferable minor spheres to a wider public sphere. As a result, Meadows and his colleagues (2007, p. 68) point out, “What we might term, a ‘community public sphere’ can be seen as a discrete formation or space that develops in a unique context and as a product of contestation with the main public sphere”. Community-based media clearly is already deeply implicated in representing the multiple public spheres. It facilitates various community public spheres which might be incorporate a process of cultural empowerment. It is thus a resource for building multiple and complex media and cultural literacies through participation on a localised and personalised scale (Meadows et al., 2007).

There are various definitions of community media. Berrigan (1981, p. 8) defines community media as:

…an adaptation of media for use by the community, for whatever purposes the community decides. They are media to which members of the community have access, for information, education, [and] entertainment, when they want to access. They are media in which the community participates, as planners, producers, performers.

Fuller (2007) shows that community media is the media in which its members have ready access to information, education, and entertainment, and community participants as planners, producers and performers. She also describes community media as an alternative to mainstream media, supplementing it on both organizational and content levels.

To conclude, the community members are the key factor in facilitating the function of community media. There is a dynamic relationship between community media and community members.

Characteristics of Community-Based Media
There are four essential characteristics of community-based media provided in this section – localism, diverse participation, storytelling and empowerment. The first characteristic is localism. Community media is created primarily with and by people of a specific geographic place. Johnson and Menichelli (2007) assert that community media helps define the places where people live and how they relate to one another, and which also reflect local values and cultures. Localism is a community broadcasting strength. The local audiences are passionate in their responses towards community radio and TV stations. People feel like they are part of a big family, as accessible and approachable, offering places where communities can connect and providing accurate representations and cultural diversity.
The second element is diverse participation. “Community media insists on the inclusion of diverse voices within the community, and their production and distribution processes emphasize community participation” (Johnson & Menichelli, 2007, p. 3). Examples include Chinese radio stations in New York, Thai radio programs in Brisbane and Islamic community radio in Southern Thailand. These community media serve and embrace their audiences, and create in collaboration with the community they live. Meadows et al. (2007, p. 71) also state “the instances of ‘micro-participation’ enabled by community media contribute to a broader ‘macro-participation’ as participants actively adopt civic attitudes and actions and perform a pivotal role in a healthy democracy”.

Storytelling is another characteristic. Hamilton and Weiss (2005, p. 1) state, stories is important because it can make people human. Community members reflect the community’s history and culture through those stories for which community media is a channel. It allows the members to tell their story and experiences. Johnson and Menichelli (2007) point out that the stories can start a deliberative process among community members and unite people together.

The final element is empowerment. Power can be defined in terms of the relationship between people and their ability to encourage others to respond to personal needs and desires (Dahl, 1957, p. 203). The foundation of empowerment is based on the idea that power can change and even be extended. Community media is a process of giving power to individuals. It aims to put communication tools in the hands of individuals, to share access with non-professionals, and to support self-expression and community building. Community media empowers people by providing a voice to the voiceless (Hamilton & Weiss, 2005).

Role of Community-Based Media
Community-based media provides more in-depth exploration of the issues compared to mainstream media. The community media formats have weakened the value of the news productions of major media outlets. To illustrate, mainstream media, arguably, provides too simple media content while community media provides people more opportunity to explain everything in more details and also more power to control, as shown in the statement “You are more likely to do live stuff on community radio than on commercial media and that means less chance of your stuff being edited. It can be more real with community radio” (4ZZZ community group interview).

Empowering cultural preservation and transmission is also one of the most beneficial roles of community media. Community media has been chosen as channels to represent, to strengthen and to reinforce a unique ethnic identity as exemplified in Australia. The term ‘Indigenous’, ‘First people’ and ‘Aboriginal’ media and communication are employed to emphasize that those media are produced by them and for them. The power of Indigenous media can strengthen traditional ways of thinking, culture and identity. Zellen (1998, p.2) demonstrates that the major reason for the interest in Indigenous radio is the opportunity to present the Indigenous language and to rescue them from extinction. Indigenous people have been using various media such as radio, video and film as new tools of internal and external communication; beyond that, they use them to resist the outside cultural domination.

Community media has been identified as a key factor in creating community connectedness and a sense of community well-being (Forde et al., 2009). An example is the
benefit of community radio. Community radio programs also act as a channel of connecting disparate sections of particular ethnic communities which had never intended to make contact with each other (Ewart et al., 2007). Ethnic language programs in community radio have the ability to provide the locals with the sense of belonging to the community and to remind them of their national homelands.

You get to listen to the radio and you feel at home listening to your own language. This community is very isolated from other Tongan communities in Australia. Without the radio program we would feel very cut off. There is no Tongan food or music here (in Adelaide) and so the radio program gives us a sense of home (5EBI Tongan language focus group).

Public Relations and Community Tourism
Public relations (PR) is an important tool for tourism marketing. Jackson (2001, p. 1-2) introduces the concept of PR to show that it provides an overriding social benefit when people have a voice and produce long term harmony because harmonious relationships are fortified with trust. He also points out that the role of communication in PR is not just in transmitting information but also intuition and emotion.

PR has also been used in tourism industries in order to stimulate economic growth. In Asian Countries, for instance, China is a country that uses foreign tourism as a PR element in accelerating the country’s economic development. It has developed rapidly since 1978 because of China’s policy of “opening doors to the outside world” (Tisdell & Wen, 1991). As a result, in 2003, the Chinese tourism industry kept developing continuously and healthily. It reached around 3,000 billion Chinese Yuan Renminbi, an increase of 14 per cent over 2012, and provided over 500,000 direct job opportunities (Travel China Guide, 2013). Another example is the cooperation among China, Japan and South Korea. These three countries made an agreement to strengthen cultural exchange and promote the cultural prosperity of East Asia. “The three countries select a ‘Cultural Envoy of East Asia’ to not only promote cultural exchanges among citizens of the three countries, but also introduce the splendid culture of East Asia to the global audience” (Xuequan, 2013, p. 1). They also organized a joint cultural festival including art performances, exhibitions and academic seminars starting from 2014, and these activities were promoted by using the media.

Social media plays a vital role in the promotion of tourism. Tourism can no longer be examined in relation to geographic places or spaces. As Wang, Yu and Fesenmaier (2002, p. 416) state, “we cannot afford to ignore the revolutionary changes information technology brings us, which inherently affect the ways we think of linking up to each other and our notion about place and space”. In Australia, there is the “Tourism Australia’s Social Media Program” launched by Tourism Australia, an Australian Government agency responsible for attracting international tourists to Australia. One of its marketing strategies is to build competitive digital capacity by delivering digital and online devices and applications that meet target customer needs (Tourism Australia, 2014). Its marketing activities have included a focus on encouraging conversations about Australia through key social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram and Pinterest.
Our Facebook page has a high level of engagement and concentrates on showcasing beautiful and unique images from all over Australia. We mainly post user-generated content, which encourages fans to continue sharing their own stories and experiences on an ongoing basis. Every Friday the best images from the week are chosen and featured in the Friday fan photo album, which receives thousands of likes, shares and comments. Our consumer and corporate Twitter accounts and Google+ profile provide interesting news, photos, updates and facts about Australia and our Pinterest profile organises stunning photos from all around Australia into location and subject categories (Tourism Australia, 2014, p. 1).

New Media Overview in ASEAN
ASEAN has witnessed a high adoption rate for online activities by individuals along with outstanding growth in digital media. ASEAN countries show a stronger interest in new online service activities than the global audience in 2011 (Sleigh et al., 2012). The social networking service and website is highlighted as a steady increase in internet use by individuals. For example, in Indonesia, the number of social media users grew by 14 per cent in 2010, and dramatically increased by 65 per cent in 2011. In a recent year, around 40 per cent of internet users in Myanmar have Facebook accounts (Sekhar, 2012).

In cyberspace, effective community networks are formed. In Thailand, during the flood crisis, people were looking for a voice of ‘authenticity’ instead of ‘authority’ (Rodloytuk, 2011). Community people rallied around each other on social media sites especially Facebook. Rodloytuk (2011) points out that people forged new connections with ‘total strangers’ and as a result, built a community of trust where information has shared on the constantly-changing flood situation minute-by-minute. The example of a popular Facebook page is ‘Tell me quickly if there are floods (nam ma haireepborg).’

By 2015, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) has the goal of regional economic integration. Consequently, there should be a lot of development in communication inside each ASEAN country with enhancement projects of connectivity within each country. The online media cooperation in a smaller sector seems to be effective. Four Southeast Asian English-language newspapers “The Star from Malaysia, Jakarta Post from Indonesia, The Nation from Thailand and the Philippine Daily Inquirer” launched their joint e-paper subscription with the support of the CIMB Group, a leading ASEAN Universal Bank. It aims to offer opportunities to the readers to read the news from the local perspective of each country. As a Chief Executive Officer Wong Chun Waisaid, “it is an opportunity for readers to widen their knowledge and know their neighbours on a more meaningful level” (Meikeng & Tan, 2014, p. 1). E-papers are able to reach approximately 450 million out of the 600 million residents of ASEAN (The Jakarta Post, 2014, p. 1).

Within the diversity of ASEAN countries, it is hard to be a single communication society. I argue that online activity is a good start. With online media cooperation in a smaller sector, it is easier to gain the success. In cyberspace, individuals have the ability to create communities and to connect themselves with other people because it is flexible and accessible. This kind of online engagement has become a great benefit for ASEAN citizens.
Hyperlocal Media

Hyperlocal media focuses on the stories and articles which larger mainstream media organizations avoid. It serves the interests of communitywide and regional audiences. Hyperlocal media has much in common with community media in that both focus on even smaller geographic areas than national media, but it tends to be online. ‘Hyperlocal’ can be defined as:

… something beyond the traditional confines of ‘community media’, defined as ‘a range of community-based activities intended to supplement, challenge, or change the operating principles, structures, financing, and cultural forms and practices associated with dominant media Howley (2009, p. 2).

With a small area on which to focus, it is much easier for hyperlocal media to reach and attract local people by providing local news, covering local politics and engaging local people in the affairs relevant to their area. Kurpius, Metzgar and Rowley (2011, p. 774) state that hyperlocal media operations “are geographically-based……and intended to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement”. Hyperlocal sites can make engagement easier for some locals to deliver input when they cannot attend a public meeting. It has also lowered obstacles so that people can easily launch community news sites on their own.

There are also examples of hyperlocal sites emerging in many countries. One example is News Community Media’s ‘whereilive.com.au’ website in Australia. Sinclair (2010, p. 1) concludes that: “(Whereilive) is based on a newspaper. This is less of a journalistic approach. It tends to publish a lot more raw information, leaving it to the community to say what they think”. Another example of a hyperlocal media site comes from the United States. A hyperlocal news and culture blog called ‘OurChinatown or www.ourchinatown.org’, launched by the Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA), was created to serve the needs of more than 100,000 residents living in particular parts of New York, most of whom are Chinese.

Hyperlocal journalism is also popular in Southeast Asian countries. For example, in Singapore, Straits Times Online Mobile Print (STOMP) is an Asian citizen-journalism website which won the World Newspaper Association’s IFRA award for Best in Online Media in 2008 for its use of citizen journalism content to meet the changing needs of readers. This site is hyperlocally successful in engaging Singaporeans in a style and approach that is different from conventional news websites.

Results and Discussion

Of the hundred participants in the community, sixty-six are female and thirty-four are male. Fifty-nine per cent of participants are over the age of fifty. Participants aged 36-50 years accounted for twenty-four per cent while twelve per cent are 26-35 years, and only five per cent are 18-25 years. I divide the information distribution activities among the Riverside community members into 3 categories “community-based media, commercial media and the media supported by the government.
Of a hundred participants, face-to-face communication is the highest at eighty-nine per cent. People are the most powerful media in the community. The community learning center, a community meeting point, is also the popular place where the community members gather for news, information and discussion. Newsletters are the second most accessible media. The reason why the traditional newsletters work effectively is that they are free and ‘touchable’. Newsletters are produced by the community leader teams and are sent out to every household. One participant suggests that he prefers getting information from newsletters and notices rather than from the neighbours. He states:

When I am not home, the neighbour walked pass my house, so I miss some information that I should know… or I could say there is still some people who are ignored by neighbours. I think it does not work if we so much depend on our neighbours in order to get news. We need something more effective…or something up-to-dated which we can access anytime and anywhere in our house.

Online media activities such as community websites, Facebook pages and online uploaded videos can reach a small numbers of community members. The reason is the most of the community members are over the age of 50. One participant says, “the internet is just OK, but not effective because lots of people here are older. You know that they cannot deal well with this kind of innovation”. However, adults aged 18-35 have more frequent use of the internet in their everyday life for different purposes such as work-related matters, entertainment and social connections. About seventeen per cent of the community internet users state that they have participated online concerning community matters including participating in the community social media sites, responding to the chat room and also
creating blogs about community issues. Some participants point out that, although they cannot attend the community meeting, they can still be involved online.

Although online activities concerning community matters are small in number compared to other traditional media, they accelerate the sending of messages from the community to the nation, especially in the promotion of community tourism as exemplified in a Facebook post.

We have just around a hundred households in the community, but we have got nearly a thousand people following us on Facebook. There are not just us. It means people outside want to know about us…want to know what is going on in the community. When we have got something like street events, we post it on Facebook. You see… lots of people come to our community. Then, when those people come here, they take a picture and post it in on Facebook, so their friends know what is going on in our community. Now, you can guess what’s next. Yes, lots of people come here. This is so much like a snowball game (P. Chatmalai, President of Riverside Community Development Association, personal communication, August 28, 2014).

Then, I will provide the study results concerning media outlets from outside the community. The most popular commercial media which influenced the community members is the local commercial TV. Cable TV has the ability to reach 69 households in the community, while local commercial magazines and mainstream television reaches a similar proportion of around 25 per cent of the households. One of the participants says that these media outlets help to promote mainly the community tourism by stating:

I am so glad that there are some people outside interested in producing media content about this community. Local magazine like AboutChan is so informative, and the pictures in there are so beautiful. I think a lot of tourists come to our community because of they write about us, you know? I am afraid that one day they will stop doing it.

The media channels supported by the government also play an essential role in the community. Wire broadcasting services, sometimes called conventional public address systems can reach approximately 62 per cent of the participants. The system works within two square kilometres, so it is quite effective for a small area like the Riverside community. This system needs speakers to convey messages to the community members. However, there are still the concerns about the wire broadcasting services. There are insufficient numbers of the speakers and sometimes the speaker volume is not loud enough. Voice broadcasting through speakers, broadcasting car and radio programs is so important for a commercial community like the Riverside community because it is flexible for merchants to receive the information while working. “I am always busy during the day. My mouth, my hands and my eyes are for the customers. I prefer something that I can listen to it while working at the same time,” according to one participant. However, there is also a suggestion to the government how to improve the media activities. A variety of news content is needed: “the governments should help promoting the community in the other ways, not only the street market, we need to promote more about our community value and history,” one participant said.
When comparing the three media use categories, I found that the community members depend on community media and themselves. Around sixty-two per cent of the participants rely on the media produced by the community. Second in importance is commercial media produced within the province. The government media is just the supporter which helps strengthen the communication in the community. As one participant commented: “community media should work together with the help from the government and other commercial media, so the community members will not miss anything important”.

Another beneficial aspect of the community-produced media is that everything in the community can be news (Sinclair 2010). One of the participants gave an example: “There was a wife run after her husband around the community. It was so funny that she tried to hit her husband with the wok. People shared the incident on the Facebook, and discussed on the community web board. This means news for me”.

Figure 2. Comparison of three media use categories

Figure 3. Media content
The media content concerning commerce and tourism has the most influence on this community. Ninety-nine per cent of people state that they receive the information about the community commercial events like a street market, and eighty-eight percent is about community tourism. Content concerning community issues is the second influence of seventy-nine per cent. The community history is seventy-seven per cent. Beyond that, the community members are also interested in the political news at both the local and national level accounted for sixty-five per cent. Lastly, seven per cent of them searched for the information about health in community media.

Furthermore, the participants were asked to rate how much the community-based media made them feel more involved in the community.

![Figure 4. Influence of community-based media](image)

However, a few participants do not agree that the community media are effective in uniting them. These participants claim that they are disconnected because they have no ability in producing, managing or changing anything in the media yet, sometimes, they do not agree with the media content. The highest proportion that is thirty per cent of the participants say they feel involved in the community because of the media, but the media need to be more updated. Twenty-six per cent of the participants feel very involved and another twenty-six per cent feel much more involved showing that the community media plays a vital role in the community involvement. These participants point out that the media made them feel more important. As one participant says, “I feel like I have been cared for someone”.

Those community media I discussed above help Riverside community members develop in their own context and style. They are very effective in allowing community members to become empowered, to preserve their cultural background, and to promote themselves to the external environment. According to Meadows et al. (2007), the community media facilitates this unique community public sphere which can be defined as a cultural empowerment. The online media activities among the community members also suggest that, while the internet obviously breaks down geographical boundaries, hyperlocal is the tool to deepen the meaning of a place and to deliver a range of new and better local services.
(Howley, 2009; Kurpius et al., 2011). It means people have more ability to attend community participation in their households.

The role of community-based media in Riverside community functions as community connection, cultural preservation and as a tourism promotion. Community media has the perfect role in creating community connectness and engaging people’s participation (Forde et al. 2009). As the study shows, about fifty-two per cent of participants claim that the media makes them feel involved in the community, which can lead to a higher level of individual participation which enhances the democratic environment in the community (Meadows et al., 2007).

As Forde et al. (2009) state, community media are more able to convey the nation’s social, identity and cultural diversity which I found to be practical in this community. The highest percentage of media content about community history shows how community members preserve their value and facilitate their identity and culture to others and the nation by using their own media outlets.

Moreover, the Riverside community promotes their history as their cultural product, their attractions and events by using their community media, especially online channels. There are a significant number of social media activities. Using Facebook to promote tourism has been found effective in engaging people to a high level without the barrier of space and place (Wang et al., 2002).

Conclusion
This is another study of reconceptualising Habermas’s concept of the public sphere. I conclude that community-based media has an effective ability to characterise the unique Riverside community members in the community environment. Their identity, history and tourism as their cultural products have been distributed as the flow of information within the community and also into the macro environment. The message they create within both traditional and hyperlocal media in their own ‘community public sphere’ can strengthen the people’s perception of themselves as community and also to promote their community as the national cultural tourism to the wider Thai public sphere.

References


Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Regional Bureau for Communication and Information UNESCO.


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Social media has altered the design of modern society. It has changed the way people lived and worked. Though no profession or industry is left untouched by the communication revolution stirred by social media, yet communication professionals bore maximum impact. This paper analyzed the usage and perception of public relation (PR) professionals regarding the use of social media, particularly, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The primary research questions, this paper attempted to find answers for, are: (i) Did social media transformed the modus operandi of PR practitioners?; (ii) Do PR practitioners rely on one social media tool/platform over the other?; and (iii) To find out whether social media is an aid or a burden for a PR practitioner? By attempting to answer these three questions the paper explored fresh aspects of social media with regards to public relations. For the purpose of the study a survey was conducted among PR practitioners based in Delhi and working with prominent multinational companies or PR agencies.

Keywords: Public relations, social media, social networking, media usage, media professionals

According to anthropology the relationships between leaders and their supporters have been significant throughout historical events even before the recorded history. These relationships played decisive roles in the major breakthrough events in the past. The leaders soon understood the importance of these relationships and made efforts to improve by getting closer to the followers. The foundations of democracy were led on this premises as free flow of information is the prerequisite for any democratic society (Kellner, 1995). Eventually, public relations, one of the fields of mass communication and journalism, emerged as a discipline to cater to this very need of democratic societies in a systematic manner. Bernays (1952) talked about three elements of public relations:

The three main elements of public relations are practically as old as society; informing people, persuading people, or integrating people with people. Of course, the means and methods of accomplishing these ends have changed as society changed. In a technologically advanced society, like that of today, ideas are communicated by newspapers, magazines, films, radio, television and other methods (pp. 11-17).

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Information technology (IT) revolution of 21st century led public relations (PR) to evolve to become one among the most powerful professions. Rapid advancements in information and communications technology (ICT) sector directly impacted the public relations industry. Communication being core produce of the field, this development provided an impetus to the PR and communications activities both inside and outside the organizations.

Communication being its core produce, the PR industry was directly impacted by the rapid advancements in ICT sector. It is a fact that this development provided an impetus to the PR and communications activities. Moreover, it has simultaneously empowered and equipped PR professionals by offering a large number of communication platforms that remarkably strengthened their armory. Though many surveys and studies have proved that PR practitioners have widely accepted, appreciated and gained from social media and other ICT, yet many feel that it’s all the more challenging to keep oneself equally updated with the technology given such a pace, especially in the case of those engrossed deep into communication processes. Hence, PR practitioners often come across such dilemmas where they feel trapped in the web of communication technologies.

Every other day a new social media platform emerges and creates a niche for itself in the existing sphere. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Google Plus, LinkedIn are among many other social media platforms that grew by leaps and bounds in a considerably short span of time. WhatsApp, being the latest fad among all social media enthusiasts, prompted mushrooming of similar instant messaging platforms like WeChat, Line, Viber, Kakao, Kik and many more. This puts up a challenge and builds pressure on PR practitioners and communication professionals. The primary aim of the present study is to gauge the penetration and reception of these social media platforms among public relations professionals.

Clear and Weideman (2001) explained the role of a public relations practitioner as a link between management and employees by channeling information to the employees. While discussing the importance of channel in the process they mentioned that ‘the public relations practitioner should always communicate with employees through appropriate internal communication channels and not through mass communication media directed at large, diverse audience’ (Annette Clear, 1997).

Modern day public relations practitioner cannot afford staying away from the technology for even a single day if not an hour. He has to remain online 24X7. Fortunately, majority of the public relations professionals have already adopted almost all the latest social media platforms (Eyrich, 2008).

According to a study, jointly conducted by Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and IRIS Knowledge Foundation and published in The Hindu on April 11, 2013, there are more than 62 million Indians using social media and the count most likely touch 80 million mark before 2014 parliamentary elections. More importantly 97 per cent of them are on Facebook. A three year longitudinal trend study conducted from 2009 to 2012 ascertained that public relations practitioners consider ‘Facebook as most important new communications medium for public relations messages’ (Wright, Hinson 2011).

Communication professionals almost everywhere act as a bridge of information among different stakeholders. They are always expected to be quick and transparent channel of communication on behalf of their clients, organizations or groups. To meet such demands and requirements they add social media to their existing toolkit. They use specific tool or
platform of communication to contact specific stakeholder based on the characteristics and preferences of the latter, objective of the communication, nature of the massage etc., among other factors.

This process of selecting one communication platform or tool over the other has to be exhaustive and accurate all the time to avoid unexpected crisis. The present study attempted to explore the above discussed process with special focus on major social media platforms. It also aimed at analyzing the present status of the transition from traditional media to social media specifically among PR practitioners. The media mix devised by these professionals was also investigated.

Though the topic of this research may sound quite new and challenging, yet various components separately have been much discussed by scholars in the areas of Public Relations and Social Media. The motive was to further explore the areas considering the conspicuous change being brought in by the social media and other ICTs. In fact, Public Relations is not the lone profession that is facing the heat, however here the responsibility, involvement and immediacy is much more.

This paper analyzed the usage and perception of public relation professionals regarding the use of social media, particularly, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The primary research questions, this paper attempted to find answers for, are: (i) Did social media transformed the modus operandi of PR practitioners?; (ii) Do PR practitioners rely on one social media tool/platform over the other?; and (iii) To find out whether social media is an aid or a burden for a PR practitioner?

Research Questions
The basic research questions are further broken into subparts to be more specific.

RQ1: Did social media transform the modus operandi of PR practitioners?
   (i) Do they consider using social media for their professional use?
   (ii) Do they use all the tools simultaneously?

RQ2: Do PR practitioners rely on one social media tool/platform over the other?
   (i) Do they feel that some social media tool/platform is better than the others?
   (ii) Do they choose specific tools for specific audience?

RQ3: Do PR practitioners consider social media as an aid or burden?
   (i) Do they feel social media have strengthened their toolkit?
   (ii) Do they think their audience trust social media more than the traditional media?

The present research also attempted to explore the opinion of the Public Relations Professional regarding the use of social media for public relations profession. It also explored their opinion over the shift from traditional to social media and weather they see social media as a threat to mainstream traditional media.

Method
For the purpose of the study a questionnaire was developed using five point Likert scale. Delhi, the capital of India is taken as universe considering that almost all the public relations agencies or PR wings of multinational corporations are either based in Delhi or have their offices in the capital. To achieve maximum diversity in the sample, alumni of Indian Institute
of Mass Communication’s (IIMC) Advertising and Public Relations batches of before 2010 were considered for the study as they spread over the capital’s top Ad and public relations businesses.

As an alumnus of Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), which is regarded as the most prestigious institute for Public Relations education in India, the researcher has access to alumni data of the institute. Using the same data a total of 75 Public Relations professionals, who are working in reputed PR agencies or PR departments of multinationals in Delhi, were approached using emails and personal visits. Out of these 75 respondents, 63 respondents completed the survey successfully.

The respondents were given clear instructions before filling up the questionnaire. Each of the 15 questions focused only on the use of social media for professional use, the opinion of the user regarding the tools and their usage and regarding the usefulness of the social media tools for public relations profession.

Analysis and Findings

The data was analyzed using SPSS. Out of the total 63 respondents, 42 were males and 21 were females. There was variation in age groups however majority of the respondents were from three age groups that range between 30-44 years. A total of 15 questions were asked in the questionnaire, out of these, first eight questions were related to the perception of respondents about the usage, role and credibility of social media in Public Relations’ context. The next seven questions dealt specifically with the use of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube for professional use. The questionnaire was developed using the five point Likert Scale. Respondents are asked to select only one out of the five options that suits them most. It was also communicated to them that checking more than one box will lead to disqualification of the questionnaire for the final research analysis and conclusion. Below are the tables displaying the demographic details of the respondents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid Per cent</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Male</td>
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<td>66.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Age Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid Per cent</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>17.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
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<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>39.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>76.2</td>
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<td>40-44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>45 and above</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ 1. *Did social media transform the modus operandi of PR practitioners?*

To find out the opinion of PR practitioners about whether social media have changed the way they worked there were two questions in the questionnaire. Out of these two, one was direct question asking the same and the other included functioning of all the departments in an organization. Majority of the respondents agreed that social media has changed the way PR industry worked. Almost negligible part of the sample disagreed with the statement (Table 3). 87.3% of the respondents agreed to the statement that social media has changed the way all the departments in any organization worked, while none of them disagree as the rest of 12.7% neither agree nor disagree (Table 4). 63.5% of the respondents agreed that they used Facebook, YouTube and Twitter simultaneously; however a significant number (36.5%) said they never used these tools together to reach their target audience (Table 5).

Table 3. Do you agree or disagree that social media has changed the way PR industry worked?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
<th>Valid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Do you agree or disagree that social media has changed the way all the departments function in an organization?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
<th>Valid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Do you use Facebook, Twitter and YouTube together for professional communication purposes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
<th>Valid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ 2: Do PR practitioners rely on one social media tool/platform over the other?

Considering the challenge of finding the most appropriate tool to contact given target audience, the present research sought opinion of PR practitioners in this regard. However a considerable number of 38 per cent disagreed to the statement that different target groups should be contacted using specific social media platforms that complement their unique communication needs. 25.4 per cent agreed with the statement while 36.5 per cent remained neutral (Table 6).

Table 6. Do you agree or disagree that different target groups should be contacted using specific social media platforms that complement their unique communication needs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid Per cent</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ 3: Do PR practitioners consider social media as an aid or burden?

Emergence of social media has put a challenge before seasoned professionals as sometimes they find it hard to be familiar with the technology especially ICTs. 69.8% of the respondents accepted that social media have added value to the profession (Table 7). More than 90% of the respondents agreed with the statement that social media have made professional life easier for a Public Relations professional whereas none of them disagreed with the statement (Table 8). 66.7% of the respondents admitted that Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are more important components of a PR professional’s tool kit as compared to traditional media tools. None of them denied the statement (Table 9). In response to the statement that people trust social media more as compared to the traditional media 68.3% of the respondents disagreed (Table 10). When asked specifically whether Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are trusted by their target audience majority of the respondents, i.e. 84.1% agreed that audiences do trust these three platforms (Table 11). There was uncertainty among 42.9% of the respondents when they were asked whether social media has the potential to take over the traditional mainstream media and they remained neutral whereas 20.6% agreed and 36.5% disagreed with the statement (Table 12).

Table 7. Do you agree or disagree that social media has added value to public relations services?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid Per cent</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8. Do you agree or disagree that social media has made professional life easier for a Public Relations professional?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid Per cent</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>25</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>49.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>50.8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Do you feel that Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are more important components of a PR professional’s tool kit as compared to traditional media tools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid Per cent</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Do you agree or disagree that people trust social media more as compared to traditional media?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid Per cent</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>25.4</td>
<td>25.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>42.9</td>
<td>68.3</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>23.8</td>
<td>92.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Do you think that Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are trusted by your target audience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid Per cent</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12. Do you agree or disagree that social media has the potential to take over traditional mainstream media of today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid Per cent</th>
<th>Cumulative Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>36.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>42.9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
This study was aimed at exploring the usage of social media among public relations professionals. To assess the usage and to gauge the opinion about social media among public relations professionals is critical at this moment as both the discipline and the technology is growing at a very fast rate. Moreover, public relations professionals are in the business of communication, thus it becomes more pertinent to study their usage and adoption of social media. This study helps to understand the present status of social media in public relations terms and also provides inputs for prognostications about near future of the relationship between the two. The questionnaire that was designed with the help of five point Likert scale, was kept simple, short and precise. Due to this the response rate was fair.

All the research questions were answered during the study while touching upon some additional issues. Some interesting findings were noted during the study. Majority of the respondents disagreed to the statement that people trust social media more than the traditional media. Though it is a fact that people take information from social media first and then they verify with traditional media. In the research question (RQ 3), the objective was to understand whether social media help PR practitioners for their professional objectives or it is a burden for them as it has become a compulsion for any brand, company or organization today for their growth and survival. However the primary objective was to understand the usage and impact of social media on public relations practices and as per the feedback of RQ 1 from respondents, it is evident that PR professionals accept that social media has transformed the way they worked. Apparently, they also agreed that it not only changed PR but all other departments in any organization. It would also be interesting to know how social media is transforming other disciplines like medical or manufacturing industries etc.

It was also found that majority of respondents disagree to the statement that different target groups should be contacted using specific social media platforms that complement their unique communication needs. However it would make much more sense if the above statement is followed. Choosing an appropriate tool for specific purpose would definitely be more beneficial not only for the communicator but for the organization and the receiver as well.

Conclusion
Findings of this study clearly indicate that the public relation practitioners are using social media for their professional use. However the medium is new and the PR community may
take some more time to adopt and modify it as per their special needs. Social media has become part of business strategies among multinationals and large organizations but there are many organizations and businesses that are still reluctant to adopt it and make use of it. There are so many hidden aspects, probabilities, expectations, possibilities and mysteries related to the phenomenon of social media. Three research questions in the present study explored the attitude of PR professionals towards social media usage and adoption. It can be concluded that PR professionals are making good use of the tools that social media provide and the future of the medium is bright with numerous new uses and platforms to come along the way.

References

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Branding Unity: Impact of Advertisements on Patriotism, Unity and Communal Harmony

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Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi, India

Patriotism and national unity have become favorite brand positioning propositions for advertisers in India. The paper explores the reasons behind the popularity of these patriotic themes that also embrace notions of nationhood, communal harmony and national unity in commercials and public service advertisements. While these patriotic themes used to be the exclusive domain of the government media in the country, they are being taken up in a big way by private business houses in their public communication endeavors. The research study has examined six frequently telecast advertisements on Indian television networks centered upon the theme of national pride, communal harmony and national unity. While tracing the historical context of these advertisements, the paper also attempts to study their impact upon the public. The primary research for the study comprised interviews with respondents to explore the impact of these advertisements upon the public. The findings of the study show that positioning brands on the themes of national pride, unity and patriotism succeed in establishing a strong emotional connect in public minds leading to brand recall.

Keywords: Public service advertisements, corporate social responsibility, positioning, branding,

Advertising and marketing managers of the 21st century have to contend with multiple markets, multiple customers, multiple channels, multiple media, advertising clutter, advances in information technology and audience fragmentation among several factors (Slutz and Kitchen, 2000). This has resulted in the development of the Integrated Marketing Communication approach described as a persuasive communication strategy to strengthen the strategic and tactical power of branding (Clow & Baack, 2004). Integrated Marketing Communication aims at executing persuasive brand communication programmes for long-term relationships with customers. Integrated Brand Promotion (IBP) is a term used interchangeably with IMC since innovation in marketing communication is the reason behind the conception of IBP. Brand image grows out of brand positioning and adds a multi-dimensional character to the brand (Jethwaney & Jain, 2012). A brand is usually a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify and distinguish the goods and services of one seller from those of rival brands. The whole idea behind brand positioning is to imbue the brand with a well-defined identity so that it can carve a distinctive place in the minds of the target group. The aim is to occupy a prime position in the minds of consumers to maximize the potential benefit to the company.

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The branding strategy under study here pertains to patriotism and unity and is akin to that of a 'nation brand'. According to Fan (2006), while a nation brand does not offer any tangible product or service, it denotes and includes a wide range of factors and associations. These associations could pertain to place-geography, natural resources, tourist attractions, people, race, ethnic groups, history, culture, language, political and economic systems, social institutions, infrastructure, famous people, picture or image. Rose (2003) explains that the state plays a vital role in cultivating certain attributes of a democratic citizen. The state plays this role either openly or subtly through the propagation of certain symbols and advertisements that symbolize the nation brand.

Previous studies akin to this topic pertain to Nation branding by Fan (2006), wherein the author explains that in theory, nation branding could help a nation to improve its image. However, Fan (ibid) accords only a partial role to nation branding as there are several other factors that impact the image and perception of the country and for branding to yield results the product has to possess good attributes. A similar study by Rose (2003) pertains to government advertising in Canada and the creation of national myths. Rose (ibid) has tried to explain that advertising has played a major part in constructing national myths to quell the nation’s fragile sense of identity, exacerbated by a vocal minority population. However, in the Canadian case, the study indicates that the government advertisements are speaking at the Canadians rather than involving them in genuine conversation, resulting in further marginalization. Gilmore (2002) discusses the brand positioning of a country and presents a case study of Spain. Gilmore (ibid) explains how the core of a country’s brand must capture the spirit of its people and how it can be developed into brand positioning.

The present study discusses the branding of national unity, patriotism and communal harmony in commercials on Indian television channels. This kind of positioning which figures prominently as branding strategies in Indian advertisements can be termed as positioning by cultural symbols. Chopra (2010) notes that several marketers make use of deeply ingrained cultural symbols as a brand positioning strategy to identify something very meaningful for the people and to gain an edge over competing brands. Another way to look at such advertising is to link it to creative appeals. It is the way in which an advertising message is formulated in order to provoke the desired response from the target audience. Types of appeal include rational, emotional, product-orientated or consumer-orientated appeals. A creative appeal refers to the approach used to attract the attention of the target group or to exert a positive influence in their minds towards the product, service, or idea. It is something that moves people, speaks to their wants or need, and excites their interest. Advertising communication is often regarded as persuasive communication, based on information or emotional appeals about product benefits, designed to create favorable mental impressions that turn the mind towards purchase. Advertisers attempt to create a unique selling point (USP) to highlight the superiority and unique characteristic of their brand in comparison to rival brands.

In this research study, the genres of advertisements have cashed in on the emotional appeal of patriotic themes which have been classified into three broad categories:
(i) Public service advertisements (PSAs) telecast by the government media;
(ii) Corporate social responsibility advertisements (CSRs) issued by renowned business houses; and
(iii) Advertising commercials for products.

An analysis of each of the above genres of advertisements reveals how they have positioned their brands around the theme of patriotism and national unity. This kind of nation branding approach is a marketing and communications technique used to promote a nation’s image. Such an approach, according to Fan (2006) focuses upon a clear, simple, differentiating idea with an emotional message which can be comprehended by diverse audiences.

Methodology
The methodology used for this study involved a qualitative analysis of six advertisements centered on the theme of patriotism and national unity. Interviews were also conducted with 40 respondents to find out the impact that the symbols of nationalism which these commercials projected made upon them. The respondents, numbering 40 were young, college-going students belonging to the age-group of 18 to 20 years. The rationale behind the selection of the youngsters was to ascertain whether branding patriotic appeals created any impression upon their minds and to assess the advertising impact upon their perceptions. India today has a rapidly growing youth population (13-35 years), which constitutes 40 per cent of the total population. The youth population in the age group is projected to increase to nearly 64 percent by 2016. The youth have become a lucrative consumer target group for all brands today as they seek to lure and tap this group of buyers.

The brand recall test approach was applied to ascertain from the respondents if they could recall a set of advertisements that they viewed on television during the period 2010-2014. The advertisements that were listed for recall belonged to the three categories mentioned above: public service advertisements, corporate social responsibility advertisements and advertising commercials for products. The respondents were asked which aspects of the ads they could recall such as the selling point of the communication, music, brand attributes, tag lines, narratives, images and choreography. Secondary data sources that comprised gleaning into articles on advertising helped to generate views of advertising experts for insights into the rationale behind the use of patriotic appeals in advertisements.

Qualitative Analysis of Advertisements on Patriotism

Public Service Advertisements by Government Media

The Social Responsibility Theory arose at the end of the Second World War after it was realized that the Press ought to fulfill the informational, social and moral needs of society (McQuail, 1987). The Social Responsibility Theory of the Press sets the normative guidelines for the media requiring that the media should not only be socially responsible but should also set the agenda for the society’s good. The Indian media set out to operate on the normative model of the development media theory which advocates that in the interests of national development, the freedom of the media needs to be curbed to an extent. According to McQuail (2010), the mass media in developing societies have to be garnered towards
nation-building efforts with the commitment of these societies to economic, political and social development as a primary national task.

In India, while there are no curbs on Press freedom, there are government controls on the state-owned broadcast media: Doordarshan (Indian Television) and All India Radio where information flow is regulated despite the creation of the Prasar Bharati Corporation in the nineties that had mandated to give more autonomy to the government-run media. The Directorate of Audio-Visual Publicity (DAVP)\footnote{2} functions as a nodal agency for the various Ministries and Departments of the Government of India and has been working as a catalyst of social change and economic growth over the years. The government agency has been working towards creating awareness amongst the masses on socio-economic themes, seeking their participation in developmental activities and for eradication of poverty and social evils. National integration and communal harmony, commemoration of 50 years of India’s Independence, figure amongst the several community welfare subjects publicized by DAVP. Social marketing is done by the government to directly address a social problem or cause to change people’s behaviour, cognition, values, actions (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

Two of the famous social marketing campaigns on national unity that have been regularly appearing on the state-run Indian television network, Doordarshan for over two decades pertain to (i) Spread the light of freedom; and (ii) Mile Sur Mera Tumhara.

(i) ‘Spread the light of freedom’ is a musical video. The music for this video was composed by Indian music director, instrumentalist and composer, Louis Banks and is based on the soundtrack of the film ‘Chariots of fire’. The video became immensely popular in the 1990s and the tune became symbolic of Indian patriotism and unity. The video set to lilting instrumental music showcases Indian sportspersons carrying the torch of freedom to instill a sense of national pride. It is also a tribute to the excellence in sports that these men and women have attained by giving their best performance for the nation.

(ii) In a similar effort at promoting the message of patriotism, Doordarshan promoted the musical video ‘Mile Sur Mera Tumhara’, which brought together Indian achievers from various fields like cinema, music, sports and the arts to instill a spirit of patriotism, national pride and unity. The advertisement aimed at spreading the message of unity in diversity amongst India’s different linguistic communities and societies. The lilting vocal rendition of this track, ‘Mile Sur Mera Tumhara’, has won nation-wide appreciation, gaining and maintaining almost a national anthem status ever since it was telecast in the late 1980s.

Both the above social marketing campaigns initiated by the government broadcaster, Doordarshan were value campaigns intended to instill a sense of national pride and unity in diversity among the viewers. In keeping with the tenets of the Indian constitution, themes pertaining to communal harmony and unity in plurality are played up regularly by the government media in their patriotic messages to present the secular fabric of the country.

A recognition and recall test of both these advertisements carried out on a group of 40 college-going students revealed that the majority (70 per cent) of the youngsters
remembered the Doordarshan advertisement, *Mile Sur Mera Tumhara*, while 20 per cent could recall the musical video ‘spread the light of freedom’.

Social responsibility advertisements use a proactive approach to social problems (Clow & Baack, 2004). Rather than focusing on damage control or giving publicity to the dangers of disunity or disharmony, both the aforementioned government advertisements tried to convince viewers about the positive outcome of unity in diversity and cultivation of a sense of national pride.

**Corporate Social Responsibility Advertisements by Business Houses**

Many companies engage in corporate social responsibility initiatives so that the public does not perceive them merely as profit-making bodies but as companies that have a concern for community welfare. Social responsibility is the obligation of an organization to be ethical, accountable and reactive to the needs of society and for this purpose socially responsible firms undertake two tasks: eliminating negatives and doing positives (Clow & Baack, 2004). Such cause-related activities make organizations appear as socially responsible and help to create strong bonds with consumers. Keller (2012) points out that CSR can enhance the brand image for a company and transcend normal marketplace transactions with customers.

Sony Television in India took up the social causes of religious unity, patriotism and unity in diversity through CSR advertisements on these themes. This is in keeping with socially responsible and altruistic marketing activities that companies engage in to build a strong company image and for generating brand loyalty. Sony TV has engaged with cause-related marketing by promoting advertisements on the theme of unity. These commercials have worked well for the Sony television channel that has captured the entertainment segment in the country with strong TRP ratings. These advertisements positioned themselves with the most popular Sony TV show, ‘Kaun Banega Corepati’ based on the famous American show - Who wants to be millionaire? The advertisement used the KBC show format and presented the anchor of the show, Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan as the brand ambassador for propagating the message of national integration. The most popular of these commercials was presented through an emotional drama format that brought out Hindu-Muslim unity wherein a Hindu contestant on the KBC show is helped by a Muslim neighbour via telephone to clinch the answer to a question. The contestant wins the show and the message of brotherhood between two diverse communities is established in the commercial. The emotional poignancy that is brought forth in this commercial has won a lot of appreciation from viewers.

The second advertisement in the same series on Sony TV has brought out the message that the North East state of Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India. The context of this ad can be traced to the recent spate of attacks on North East students in some parts of the country. The other context for this advertisement is to reaffirm that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India and can never be a disputed territory that China seeks to capture. Both these messages have again been brought out through a KBC contest format with Amitabh quizzing a North East contestant. This commercial has been popular with a large section of viewers.
‘Vande Mataram’ is yet another television commercial in the series of CSR advertisements. ‘Vande Mataram’ is a musical album composed by Indian music composer, producer and singer-songwriter, A.R Rahman commemorating 50 years of India’s Independence. Thirty-nine of India’s top musicians—from Hindustani musicians that include Girija Devi and Shiv Kumar Sharma to Carnatic maestros like Nithyashree Mahadevan and M Balamuralikrishna, from playback singers like Sonu Nigam and Alka Yagnik to folk singers like Lopamudra Mitra and Lakhkhandas Paul — have sung verses in this album. ‘Jaya He!’\(^4\), a limited version of the Vande Mataram album, comprising four verses, set to music and produced by Saregama, was presented to the nation by The Times of India and unveiled at the 9 pm News Hour on the television channel, Times Now. ‘Jaya Hey’ which is based on the Indian National anthem Jana Gana Mana has been sung in 39 Voices by top musicians of India. Saregama, in association with the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, launched the album Jaya Hey to commemorate Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore’s 150th birth anniversary. India with its rich culture and heritage displays immense diversity; and its national anthem Jana Gana Mana written by the Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore articulated his philosophy of universal brotherhood and harmony in five verses written in praise of the nation. The National Anthem is just the first verse out of these. In this album, for the first time, all five original verses have been included.

The maximum recall from the audience in this category of CSR advertisements was recorded for the KBC commercial on Hindu Muslim Unity (61 per cent), followed by 39 per cent for the KBC ad on North East Unity and 25 per cent for Jaya He. The results show that Sony TV’s CSR ads have worked well in spreading the message of unity since the audience remembered and also appreciated the commercials for the emotional appeal.

Advertising Commercials on Unity and Patriotism

Corporate houses in India are cashing in on the theme of national unity to market their brands. In this category, four advertisements were selected pertaining to four product brands, namely, Bajaj Scooters, Pepsi, Coke and Dalmia Sugar. These four brands have played up the theme of national pride and patriotism in their advertisements.

Bajaj scooters advertised itself as the scooter for modern India with its jingle ‘Bulund Bharat ki Bulund Tasveer, Humara Bajaj’. The Bajaj advertisement presented the brand as a trustworthy and credible brand that has had an unshakeable track record of excellence which is the hallmark of a modern and towering nation. The word ‘bulund’, implies, ‘towering’ and is emphasized for the brand and for the nation in the jingle.

The Pepsi ads drove home the point that they were the Official Sponsor of the Indian cricket team and cashed in on the patriotic sporting spirit with their slogan “Go India go”. Pepsi used an authoritative executional framework in the commercial to convince viewers that it is the official sponsor of the Indian cricket team implicitly stating that Pepsi has the superior edge over other brands.

The rival brand Coke capitalized on the happiness quotient that the soft drink provides with the slogan ‘Cricket Ki Khushi’ and the Coca Cola advertisement featured the company’s ‘Happiness Ambassador’\(^3\), and cricketing legend, Sachin Tendulkar. Coke used Sachin Tendulkar as a celebrity endorsement strategy since the cricketer scores in terms of trustworthiness, likeability, credibility, believability and persuasiveness.
The Dalmia Sugar group cashed in on the strides made by the Indian economy and used the slogan *Mera Bharat Bada Ho Raha Hai* (My India is growing Big). Dalmia Bharat Group is an Indian conglomerate with a legacy and expertise of 75 years in the field of cement, sugar, and power. The advertisement used the informative format to showcase the performance of Dalmia Sugar.

All the above-mentioned brands have positioned themselves as nation brands imbued with patriotism. All the above brands brought in creative copy, ingredients of music, colour and motion to grab the attention of viewers. The audience recall test brought out that the Pepsi ad scored amongst the audience and was most recognized with 67 per cent audience recall, while Coke notched 31 per cent recall. Bajaj scooters with their catchy jingle notched up 33 per cent, while Dalmia Sugar got an 8 per cent audience recall.

The results show that Pepsi captured the zest and enthusiasm of a cricket hungry nation and received the largest share of recall.

**Public Perceptions**

The AIDA principle in advertising tests the Awareness, Interest, Desire and Action on the part of the consumer after he sees the advertisement. When exposed to advertising stimuli, consumers tend to respond favorably or unfavorably during a particular exposure occasion. These attitudes can be either cognitive wherein the consumer may form attitudes towards the advertisement based on execution criteria like copy and layout. The other dimension is the affective dimension in which consumer forms attitudes based on emotions evoked by the advertisement. It has also been suggested that a consumer’s pleasant feelings regarding ads for a new product may provide a key input into her or his over-all global attitude towards the product, and therefore, the probability of choosing the new brand (Shimp, 2000).

The results of the audience survey have shown that noticeability and awareness levels rose in the way brands positioned national pride, patriotism and unity. The responses show that in Category 1 of public service advertisements, the highest recall went to the government-sponsored advertisement, ‘*Mile Sur Mera Tumhara*’. The respondents said that the advertisement commercial evoked the positive emotions of unity that it aimed to induce. They remember the advertisement for the music which they found melodious and most respondents said that it painted the rich and diverse culture of India.

In the second category of CSR ads, the KBC ad featuring Amitabh Bachchan with the message on Hindu-Muslim unity was most recalled. The audience said they were emotionally moved by the portrayal of inter-religious harmony and brotherhood of humanity.

In the third category of commercial products using the theme of Indianness and unity, the maximum recollection on the part of the audience was for the Pepsi advertisement - Official Sponsor of the Indian cricket team with the catchphrase, ‘Go India go’. This was followed by the advertisement for Bajaj Scooters. When asked for the reasons for their recollection, the Pepsi ad stood out for its creativity in projecting the theme of patriotism, while Bajaj won hearts for its jingle that touched an emotional chord with its message of pride in Indian goods.

The results of the study also establish the psychographics of today’s youth who were the target group for this study. The respondents who were interviewed came across
as young, enthusiastic impulsive buyers who sought excitement and variety in brands. They stated that they were highly fond of cricket and took tremendous pride in the Pepsi slogan, Go India Go, which emphasized for them India’s winning position in the game. The youth were equally buoyed up by the lyrics of Mile Sur Mera Tumhara, which actually had its genesis in the 1980s, the eras that belonged to the older generations of their parents and grandparents. Majority of the youth who were interviewed stated that the PSA, Mile Sur Mera Tumhara showcased the rich diversity of their country and imbued a sense of national pride in them. Added to this, was the lilting and melodious Indian classical music of the advertisement which they all stated was enjoyable. Majority of the respondents could identify patriotism and unity as the unique selling points of the ads. They commonly discussed these commercials in terms of the following attributes: brand name, music, tagline, celebrities (wherever used) and choreography.

Advertisers are of the opinion that positioning brands around the theme of patriotism work well for brands since they present amazing opportunities to showcase the nation’s pride and confidence as being on the top and amongst the best. According to advertising analyst, Esha Guha, ‘Connecting the core values of a product/service with the nation’s vision and values can be a fascinating and exciting challenge, if leveraged intelligently. However there should be a brand-fit like the patriotic Hamara Bajaj, Mile Sur Mera Tumhara’ (ibnlive.com).

According to political commentator, Paranjoy Guha Thakutrta ‘these ads’ that project patriotism and national pride ‘are doing their job for whatever they are worth. They may not be the most creative, imaginative and professional examples of advertising excellence, but the intent is honourable and well-meaning.’ Mathias, an independent marketing professional, believes, ‘Should a brand anchor it and establish a relevant and powerful connect with patriotism – like the fabulous Pepsi Freedom ads in 1997 commemorating India’s 50th year of independence – then it could result in powerful and memorable communication’ (ibnlive.com).

Discussion
In today’s age of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), the emphasis has shifted from the marketer to the consumer and the emphasis is upon creating a continuous dialogue with the consumer, developing strong brand identity and harnessing media effectively for the promotion of products and services (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000). Branding here entails elevating the intangible attributes in the brand. While initially a brand may be synonymous with the product it makes, over time through advertising and influences it can develop a series of attachments and associations that exist over and beyond the objective product. The research study focused on Branding patriotism and unity in advertisements.

The findings of the study point out that positioning the brand on these themes of national pride, unity and patriotism succeeds in establishing a strong emotional connect in public minds. The results of the audience survey establish that the positioning of unity succeeds best in public service advertisements (PSAs) as well as CSR ads. The prime time telecast and repetition of these patriotic on all major national occasions has given these brands a favourable disposition in the minds of the public. As for commercial products, the amplification factor raises chances for brand noticeability. Pepsi, as the official sponsor of cricket is
undoubtedly well positioned in sending across the message of national pride and patriotism for a cricket crazy nation.

Musical jingles succeed in establishing the emotional bonding with the public as was seen in the largest recall for the government PSA Mile Sur Mera Tumhara. In an age of advertising wars, patriotism is a theme that advertisers are increasingly turning to for marketing their brands. Such brands are regarded as credible by the public. The bigger the ad blitz the better the chance of success in branding unity. This reaffirms that one single idea-especially if it involves a great brand concept-can change a company’s entire future’ (Gobe 2009).

The results of the audience recognition test have shown that brand patriotism works best when the advertisement is run during a national event or occasion. The highest audience recall was for Mile Sur Mera Tumhara, which is broadcast regularly during national occasions such as Independence Day and Republic Day. Similarly Pepsi as Team India’s official Sponsor was timed to coincide with the World Cup Cricket tournament. This naturally gave the brand an added edge since it establishes a strong patriotic connect with the public. This is in line with the view that brand positioning involves establishing key brand associations in the minds of customers and other important constituents to differentiate the brand and establish (to the extent possible) competitive superiority (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

In all these brands, patriotism and unity have been used as the USP, directed towards the excitable state of mind of the target audience. The positive emotional appeals of unity and patriotism have succeeded in establishing the emotional connect with the audience. Branding patriotism is a powerful proposition to attract viewers since the benefit appears credible and distinct. According to Frank (1985), emotion-based appeals and positively framed messages are more effective in older markets. This has been proved in the Pepsi and Bajaj brands since the public recalled them as they were old, strong, established brands. The use of patriotic appeals has invested these known brands further with a set of positive connotations and associations in the minds of the audience. This is in consonance with the branding principles in the 21st century (Bedbury, 2002) which state that great brands establish enduring customer relationships through emotion and trust. Rather than technology or product attributes, branding principles today stress upon relevance, simplicity and humanity (Bedbury, 2002 cited in Kotler & Keller, 2012).

The study has shown that emotional advertising through the use of national pride, unity and patriotism serves to evoke powerful emotions among viewers eventually leading to brand recall. Such a cultural branding strategy helps to build iconic, leadership brands. The emotional connect with the consumer works well when brands tap into inter-religious communion or emotions of patriotism and national pride. This kind of cultural branding makes consumers a part of the ‘brand journey, wherein they are beginning to own brands and participate in their creation’ (Lafley cited in Kotler & Keeler, 2012). In all these ads a common factor has been the way in which the narrative logic unfolds to include actions, desired experiences, defining events and the celebration of success – all of which contributing to national pride upon which these brands are positioned.

The study reaffirms the perspective that there is a similarity between corporate brands and country brands since both seek stability and prosperity, and the interests of the two are in some respects similar and they increasingly overlap, work in tandem and derive
strength from each other (Gilmore, 2002). All the categories of advertisements discussed in this study showed that patriotism portrayed by commercial brands complement the government disseminated ads and ultimately serve the cause of nation branding.

The study further shows that active positioning of nationhood and unity through branding holds great potential and gives a brand a competitive edge over rival brands if timed well to fit in with historical occasions and mega events.

Notes
2 Information on DAVP sourced from the DAVP website www.davp.nic.in accessed on October 2, 2014.

References

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**Jyoti Raghavan** is an assistant professor in the Department of Journalism at Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi, India. Her research interests include development communication, sociology of journalism, integrated marketing communication, political communication and news analysis.
This research work is an investigation into the reception of anti-smoking advertisements that make use of “fear appeals”. The objective of the research is to bring audience perceptions, interpretations and making sense processes of such advertising campaigns to the limelight. Instead of measuring effects or effectiveness of anti-smoking messages using shocking images, this project has at its basis the assumption of an active audience that interprets, makes sense and decodes media texts in various ways. Research methods used in this study are qualitative by nature. Research findings show that the prospective audience champion the use of anti-smoking advertisements and see the use of fear appeals as a one-way road to drawing the audience’s attention, they nevertheless perceive these communication efforts in a highly individualized manner, resisting to advertising techniques of persuasion and showing signs of desensitization towards fear appeals. Findings show that advocacy advertising using fear appeals are always decoded within the wider media context and the identity of smokers themselves often nourished by media representations of smoking, which plays an role in the way the audience gives different interpretations and relates to these messages.

Keywords: Advocacy advertising, advertising campaign, anti-smoking, fear appeal

Indian People in particular and the countries all around the world in general walk everyday next to posters in the streets, watch television advertisements and hear jingles or radio announcements about practicing safer sex, planning their family life, saving the planet, reducing their alcohol or cigarette consumption and so on. Public service communication campaigns are very commonly used to reach the mass audience about important social issues. Cigarette smoking traditionally has been considered to be a serious threat to public health and therefore, there always has been great interest in developing and implementing effective anti-smoking campaigns for reducing the prevalence of smoking. “One approach is to enact laws and regulations which restrict opportunities for smoking or raise its costs.

Communication campaigns in India and also in countries all over the world communicate the message that people cease from using tobacco products, via anti-smoking television advertisements (public service announcements) supported by printed advertisements in magazines, the daily newspapers and posters in busy city streets. Various studies have
explored the efficacy of such anti-smoking Public Service Announcements (some of them arguing for and some of them against their potential to lead to healthier behaviour, namely smoking cessation) and others have focused more on their content, although their internal components remain relatively under-explored (Beaudoin, 2002).

More aggressive advertising strategies appear to be more effective for reducing tobacco consumption. Emotional appeals, and especially appeals to fear, widely used in health promotion campaigns and anti-smoking advertising in particular (which is the basis of this research report), are another ‘useful social construct’ for examining anti-smoking Public Service Announcements (Beaudoin, 2002) and their effectiveness has been widely researched as well. Fear appeals are described as: “a persuasive communication attempting to arouse fear in order to promote precautionary motivation and self-protection action (e.g. stop smoking). Fear arousal is an unpleasant emotional state triggered by the perception of threatening stimuli.”

This piece of research aims at investigating the way in which one specific part of the audience, namely young adult smokers, make sense of this somewhat unique kind of advertising (anti-smoking advertising using appeals to fear) in their everyday lives and within the broader media environment. This is not a study of effects or a measurement of the advertisements’ effectiveness in getting people to quit smoking; it is a qualitative study that seeks for an in-depth exploration of the active involvement and diverse interpretations of the audience, with a deep understanding of how these intersect and can be influenced by the audience’s personal characteristics, their involvement with wider media representations and discourses around smoking and health in general, and finally, by the interaction of the audience with anti-smoking advertisements as texts open for interpretation.

Therefore, this paper tries to shed light on an area that remains under-explored in media and health promotion research moving away from effects and quantitative measurement of the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of public communication campaigns promoting healthy behaviors, it tries to put the audience into the spotlight for a deeper understanding of the audience’s point of view when receiving and making sense of these texts, proposing for a more qualitative approach when trying to understand how best to communicate health to the public via advertising.

Theoretical Framework
This research is mainly framed by the reception approach of the audience; in investigating the reception of shocking anti-smoking advertisements, the audience is put into the spotlight and, rather than searching or measuring (quantitatively) for ‘effects’, the audience’s engagement with hard-hitting anti-smoking advertising material will be investigated. Instead of using one single theory or relying on the work of one key theorist, this research tries to make use of several key concepts stemming from the work of many scholars.

Hypotheses
H1: This research has at its basis the assumption or the hypothesis of an ‘active audience’ that interprets, makes sense and decodes media texts in various ways.
H2: It also assumes that shocking anti-smoking advertisements are never received and decoded in isolation from the wider media environment, recognizing therefore the importance of the viewing context and the social and personal characteristics of their audiences.

Objectives
(i) To highlight the ways in which the audience, as well as trained consumers, understand and find useful, if at all, public communication efforts and social marketing techniques and test the belief of several scholars that these propose mainly individual solutions to a social problem like smoking, linked with deeper rooted social problems.
(ii) To investigate and highlight the ways that the audience not only decodes but also emotionally relates and copes with hard-hitting images used in antismoking campaigns.
(iii) To find out if the audience finds these really ‘shocking’ or ‘hard-hitting’ or if claims about desensitization towards powerful images can be justified.
(iv) Using the concept of identity in combination with theories of social representations the researcher also investigate the way that media representations of smoking (whether positive or negative) influence the perceptions of the audience about smoking, how this interferes with the formation of their own identity as smokers and how that, in turn, lays a role in receiving and understanding hard-hitting anti-smoking advertisements.

Research Questions
(i) How do young smokers make sense of anti-smoking advertisements using fear appeals?
(ii) How do young smokers understand these communication efforts within the wider media environment?
(iii) How do they process emotionally fear appeals? Are these advertisements really shocking?
(iv) What other feelings or emotions are involved in the process of decoding such messages?
(v) How is their identity as smokers influenced, if at all, by media constructions and representations of smoking?
(vi) How does the way they see themselves as smokers and the way others see them-in turn, influence the way they make sense of antismoking advertisements?

Research Design and Methodology
Going beyond the quantitative measurement of ‘effects’ of shocking anti-smoking campaigns, to the understanding of how audiences make-sense of these in their everyday lives and within the broader media environment, requires more qualitative approaches where audience views and interpretations are well documented and analysed. This piece of research does not include an analysis of the advertisements themselves as texts (be it in image or film form) nor does it include any form of quantitative measurement of their content. However,
carrying out this piece of research meant taking up a wide research and detailed reading of many existing studies on anti-smoking advertisements’ content and textual characteristics.

The main method used in this research is that of qualitative interviewing chosen as the best suited method for the reasons explained in the section that follows. Fifty individual interviews were carried out with twenty five male and the rest female respondents from B.B. Ambedkar Central University, the city of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. After these, the respondents had already taken part in the individual interviews, were asked to participate in one more individual follow-up interview, where they were shown two clips of a recent anti-smoking campaign as stimuli to liven up the discussion and bring to light viewpoints and perceptions that might have remained uncovered during the first series of interviews.

**Public Health Communication Campaigns**

Public health communication campaigns are communication efforts to improve the lives of individuals and the fabric of our society very commonly used to reach and inform the ‘mass’ audience about important social issues, they are called public in the sense of excluding no one from their messages and also in the sense of addressing the audience as citizens, as an ‘active public’ who have to choose to be persuaded to take action on a social problem (Roser & Thompson, 1995). Communication that aims at influencing complex and persistent behaviour of the audience must perform three functions: inform audiences about these behaviour and their consequences, persuade audiences to cease or avoid those behavior and finally, train audiences in skills necessary to translate intention into action. The media offer economy and uniformity in mass distribution that make them highly attractive options for communicators wishing to influence widespread behaviour change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One to One Communication</th>
<th>One to many communication</th>
<th>Backdrop Communication</th>
<th>Key message using mass media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Small media</td>
<td>Particular approach</td>
<td>Foreground communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Social Advertising: A Tool for Health Promotion**

Public communication campaigns have been used broadly for the promotion of healthy attitudes and behaviours. The majority of the Indian population are familiar with public health communication efforts, communicated mainly via television advertisements - known as Public Service Announcements or PSA’s. Myriad of studies have explored the efficacy of such public service announcements that have often caused controversies and public discussion about their appropriateness and efficacy. Public Service Advertising is a highly visible communications strategy used to promote health and other issues of public interest and concern; “ the pervasiveness of advertising makes it seem powerful and useful for health promotion” (Dorffman & Wallack, 1993). Health promoters turn to a number of disciplines (communication theory, social psychology and so on) in order to make best use of the media (Hastings & Haywood, 1991) and thus, promote health to a mass audience more effectively; recently, much has been written about commercial marketing as yet another source of insight for more effective campaigns for social issues and especially public health
promotion (Hastings & Haywood, 1991: 135). Often the term social advertising is used
synonymously with mass media campaigns for health promotion or for shaping attitudes on
other social issues (Hastings & McDermott, 2006; Chapman et al., 1993). The first formal
definition of social marketing was that of Kotler and Zaltman (1971):

“Social advertising is the design, implementation and control of programs calculated
to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product
planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research.”

Anderson (1994: 110) proposes a revised definition that seems better suited for the
application of social advertising to public communication campaigns: “Social marketing is
the adaptation of commercial marketing technologies to programs designed to influence the
voluntary behavior of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the
society of which they are part.” Marketing technologies - used heavily by the tobacco
industry itself to ‘sell’ smoking as fun, stylish, cool - are this time being used to ‘sell’ healthy
behavior and good health or self empowerment becomes the product advertised and
promoted” (Hastings & Haywood, 1991: 140). Perhaps the most useful perspective social
marketing gives to public health communication campaigns is the focus on the audience; as
Hastings and Haywood (1991: 144) say: “To communicate successfully we have to
understand our audience’s point of view, we have to climb into their skins and walk around
in them. The consumer orientation that underpins social advertising is a good starting point
for doing this.”

Social advertising proponents argue that their programs include the development of
skills, consumer participation and activism (Chapman et al., 1993: 117) and that all such
programs are oriented toward “empowering people to change threats to their health and
well-being (including economic and social deprivation, objectionable advertising of health-
compromising products, and environmental degradation)” (Chapman et al., 1993). However,
not all scholars share the same enthusiasm about the potential of social advertising for more
effective and audience/public-centered public communication campaigns. Contrary to the
opinion of many scholars advocates of the application of social advertising to health promotion
are very skeptical about the ability and power of a practice like advertising used for many
years in the service of consumerism and individualism to address the audience as a public
for a social issue of paramount importance like public health and are also concerned about
its ethical dimensions.

Health promotion expert Lawrence Wallack identifies several limitations of the
application of social advertising to health communication and promotion efforts: first of all,
its close correspondence to more general advertising and marketing practices makes it an
approach open to criticism as being manipulative and ethically suspect. Many see social
advertising efforts as a form of social control and stress the importance of social responsibility
even when it is for people’s ‘own good’. Moreover, social marketing faces the difficult task
of reducing the psychological, social, economic and practical distance between the consumer
and the behavior (here smoking cessation) and as Wallack argues the limited success of
previous health promotion campaigns does not leave room for much optimism (Wallack,
1990b: 158). More importantly, Wallack argues that marketing in any form reflects commercial
values and interests and promotes consumption as a way of life (Chapman 1993); social advertising is promoting single solutions to complex health problems, downplaying or completely ignoring the social conditions that give rise to these problems in the first place.

**Literature on Fear Appeal**

Fear is a negatively valued emotion (Witte & Allen, 2000); various models and theories have been developed to explain and or describe the factors involved in the processing and making sense of messages using hard-hitting images and appeals to fear; most of them stress the role of not only cognitive but also emotional responses involved in this process. Some of the most important theories about fear appeals are reviewed below. The curvilinear model or drive model (McGuire, 1983; Janis, 1967) suggests that fear acts as a drive to motivate actions up to a certain level of fear arousal beyond which it becomes counter-productive. In simple words, these theories suggest that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between fear and attitude and therefore moderate levels of fear produce the most attitude change. The parallel response model, proposed by Leventhal (1970), suggests that emotional and cognitive processes are produced separately by fear appeals; emotional factors control the process of controlling the fear of the threat while cognitive factors control the efforts to control the threat itself (whether the proposed behavior change -e.g. smoking cessation- will be enacted).

Roger’s (1983) protection motivation theory suggests that the effectiveness of fear-arousing communications is the result of four interacting variables: perceived severity of the threat, the perceived probability of its occurrence, perceived efficacy of the recommended response and perceived self-efficacy (one’s beliefs about his/her ability to actually perform the recommended response/action). In this model, the role played by the emotion of fear is restricted to an indirect magnification of the perceived severity of the threat (Hastings et al, 2004). Rogers’ model suggests that the four aforementioned variables produce in the individual a ‘protection motivation’ that determines the degree of behavior change.

Witte’s (1998) recent fear appeal theory, extended parallel process model, uses Levanthan’s theory as its basis and uses a combination of all above theories to provide a new model that as Witte and Allen (2000) summarize suggests that fear arousal works as follows: first, individuals evaluate their susceptibility to a threat: if a threat is perceived as relevant to them or significant, then they become scared and this fear gives them the motive to take action in order to reduce or control the danger and thus lessen the perceived threat. Therefore, individuals think about the recommended responses advocated in the persuasive message and adopt these as a means to control the danger. Public Service Announcements using fear appeals and health promotion campaigns in general, are only a tiny part of the media messages the audience receives on a daily basis. For this reason, in what follows, the researcher wish to turn the discussion to the wider media context in which they are produced and more importantly received, and focus on the audience itself.

**Fear Appeal in Public Health Campaigns**

Appeals are widely used in public health communication campaigns and are “a useful social construct for examining anti-smoking television advertisements” (Beaudoin, 2002); emotional
appeals in particular are prevailing in public communication campaigns (DeJong & Atkin, 2008). Recent campaigns aimed at smoking cessation as well as smoking prevention in India and other countries all around the world have used fear-arousing, hard-hitting images, as have campaigns for road safety, prevention of HIV/AIDS, breast self-examinations, exercise promotion and so on.

A large body of research has tried to provide answers as to whether and in what way, if any, threat or fear appeals can persuade the audience to change their health behaviors (Hastings et al, 2004). Some studies recommend against their use (Austin, 2005), while others suggest that fear arousal is integral to persuasive health messages (Witte, 2006). Other studies have investigated the amount of fear evoked in parallel with the resulting amount of attitude or behavior change (Hastings et al, 2008) and have reached different conclusions: some argue that the more fear the more the ‘desired’ effect is achieved while others argue that moderate rather than high levels of fear can actually be more effective.

Apart from the diversity of views regarding their effectiveness, fear appeals, used almost always along with an underlying health campaigns’ emphasis on personal responsibility, have also raised concerns about the ethical dimensions of their use. Fear appeals are rejected by many who according to deontological or duty theory believe that causing anxiety and distress in order to persuade is fundamentally wrong regardless of the cause you are trying to serve or the ultimate societal consequences (Hastings et al, 2009). According to this view, fear appeals should be used to the extent that they allow for personal choice and autonomy. Others, express their ethical concerns regarding the design of health messages that make use of fear appeals in parallel with direct reference to personal responsibility and an implication of culpability if one does not follow the recommended practice; they point out their concerns about the potential of such messages to elicit a negative self-image and identity and also the danger they engender of labeling, blaming or stigmatizing (Guttman & Ressler, 2001). Other scholars express their concerns for what they call the ‘unintended effects’ of health communication campaigns using fear appeals and point out that desensitization might be one of the most common and important of these.

Table 2. Advertisements contain fear appeal components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat Component</th>
<th>Number of Ads</th>
<th>Percent of Ads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat Severity</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability/Susceptibility (print)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability/Susceptibility (Electronic)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Efficacy</td>
<td>16 (excluding telephone)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Media in Health Promotion**

The media are deeply embedded in our everyday lives and our lives in turn, are punctuated with mediated experiences (Silverstone, 1999). Within the debate about media power, one can wonder what the role of the mass media could be in promoting the health of the public. Viewpoints on this issue are highly divergent and are supported by a wide spectrum of arguments (Wallack, 1990). At the one end of the spectrum is the argument of those who believe that the media are a “valuable and willing partner” (Wallack, 1990) of health promoters.
From this point of view, the power of the media and positive media representations can be used to inform, activate and ultimately empower audiences regarding public health issues. At the other end, are those who believe that the media can never be an effective channel for communicating and promoting public health; instead they consider them to be a great barrier in this procedure as the media are, as they argue, always driven by profit and the need to sell the greatest number of consumers to advertisers within the culture of consumerism and individualism supported and circulated by the media, any form of public service is a very low priority (Wallack, 1998).

Dorfman and Wallack (1993) argue that often public health communication campaigns in the media themselves are simply a reflection or a consequence of the individualization and commercial culture promoted by the mass media in general. In public health communication campaigns, the deep, complicated roots of problems are virtually ignored in favor of messages that hold the individual person responsible. This is true in the mass media as well. News, entertainment programming, and advertising all tend to hold people responsible when they depict health problems. This may be a reflection of the strong underlying ethic of individualism or it may be a consequence of storytelling conventions that give preference to the “personal angle” over the more complex and less emotion-inducing institutional forces that contribute to health problems. The mass media routinely omit social causal factors for problems.

In relation to understanding health relevant attitudes and behaviors this has led to a focus on a neo-liberal sense of agency, where people themselves are responsible for constructing their identities and biographies and where consumption is recognized as having symbolic significance in this ‘construction’ process (Pavis et al., 1998). “Casting members as individuals is the trademark of modern society” writes Zygmunt Bauman (2002) and continues: “individualization consists in transforming human identity from a given into a task and charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that task and for the consequences (also the side-effects) of their performance”.

**Findings**
The respondents are of the opinion that they find public health communication campaigns in general useful and necessary; they all agreed when asked that they fully understand and appreciate their reason of existence for the ‘common good’ and understand them as a sign of ‘concern’. Interestingly enough though, all respondents were eager to note that these campaigns would have no impact on them personally and also to demonstrate a ‘knowingness’ toward marketing and advertising practices, that would not allow them to “fall for advertising tricks.

Although anti-smoking campaigns in particular, were also characterised as indispensable for reminding people of the dangers of smoking, at a personal level all respondents believed that these campaigns could not make them, personally, quit smoking for two main reasons: the first one was a decision that only they could make for themselves and secondly, because, as they said, they could see through advertising techniques and that made advertisements less persuasive in their eyes. Closely linked to the ethical concerns about the use of social marketing as a mild form of social control, all interviewees showed
a resistance, at the individual level, of ‘being told what to do’, declaring that their self-
determination and a sense of personal autonomy was crucial to them.

Table 3. Confidence intervals for smokers vs. anti-smokers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-smoking media messages</td>
<td>0.89 (0.81-0.98)</td>
<td>0.89 (0.81-0.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors smoking</td>
<td>1.20 (1.00-1.44)</td>
<td>0.82 (0.65-1.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarette brand names</td>
<td>1.75 (1.54-1.99)</td>
<td>1.92 (1.60-2.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers/magazines</td>
<td>1.37 (1.26-1.48)</td>
<td>1.37 (1.26-1.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free cigarettes</td>
<td>2.62 (2.37-2.89)</td>
<td>3.83 (3.32-4.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free bids</td>
<td>2.37 (2.13-2.63)</td>
<td>2.85 (2.43-3.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarette brand name</td>
<td>2.62 (2.39-2.86)</td>
<td>2.62 (2.30-2.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidi brand name</td>
<td>2.58 (2.35-2.82)</td>
<td>2.76 (2.42-3.16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations

This research provides findings that have to be considered in light of the limitations involved. First of all, respondents of this study were all young adults that lived or studied in the area of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh and therefore results may or may not be representative of the general perceptions of the target audience of anti-smoking advertisements.

Also, I believe it is crucial to note that apart from gender, other social and cultural characteristics of the respondents like class, nationality and race were not taken into consideration in this study, however it would be very interesting, if not necessary, to be considered in similar future research. Moreover, qualitative interviewing has proved more difficult than thought at first and this, combined with my own inexperience as a researcher and the fact that many of the respondents were personal acquaintances of mine and at times put too much effort in giving me the data they thought I wanted, could have influenced more or less the above findings. Finally, due to the restrictions placed upon this research, most importantly time, this study did not include an analysis of the media text themselves which would be worthy of analyzing in future studies, with a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods so that both media material and audience reception are investigated.

Another suggestion for future research that could provide interesting findings could be a comparative research between different age groups for an understanding of the different way these might make sense of antismoking, shocking advertising and also a transnational study, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, for the study of texts used and audience perceptions, across countries.

Summary

This piece of research has tried to investigate a widely researched issue and a media and social phenomenon such as shocking and anti-smoking advertising, adapting a more qualitative approach and focusing on the audience’s interpretations, readings and perceptions rather than searching for effects or measuring changes in behaviour. The purpose of the qualitative methods used was to understand how a certain type of audience, young adult smokers, engages with and makes sense of these controversial media texts. Data were rich and the findings were many, however, they can be summed up in the following: the audience engages
actively with anti-smoking advertising using fear appeals as the basic part of public health communication campaigns and diverse interpretations and readings are produced; most of them are emotional rather than cognitive responses and the audience find different ways to produce different and resisting meanings of these messages often facilitated by a positive self-image as smokers nourished by positive media representations of smoking - and to cope with the feelings and emotions these provoke. It would be necessary to confirm these findings by conducting more individual interviews and also group discussions, among the same target audience or using more age groups in order to investigate age differences or similarities. Advertisements themselves as texts, using threat or fear appeals should also be analyzed and useful comparisons could be made between campaigns and audience perceptions from different countries to give an insight of the cultural implications involved in the meaning-making process.

References
Communication and Advocacy: M Padhy


Dr. Mahendra Kumar Padhy is an assistant professor in the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Central University, Lucknow-226 025, India.
This paper examines the dynamics of access and exclusion in children’s Internet use, in both private and public school spaces and interrogates the role of socioeconomic and demographic predictors as well as the schooling system in shaping Internet habits. More specifically, it explores the nature of Internet use by primary school children, mainly for education and information and attempts to understand the differences across and within two types of schools—a rural public school and an elite private school. Through in-depth interviews, this research investigates the level of computer and Internet literacy among the primary school children in the age group of 8-10 years and reports the differences observed among the various social dimensions. It attempts to stress the significance and need in today’s context to provide the opportunities for physical and material access so that disadvantaged children are not excluded from the digital opportunities.

Keywords: Digital inequality, Internet use, Internet access, Internet literacy, digital natives, digital exclusion, social inequality

The opportunities the Internet offers for education and learning are vast, and it is significant to investigate the ways by which schoolchildren use and integrate the medium into their learning process. Within the academic discussions and public debate on the Internet habits of children, there is a general assumption that the Internet poses threats and will have negative effects. Nevertheless, there is a need for research from an educational perspective and it is imperative to raise critical questions to understand how school going children interact with the Internet.

Various reports and surveys on Internet consumptions reveal the increasing trend in usage, both globally and within India. As on June 30, 2012, the Internet world stats report estimated Internet users in India at 137.0 million. Additionally, the report states that India ranks third among top 20 countries with the highest number of Internet users, China with 538 million users ranking first, followed by the United States in the second rank with 248.2 users (Source: Internet World Stats). According to the major findings of the I-Cube 2013 report, released by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and IMRB International, the number of Internet users in India has reached 205 million in October 2013 and is estimated to reach 213 million by December 2013 (Internet in India, 2013).
In Coimbatore district, the research setting for the present study, the number of households owning computers and laptops with Internet connectivity is 63.27 million, which is 6.7 per cent in the State of Tamil Nadu. Coimbatore also ranks fourth in the State in ownership of computers and laptops (Census 2011, http://www.censusindia.gov.in).

One of the most significant findings of a 2006 study, conducted by the IAMAI was that the access from schools and colleges remained insignificant at 6 per cent, and the report recommended the need to strengthen this access to facilitate Internet use by the non-affluent classes (Source: Internet in India, I-Cube 2006 Report). Five years later, the 2011 report states that the Internet usage of school going children has seen a substantial rise and they have started using the Internet more than in the past decade owing to the e-learning services and educational information available to them (Internet in India, I-Cube 2011).

Marketing organizations, market research firms, software companies and associations release annual findings or periodical reports on Internet access and penetration, primarily based on nationwide surveys and present statistical percentages of use in metros, small towns and sometimes in rural areas. However, all these reports focus on increase in Internet ownership, and mobile internet use but do not give details about the patterns of use and the disparity. There are surveys estimating and predicting use of social networking sites by youth, but few reports on children. A similar standpoint by van Dijk (2006b) that most digital divide research is based on quantitative data collection and that there is a lack of qualitative research supports this argument. According to Warschauer (2003), India has a strong Internet penetration as indicated by the census and surveys, but the access is largely restricted to major urban areas.

The present study aspires to make a modest contribution in this direction, with its focus on the specific ways in which children participate in the digital environment and negotiate the presence of the Internet in their lives, as well as how others are excluded from these opportunities. This study focuses on children from both affluent and poor family backgrounds in the age group of 8-10 years studying in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grade under the primary school level and attempts to understand their Internet experiences and the intersection of social and digital inequalities in a rural context.

**Research Context and Significance**

Indian schools represent opposite ends of a broad spectrum, with well-funded hi-tech élite schools at one end, and poorly funded low infrastructure public schools at the other. Any discussion on school going children cannot ignore discussing these gaps. The study understands the significance of the various dimensions that interact and influence Internet access and use by schoolchildren. Firstly, the nature of the school system along with the differences that are inevitable in a geographic and socioeconomic context in the country. Secondly, there are several recent initiatives by the government, educators and policy makers to implement technology in schools. Thirdly, the so-called ‘digital natives’ – the school children’s access and use of new technologies that is influenced by family background and the parents’ apprehension in recognizing the potential of the Internet for learning.

The school system in the country comprises of three main school types, namely the government, private aided, and private. The government schools are the public schools run by the central, state or local governments; private aided or ‘aided’ schools are those run by
private managements, but funded largely by government aid; and the private ‘unaided’ or private schools are run by private managements without any state aid. The school educational structure in the State has four levels namely, primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary. The 1st to 5th grade comes under the primary level, the upper primary comprises grades 6 to 8, and secondary covers the 9th and 10th grades. The final level of schooling is the higher secondary, comprising the 11th and 12th grades (Tamil Nadu Development Report, 2005).

This study also assumes significance against the backdrop of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 (RTE Act), which aims to achieve 100 per cent enrollment in primary schools. On 1 April 2010, India joined a group of few countries in the world by making education a fundamental right of every child and elementary education an entitlement for children in the 6-14 age groups (Rai & Kumar, 2010). The country is still focusing on achieving 100 per cent literacy, and hence the appropriateness of digital literacy and construction of children as whiz kids and gen next needs to be explored in this context. The construction of the notion of digital natives is another centrally recurring issue and the assumption that all children are digital natives is contentious.

Today creating Internet literacy and computer-aided learning (CAL) has become an important aspect of the school curriculum development and the initiatives to upgrade schools with technological advancements by the Government and private managements is worth mentioning. The National Council of Educational Research and Training1 (NCERT) Curriculum Framework, 2000 recognizes the challenges posed by the new information technologies in school education and has stressed the integration of computers into the curriculum and the need for making information technology a part of the schooling process and creating access to global information sources (NCERT, 2000). The National Curriculum Framework 20052 (NCF) stresses the need for equality in education and makes an observation of the continued exclusion of vast numbers of children from education and the disparities caused through private, and public school systems that further challenge the efforts towards achieving equality (NCERT, 2005, p.7).

The Department of School Education in Tamil Nadu directs all government schools in the State, to step up use of computers during the academic year. Under the activity based learning (ABL) and advanced learning methodology followed in the State of Tamil Nadu, the government schools are expected to make extensive use of computers in teaching. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan3, (SSA) provides training in using computers to all government school teachers.

Earlier researchers have stressed the ‘ubiquitous’ presence of the computer and Internet; the use of the personal computers as standard homework equipment and that the Internet replaces the library as well as the power of the Net Generation (Das, 2000; Papert, 1996; Tapscott, 1998). Prensky (2001) states, “today they are all native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet” while describing the ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). These claims are firstly debatable in terms of Internet access and use in a rural context in India. Though the Internet is being widely used and integrated into the lives of young people, it by no means dominates everyday life across the social spectrum as presented by these earlier social commentators. Researchers from other parts
of the world like Benett, Maton and Kervin (2008) have presented their critique of these claims too. Facer and Furlong (2001) have addressed the stereotype of portraying children as naturally competent computer users in academic and political discourses. In 2009, researchers in the UK have questioned the assumption of the universal and pervasive presence of the Internet (Buckingham, 2009; Livingstone, 2009).

This paper attempts to negotiate the theoretical perspective of the digital divide and digital inequality to contextualize the discussions, and interrogates how the dynamics of socioeconomic and demographic predictors and the schooling system shape the Internet access and use by primary school children.

**Literature Review**

The rise of the Internet as a mass medium has caused widespread interest in academia and has produced a constantly growing body of research. The literature on the digital divide and exclusion is vast, cuts across experiences in different countries, and has been a topic of concern in both academic and policy discourses. The underlying intellectual position of academic commentators is that digital divide refers to inequality in access to the computer and the Internet and unequal distribution of digital resources (Castells, 2001; Fuchs, 2008; van Dijk, 2006a).

One of the earliest definitions of digital divide by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is:

> The term “digital divide” refers to the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socioeconomic levels with regard to both their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities. The digital divide reflects various differences among and within countries. (OECD, 2001: p-5)

The academic discourse on the digital divide has generated abundant literature from diverse standpoints ranging from technological determinism to socioeconomic, cultural and geographical determinants of inequality. This section engages with the various theoretical approaches to digital inequality, the scholarly analysis of the phenomenon and its relevance to the current study.

A review of literature on the topic identifies the following broad research strands: first, the sociological dimension to disparities in computer and Internet access; second, the digital inequality among the marginalized and disadvantaged groups in rural and urban spaces in both developed and developing countries; third, the differences in technological access due to disparities in education and schooling system and finally, the children’s appropriation of the Internet in various countries.

From a sociological perspective, the notion of marginalisation and inequality has been reexamined in the context of the network society by various researchers drawing from the theories of Marx, Weber, Rawls, Tawney and Bourdieu (Castells, 2001; Duff, 2013; Miller, 2011; Rojas et al., 2004; Wessels, 2013). Miller (2011) argues that an information society is still a capitalist society that creates economic and social inequalities and therefore
digital inequality is much a social problem that reflects other inequalities and marginalisation. According to Wessels (2013), “social inequality and disadvantage is being reproduced and reconfigured within the networked society, specifically as digital divides” (p. 26)

Ilavarasan (2013) presents two deviating perspectives on social inequality; the conflict perspective, a Marxian view where the dominant class will have a better ownership and access to the Internet as opposed to Weber’s cultural perspective where the Internet becomes a part of the lifestyle or a distinct culture of a restricted group. In his study, he examines disadvantaged groups in the ICT workforce to understand the digital divide in India and concludes that the exclusion process is a manifestation of social inequalities and the continuation of class privileges.

The perspectives put forth by the researchers discussed above reiterate the relevance and universality of the insights of sociological theorists like Marx and Weber in the current scenario. This dimension adds value to the Indian context where existing inequalities and social stratification are shaped by strong class-caste divides as presented by Ilavarasan (2013).

Considerable scholarship on the geographic, socioeconomic and demographic predictors that determine and influence access and use of the Internet is present in the digital divide literature. Internet researchers elaborate that the relationship between socioeconomic status and use of technology is an indication of social and digital inequality reinforcing one another leading to disparities in access (DiMaggio et al, 2004; Hargittai, 2008; Hargittai and Hsieh, 2013; van Dijk, 2005). The notion of digital exclusion first emerged in the western capitalist societies to explain the technological disparities among developed and developing nations and later addressed issues of the inequalities within individual countries (OECD, 2001; Selwyn, 2004; Suoranta, 2003). The following definition by Warschauer (2011) on digital divide strengthens the social stratification angle:

The digital divide refers to social stratification due to unequal ability to access, adapt, and create knowledge via the use of information and communication technologies (ICT)(2011, p. 5).

Castells (2001) posits that within countries, there are major spatial differences between urban and rural areas in the diffusion of Internet use and access both in developed and developing countries. Similarly, Norris (2001) reasons that in postindustrial societies, the social divide in Internet access within nations lies in broader patterns of socio economic stratification and it becomes important if certain groups from poor neighbourhoods and peripheral rural areas are excluded from digital resources.

Scholarly exploration of the marginalized and disadvantaged groups highlight the disparities in access and adoption of the Internet due to low income and education status, racial and ethnic divides, urban and rural differences and immigration status. Researchers have explored the contours of these disparities among the adult population in their studies in both developed and developing countries that include the United States (Mehra, Merkel and Bishop, 2004; Agarwal, Animesh and Prasad, 2009), Canada (Haight, Quan-Haase, and
Indian studies related to digital divide have chiefly focused on the government and corporate ICT initiatives and how these experiments help in bridging the divide faced by village communities, farmers, slum children and young people, enabling them to adapt to new technology, even without formal education (Asthana, 2008; Mathur, 2004; Mitra & Rana, 2001; Venkatesh and Sykes, 2013; Warschauer, 2003). Initiatives like *gyandoot, ERNET, hole in the wall, cybermohalla*, and *e-choupal* information kiosks for farmers - most of which are part of the information and communication technologies for development projects (ICT4D), have been discussed extensively. The point of departure offered by Mazzarella (2010) is a realistic stance towards the initial hype around bridging the digital divide and the functional problems and disillusionment that are inherent in the social, cultural and political milieu of India.

A few scholars have conducted research on increasing disparities in the schooling system, leading to differences in computer and Internet access. Castells (2001) articulates that, “because schools are territorially and institutionally (public/private) differentiated by class, gender and race, there is a substantial cleavage in terms of technology among schools” (2001, p. 259). Bolt and Crawford (2000) identified the growing divide between advantaged and disadvantaged schools and school systems with the “wiring” of some schools. These viewpoints which emerged in early 2000’s in the American society relate the students’ educational experience to their socioeconomic background. Duff (2012) presents a sociological perspective on the equality of opportunity to provide the same quality of primary and secondary education and recommends an integration of private schools and public schools to establish the principle of information justice – an equal opportunity meaning equal access to information.

Emphasizing the fact that educational imbalance leads to digital inequalities, DiMaggio and Hargittai (2001) have hypothesized that, “in the long run, education will be a strong predictor of the use of the Internet for the enhancement of human capital, the development of social capital, and political participation” (2001, p. 13). These discussions are pertinent to the argument that the schooling systems are in fact embedded within the sociological dimensions of class, race and gender and strengthen the discourse on digital inequality among children.

Literature on children, though not extensive, has identified significant gaps in computer and Internet use due to differences in the income and education levels of parents, inequalities by age, gender and socioeconomic status, race and family background (Calvert et al., 2005; Castells, 2001; Facer and Furlong, 2001; Livingstone and Helsper, 2007; Warschauer, et al., 2004). Livingstone et al., (2005) reason that the literature on children’s access to the Internet is very limited partly because of the perception of children being the Internet generation.

Broadly, the literature review has emphasized the central premise that the ability to access and use the Internet is critical to avoid digital inequality, as that in turn would lead to exacerbating social inequality. This paper explores how socioeconomic determinants cause differences in awareness, Internet access and use among children and seeks to have a realistic understanding of the inequalities that exist between private and public schooling.
systems. Since the academic attention devoted to the digital inequality among children is less in comparison to the government and private initiatives within India, this article attempts to examine the nature of access and use of the Internet among primary school children. Researching the Internet use among rural children from a social inequality lens is also important as penetration of digital technologies is often studied in an urban context.

Another crucial debate in the digital inequality discourse concerns the criticism of the simple binary stratifications of the digital divide as technological “haves” and “have-nots” (DiMaggio & Hargittai, 2001; Gunkel, 2003; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; Selwyn, 2004; van Dijk 2000). The takeaway from the various discussions is that a researcher needs to move beyond the simple dichotomous divide of access and no-access or use and no-use to more nuanced discussions of the digital divide that speaks of the gradations in access and use among different groups.

Research Questions
RQ1: What is the nature and patterns of the Internet-use of school going children?
RQ2: What are the differences or inequalities in Internet-use across and within various types of schools (Government and private) including differences in age, class, gender and family background?

Research Design and Method
This research explores the levels of Internet use, opportunities and inequalities among primary school children from both affluent and poor family backgrounds and reports the findings from fieldwork conducted in two schools in a rural setting in Coimbatore. The first one a private school catering to the children from affluent families and the other a public school catering to the children from poor families. Henceforth the affluent school is referred as, the rural elite school and the public school as the village public school.

Firstly, the categories of schools are an indicator of the background of children studying with them. It was important to get a good mix of children from various socioeconomic status and this was a major criteria employed in selecting schools that catered to different groups. The selection attempted to ensure representation in terms of gender, socioeconomic class and age group and hence mixed schools were shortlisted. For example, the village public school had children of agricultural laborers, construction workers and migrant skilled workers; whereas the rural elite school had children of agricultural landowners, businesspersons and entrepreneurs. The rural elite school, geographically situated in a village, had affluent children from the surrounding villages and from the nearby city. The schools selected were representative of the typical village public school seen across the State and the elite private schools, the numbers, which are on the rise in the rural and suburban locations.

The research strategy employs a qualitative approach, including a combination of in-depth interviews and observations in the school settings. The more intuitive approach of qualitative research seems to be a better way to explain social phenomena by understanding the meaning of action as suggested by Alasuutari (2008, p- 6). Therefore, interviews were held with 36 children comprising an equal mix of boys and girls between the age of 8 and 10.
years studying in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades besides observations of a computer lab and multimedia sessions in the elite school.

A similar recruitment procedure employed in previous Dutch studies has shown to result in a varied sample in terms of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003). Similarly, in a study by Rozendaal, Buijzen & Valkenburg (2012), on children and perception of advertising, 163 children between the ages of 8 and 12 participated in the study and the children were recruited from six elementary schools in different urban and suburban areas in the Netherlands. In an Indonesian study of children in the age group of 9-15 years, Hendriyani et al., (2012) collected data in five regions in Jakarta (east, west, north, south and central) employing a simple random method to draw two elementary schools as the sample from each region: one public and one private. Warschauer (2000) has conducted observations and interviews in an elite private school and a rural public school in Hawaii with high school students belonging to different levels of affluence.

Permissions for conducting the study were sought from the heads of the respective schools and letters ensuring confidentiality and anonymity were submitted. The children were informed that they could drop out in case they were not comfortable. In the rural elite school, the children and teachers were aware of the identity and role of the researcher during the observations of the computer sessions. All the interviews conducted individually with the participants lasted for duration between 15 to 45 minutes. The venue for the interview was usually a quiet classroom, the library or audiovisual room. The interview language was English in the elite school and in the case of the village public school, the interviews were conducted in the local language Tamil. All the interviews were recorded, translated and transcribed besides taking field notes. A thematic analysis was done by categorizing the emerging themes and coding the interpretations.

An interview guide with questions aimed at understanding the sociological dimensions, awareness, access and patterns of use of the computer and Internet was prepared. To understand the sociological dimensions, questions about gender, age, education, family background, levels of parental education and employment, social class, family structure and education and age of siblings were included. Internet related questions began by trying to understand the participants’ awareness of the computer and Internet and later moved on to them describing the Internet. To determine Internet access and patterns of Internet use, the number of years of Internet use, frequency, first time use, reasons for use, the participants’ favourite website and the use of Internet in domestic and school spaces are investigated. Additionally an understanding of the use of gadgets like mobile phones and play stations and the daily routine was established.

Findings and Discussion
RQ1: What is the nature and patterns of the Internet-use of school going children?

The use of the computer and Internet by children in the rural elite school from well-to-do and affluent family backgrounds tends to be for education or school related learning like doing homework and school projects. Besides this, leisure time is spent using the Internet for playing games, downloading music and occasionally for online shopping for books, toys,
school bags and accessories with the help of parents. There are no gender differences between these children in the patterns of usage. The rural elite school encourages the use of the Internet for learning activities, projects and homework. The school has a well-equipped computer class and an interactive audio-visual room and the children exhibit familiarity in using the computer during the class sessions. The use of Internet within school spaces is limited for project work or other school related activities after obtaining permission from the teachers and under supervision. For example, collecting information about dance forms for cultural programmes or to participate in the school competition.

The participants are familiar with using various search engines for accessing information and within domestic spaces they use the Internet either on their own or with the help of their parents or siblings. It is evident from the interviews that the children with older siblings have experienced using the computer and the Internet at a very early age. Familiarity and comfort levels in using the Internet for both homework and entertainment are obvious among these primary school children, having grown and participated in the digital environment and in general, they give an impression of being digital natives.

In the village public school, awareness of the Internet among the participants is very low and hence it is essential to understand their knowledge on the use of computers. There are mixed views and a marked gender difference is observed. Out of the 18 participants, only two boys and a girl studying in the 5th grade were aware of the Internet. All the participants interviewed were aware of the computer and had seen it in school, though none of them has a computer at home. They had seen a computer for the first time either in school or in a relatives’ home. The village public school allowed the use of computers during the lunch hour, wherein the children practice drawing and painting. In terms of patterns of use, there was a noticeable difference with respect to age and gender, as all the participants who had used the computer were boys and were from the 4th and 5th grade.

The influence of parents, teachers, siblings, peers and relatives determine the patterns and nature of Internet use by children, besides the family background, parental income and socioeconomic class and community. It can be interpreted that socioeconomic status, family background and the type of school predominantly shape children’s access to the Internet, as there were marked differences in the way participants from the two schools under study experienced the medium.

Children in more affluent, better-educated families are more likely to have used the Internet in comparison to rural children from poorer backgrounds and researchers in other countries reported similar findings. An Italian study (Tarozzi & Bertolini, 2000), reports that children using the Internet at home belonged to a privileged elite, whereas another study conducted in Finland (Suoranta & Lehtimaki 2003), reported that children primarily access the Internet to play computer games, and for information searches and drawing.

In the present study, the nature of Internet use falls into the three main categories based on the purpose and frequency of use, namely: (i) information seeking, (ii) entertainment seeking and (iii) Interaction seeking.
(i) Information seeking

“It gives us information”

“It is very useful for projects and homework”

When asked to describe the Internet the participants, a girl from grade 4 and a boy from grade 3 both, from the rural elite school gave the above responses. This expresses the need and purpose of the Internet—use for information and learning.

The internet is part of the everyday routine for the children in the elite school primarily for searching for information for their homework and school projects. The first time experience with the medium has been in school related work like gathering information for school projects, homework, quiz, drawing and downloading pictures. The participants exhibited familiarity with search engines like Google and Yahoo. A girl from the third grade said, "Google is one of Internet". It is well established among the affluent children that the Internet is a source of information and is required for learning.

This finding is contrary to an Indonesian study of Jakarta-based children aged 9-15 years, which revealed that high social-status children have access to computers and the Internet in their bedrooms and that Internet is mainly used for entertainment (Hendriyani, Hollander, d’Haenens & Beentjes, 2012).

The information seeking nature of the computer is also perceived by the participants from the village public school, but this perception varies with gender across all the age groups studied. Even though all the participants stated that the teachers use the computer for teaching rhymes, math, drawing and painting, the girls in the 3rd grade associate a computer with entertainment while all boys and older girls relate the computer to information and learning.

Some of the relatives of the participants own a computer with Internet connectivity and the key motivation factor for purchase is for the children’s education. This seems to be a general practice, with the parents’ belief that a computer (sometimes the term computer also refers to use of the Internet) is a necessity for higher studies. There were interesting answers from the participants regarding their opinion about computers for learning:

“The computer is used for drawing”. (A girl from grade 3, the village public school)

“The computer is for learning. I have seen many people studying using the computer” (A boy from grade 4, the village public school).

A 4th grade boy from the village public school aged 9, presented the following response when asked about the use of the computer.

Interviewer

A boy from the 4th grade

: What did you see on the computer?

A boy from the 4th grade

: We watched movies on my uncle’s computer.

Interviewer

: Here… in my school we had lessons.

A boy from the 4th grade

Then for drawing...

Interviewer

: We had lessons on television. Now the computer is under repair.

A boy from the 4th grade

: What is the computer used for?

Interviewer

A boy from the 4th grade

: For studying.
Interviewer: What can you learn?
A boy from the 4th grade: We can learn lessons.
Interviewer: Who told you?
A boy from the 4th grade: I know... we can study.
Interviewer: For what else?
A boy from the 4th grade: We can become a computer engineer. We can learn a lot of information. We should always be very eager to learn more.

(ii) Entertainment seeking

“Internet is used for playing games”

The above response is from a girl studying in grade 4 in the rural elite school. Some of the participants from the rural elite school use the Internet to play games, listening to music, and to download songs and the entertainment seeking nature of the Internet use is evident from the participants expressing the view that the Internet is used for playing games during holidays and weekends.

For most of the children in the village public school, the computer is synonymous with television and entertainment. Gender differences are observed with most of the girl participants stating that a computer is meant for playing, listening to songs and for watching movies. This answer is an outcome of visiting relatives’ place and having observed their cousins use the computer for listening to songs or watching movies, and it is interesting to note that their cousins are also girls. In spite of the teachers in the school using the computer for screening multimedia presentations and interactive lessons for mathematics, science and other subjects the computer is associated with a television by the girl participants.

Excerpts from an interview with a girl participant aged 9 years studying in the 4th grade in the village public school who offered a different perspective compared to her classmate, a boy who said the computer is for learning.

Interviewer: Have you seen the computer?
A girl from the 4th grade: Yes.
Interviewer: What did you see?
A girl from the 4th grade: My teacher showed rhymes on the computer and on television in school.
Interviewer: Have you used the computer at school?
A girl from the 4th grade: No.
Interviewer: Have you seen it elsewhere? In your relative’s house..
A girl from the 4th grade: Yes, in my sister’s house. (Cousin)
Interviewer: What does she/ or others in her house do on the computer?
A girl from the 4th grade: They listen to songs.
Interviewer: What about studying?
A girl from the 4th grade: They do not use for studying.
Interviewer: What is the computer used for?
A girl from the 4th grade: For playing games and for listening to songs.
Interviewer: Is the computer used for playing games?
A girl from the 4th grade: Yes, for playing games, watching movies and listening to songs.
Interviewer: Not for studying?
A girl from the 4th grade: No.
Interviewer: What do you think? The computer is for learning or for playing games.
A girl from the 4th grade: For playing.

(iii) Interaction seeking
“Internet is used for chatting” (A girl from grade 3, the rural elite school)

The participants from the rural elite school were familiar with chatting and most of them were aware of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. The awareness of social networking sites seems to be prevalent among all the participants in the 4th and 5th grades except for two girls. This was very different in the village public school, where only two boys and a girl studying in the 5th grade were aware of the Internet and among them, only one of the boys was aware of Facebook and Twitter. There was absolutely no awareness about social networking sites by the remaining participants and none were aware of email.

Typical patterns that emerge regarding the children’s Internet access and use as well as practice, are that there are high levels of Internet awareness, frequent use and more information seeking nature of the affluent children in the rural elite school. Lack of awareness, rare use of the computer and the Internet and a predominant gender difference in the information-seeking and entertainment-seeking pattern is observed among the participants in the village public school. There exists an association between socio-demographic characteristics and patterns of Internet use including gender.

RQ2: What are the differences or inequalities in Internet-use across and within various types of schools (government and private) including differences in age, class, gender and family background?

The study asserts that a social distance exists between the students of public government schools and those of private schools particularly the elitist ones. The public schools funded by the government consist mostly of children from the less privileged sections of society, whereas, the elite and upper income groups prefer the private schools over government schools. This is reflected in the key differences observed, which includes the digital exclusion among rural children from poor backgrounds when compared to those studying in the elite school. Similar observations have been cited by Livingstone (2003) and she states that the access to the Internet is heavily stratified across and within households in all nations studied.

It is evident that the participants in the rural elite school have ample exposure to the computer and the Internet, in addition to other gadgets like the Tablet or I pad. All the participants right from the 3rd grade have used the computer and the Internet. This is in
contrast to the children from socially poor economic backgrounds studying in the public school where awareness of the Internet is rare and the use of computer is very limited. They are clearly excluded from the digital opportunities due to the family background, parents’ education, occupation and social hierarchy.

After school, time is spent in doing homework, projects and for playing by the children studying in the rural elite school and the use of gadgets like play stations, PSP, tablet, computer games and the I pad are common. Evenings are spent playing outdoors, doing homework, studying and watching television by the children in the village public school. Since none of the respondents’ homes have a computer, use of the medium does not feature. There are very obvious gender differences in the way evenings are spent with the girl children, including domestic work in their daily evening routine besides studying and doing homework and rarely watching television.

Although, there are policy initiatives by the government to provide technical resources in schools, the level of implementation is not rigorous in the public schools. The use of the school computer for teaching is restricted to what is mentioned in the curriculum and is used sparingly. Even though the participants interviewed from the 3rd grade in the village public school had seen a computer at school and said their teacher taught them drawing, none of them had used it on their own. Familiarity with a computer is established in spaces outside the home and school; for example, two of the female participants had seen the computer in their tuition teacher’s home and two of the male participants in their cousin’s homes. Except the two male participants, none of the others interviewed from that class have relatives owning a computer and they would like to use the computer and Internet. One migrant worker’s child clearly said their relatives could not have a computer implying the poor economic conditions.

In the family context, the parents’ education and socio-economic status directly influence children’s Internet access and use. All the parents of children in the elite school are well educated and are undergraduates or postgraduates. The educational background, occupation and income of parents are an indicator of the availability of access to the Internet, which is revealed by the ownership and use of computers and the Internet by the children coming from the upper and upper middle-income homes.

The parents of the participants interviewed from the village public school have been to school and studied up to primary school or high school level. Only four parents had completed their higher secondary. In most cases, both the parents are working and almost all are skilled and manual laborers who work on farms, workshops or in construction sites. The daily wagers and casual laborers did not have jobs all through the year and were short of finances. To appreciate the role of family dynamics, it must be noted that the parents’ level of education and income are major factors in influencing the ownership and use of the computer and Internet.

The children from the elite school express positive associations with the term Internet, and their choice of words to describe the Internet include happy, favourite, delighted and fun and there are no apparent gender or age differences in this observation. The following excerpts from participants’ interviews convey this:
A boy from the 4th grade: When I use the Internet, I will be happy because I am going to search many things on Internet.

A girl from the 5th grade: I like Internet very much. The internet is very helpful and useful. Whenever I sit with the Internet I feel very salubrious and delighted.

A boy from the 5th grade: Internet is my favorite subject in computers. On the Internet, we will have Google. I have Google because Google gives a lot of information.

The participants from the village public school have the same positive associations with the computer, whether they perceived it for learning or entertainment and it is observed that if given the opportunity and the exposure, the children are capable of gaining Internet literacy and proving themselves as digital natives. To illustrate this, the response from a boy from the 5th grade studying in the village public school who was aware of the Internet and is very eager to use it for learning, is presented:

“Yes, it is (the Internet) very important for learning…. Internet is for studying. My cousin will open the laptop. She is careful before allowing me to touch the laptop. She lets me play games occasionally”.

The above discussion on inequalities in access and use of the computer and the Internet can be analyzed applying van Dijk’s (2006 a) classification of the barriers to access causing digital inequalities. First, the lack of motivational access observed among the children in the public school as they are not sufficiently motivated to use the computer or Internet, girls in particular and they are the ‘want nots’. Second, the lack of material or physical access to the computer and Internet possession has put the children in the village public school at a disadvantage and they are the ‘have-nots’ influenced by the lack of resources enabling the physical access like parental income and social class. The lack in skills access is a result of the above two barriers and also due to lack of training. Lastly, the lack of significant usage opportunities or the need for actual use, which has widened the gaps in comparison to the children in the elite school.

Socio-economic class, parental education, income and occupation, and the type of school influence children’s access and Internet use leading to inequalities between children in disadvantaged rural schools and the elite schools. Hence, both personal inequalities like age and gender and positional inequalities namely the level of parents’ education, occupation and the community or region appear to be related to the amount of Internet access the children have (van Dijk, 2013). Newhagen & Bucy (2004), articulate that one of the dimensions of access leading to digital divide is the technological access, which refers to the physical access to computers and access to the Internet as a system. Drawing from previous researchers, it can be asserted that among the less privileged this physical access is lacking and digital inequality is a continuum or spectrum, which transcends the dichotomies of mere have’s and have-nots’ but within the disadvantaged there are various degrees of awareness, access and use.
Digital inequality is merely another manifestation of other inequalities that exist within our contemporary society (Miller, 2011: p. 96).

In sum, Miller’s words are true in the context where the existing social hierarchies and prevailing attitudes are reinforcing the digital inequalities.

Summary and Conclusions

‘In the little world in which children have their existence’, says Pip in Charles Dickens’s Great Expectations, ‘there is nothing so finely perceived and finely felt, as injustice’ (Dickens, cited in Sen, 2010). Noted economist Amartya Sen, begins with these lines as a preface in the book, “The Idea of Justice” (Venkataswamy, 2012).

This is very true in the way the inequalities in the adult world permeate the world of children through the walls of their homes and boundaries of their school spaces. It is only fair that the opportunities given to children are equal in the spaces of learning. The study clearly depicts that the differences among the children in the elite school and the public school with respect to their Internet experiences are due to the lack of access and exposure. Dominant perspectives that emerge are that the children in the rural elite school had better opportunities as well as encouragement and motivation whereas their counterparts in the village public school showed a lack of awareness of the Internet besides poor or total lack of access.

The finding that merits attention is that ownership of gadgets creates new hierarchies of inequality, including the computer with Internet connectivity; tablet and I pad being associated with status and prestige. This study observes that there is an aspiration to own a computer and the Internet by the children from poor backgrounds, the boys in particular. A few girls are not motivated or don’t express a need for a computer or the Internet. Questions like “What for the Internet when they go about their routine of learning in a peaceful environment?” and “Are we paying too much attention to these new forms of learning?” could be raised as counter arguments. It is crucial that all children gain from the digital opportunities and it is imperative to ensure that the digital inequalities do not create new social hierarchies among school going children.

The role of government policies and initiatives like implementation of the Right to Education Act and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) become significant in providing equality in education for the benefit of the less advantaged children. However, there are increasing debates on the implementation of a universal elementary education and the difficulties in the functionalities of the Right to Education Act, 2009 and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), by both media and academicians, in particular the gaps due to improper implementation and lack of funding (Jha and Parvati, 2014; Srivastava and Noronha, 2014).

The exclusion at the threshold of one’s education is apparent right from the choice of school by the parents primarily depending on the affordability. Ramachandran and Naorem (2013, p. 44), while discussing the implementation of SSA, mention that, “in most areas, elementary schools run by the government primarily cater to the very poor while the not-so-poor opt for private schools, even in rural and remote areas”. According to Rana et al (2005, p. 1551), “a government primary school is the main fallback option for the children of underprivileged communities”.

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The parents aspire to send their children to an ‘English medium school’ or the ‘town school’ chiefly governed by the notion that an English medium school provides better quality of education. A second factor is the construction of ‘English’ and ‘English speaking’ as being superior that will eventually help children climb up the social ladder – a belief deeply rooted in the colonial past and existing norms of social hierarchy. Social and caste hierarchies are entrenched and embedded within the rural community and the research setting represents the numerous villages in the State that are structured around these social norms.

For example, caste, class divides are obvious in both the villages studied with specific communities living in groups located within certain streets while the structure of the spaces within the village is very typical with the temple, courtyard, and open spaces at the centre. These spaces have the government offices and schools, whereas the communities belonging to a ‘lower’ caste in the hierarchy live in the peripheral spaces in the village.

Because of the above factors, the affluent and upper middle class families who also belong to the higher castes do not send their children to the public school. The mushrooming of private schools in some remote rural areas provides an opportunity for such parents to send their children to a nearby ‘English medium school’ rather than sending them to the city. The crop of elite private schools also invites a number of children from the suburban areas and the city, promising a fresh and conducive learning environment similar to the one under study. As a result, these schools filled with children from rich backgrounds accentuate the differences with the public schools and create wider inequalities among the children in the rural areas. Additionally, the socioeconomic and digital inequalities among parents perpetuate digital inequalities in children.

The class and caste dynamics play a strong role in the stratification and Weber’s approach of social status and prestige is relevant in this context. The above arguments are strengthened by Rojas et al., (2004) who have detailed Bourdieu’s thought on the “reproduction of inequalities within a school system”. The present study contextualizes and locates the Internet experiences of children through a social inequality lens and critically examines the complexity of the social hierarchy within the institutional framework of the school.

This paper examined the influence of various demographic and socioeconomic variables, including age, gender, parental education, income and occupation, embedded within the schooling system and their relationship with Internet access and use. Initially, an introduction of the scholarly perspectives on digital divide and inequality was presented, followed by a discussion on previous research on the topic. Grounded in the theory of digital divide, this paper integrates the link between type of schooling system, socioeconomic dynamics and digital inequality and concludes that the disadvantaged children from disadvantaged schools are excluded from the opportunities.

Therefore, a utopian view does not work well in the Indian context and there is a need to negotiate the use of a term like digital natives that is applicable only to children of affluent families. At the outset, it is important to redefine Internet literacy and establish whether our children are computer literate before labelling them as digital natives. Computer literacy referred to the basic use of computers and later spread to the fluency of use from the 1980s (Warschauer, 2003) and Internet literacy is defined as a multidimensional construct...
that encompasses the abilities to access, analyze, educate and create online content (Livingstone & Helsper, 2010).

It would be appropriate to go with a simple terminology that refers to a computer literate as one who can access and use the computer and an Internet literate as one who can access and use the Internet. A mixed picture emerges in this respect as far as this study is concerned. The children from the rural elite school belong to the category of Internet literates with some of them being proficient and those from the village public school are partially computer literates while some are not.

This paper does not argue from a utopian perspective for total equality in educational opportunities and universal Internet access as the panacea for social and digital inequalities. On the contrary, it attempts to portray the differences that are present in a rural context from a sociological perspective and stresses the point that digital inequalities in fact reinforce existing social inequalities.

Sen draws attention to ‘matsyanyaya’ or ‘justice in the world of fish’, “where a big fish can freely devour a small fish” (2010, p. 20), and stresses that the ‘justice of fish’ should not invade the world of human beings. He further elaborates the need to avoid a state of ‘matsyanyaya’:

The subject of justice is not merely about trying to achieve - or dreaming about achieving - some perfectly just society or social arrangements, but about preventing manifestly severe injustice (2010, p. 21).

The lack of access to computers at home does not get compensated by access within school, even though this is a stated objective of educational policy and programmes. In a situation where inequality is institutionalized and expresses itself through institutions such as the school, the question arises as to how the school and the access to digital and Internet literacy within the school for underprivileged children, could work towards mitigating the inequality and injustice that prevails today.

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Notes
1 National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is an autonomous organization set up in 1961 by the Government of India to assist and advise the Central and State Governments on policies and programmes for qualitative improvement in school education.
2 The National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) is one of four National Curriculum Frameworks published in 1975, 1988, 2000 and 2005 by the NCERT. The document provides the framework for making syllabi, textbooks and teaching practices within the school education programmes in India.
3 The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is Government of India’s flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner, as mandated by 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years age group, a fundamental right.
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Social Media and the Arab Spring

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This paper discusses the effect of social media on the occurrence of ‘Arab Spring’. In the Arab world no country could claim to be truly democratic and most were autocratic coupled with desertification (68.4 per cent of the total land area), phenomenal rise in population and scarcity of water. Moreover, about 60 per cent of the population is under 25 years and this group belonging to lower-middle class with high education, self-constructed status, wider world views and global dreams forced them to raise their voice and change the autocratic set up. But, in the absence of effective social media since the year 2000 made it possible to raise their voice unitedly through facebook, twitter and blogs culminating to the ouster of Hosne Mubarak in Egypt. The ‘top to down’ approach adopted by the Western social scientists, thus proved wrong and ‘bottom to top’ approach through social media brought the dramatic changes in Arab nations.

Keywords: Social media, Arab Spring, Egypt, convergence, blogosphere, Internet activism, desertification

Social media in the Arab countries prior to the revolutions that are collectively called the “Arab Spring” was considered a insignificant, elitist and selective because of the low penetration and access to the internet. The year 2011 changed that perception. The events that occurred across the Arab World in this year brought ‘social media’ to the vanguard, with the credit of making possible the revolutions that have taken place going all the way to You Tube, Facebook, Weblogs and Twitter. However, it would be an exaggeration if social media takes away all the acclaim as the driving force behind the Arab Spring.

The convergence of social media, the mainstream media, and mobilization of the masses along with hard core agitations led to the revolution in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria. Development communication scholars had always hailed the introduction and spread of social media in the Arab world. They stressed that the social media would allow the people of the region not only to have access to alternative and independent news information, but also to gradually increase the pressure for democratization and liberal reforms (Eickelman and Anderson, 2003; Lynch, 2006). However, they never imagined that the social media would play an instrumental and protagonist role in the overthrow of authoritarian regimes. The technology of social media and blogging, it was felt, was unlikely to ‘induce wide political change in the Middle East’ (Lynch, 2007).

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By the beginning of 2011, however, the social media acted as an ‘accelerating agent’ (Chebib & Sohail, 2011), that helped the revolutionaries protesters hold online debates, discussions and arouse the angst of the people against authoritarian regimes. This in turn, led to a widespread fire of agitation that led to the resignation of two unpopular leaders, rapid spread of the people’s movement across Arab countries, and trans-nationalization to the wider world.

The cynical approach towards the social media prior to the events of 2011 was due to a ‘top-down’ view that most analysts assumed while trying to explain the authoritarianism of the Arab regimes. This analysis did not sufficiently investigate the changing political and social dynamics of the Arab world and, therefore, failed to appreciate the importance the social media could have in political communication and mobilization (Gause, 2011).

To understand the phenomenon of “Arab Spring” in general with Egypt as a special case we need to adopt a “bottom to top” approach. The widespread revolt had two major players: the civil society and the social media.

**Socio-Political and Economic Intricacies**

The world has witnessed tsunami of democracy sweep in different places across the globe. The breaking of the Berlin Wall, communism giving way to democracy in Eastern Europe, the end of monarchy in Nepal are few instances where the tsunami of democracy transformed the system forever. In the year 2011, a wave was sweeping discreetly into a region that had remained devoid of democracy: the Middle East.

The popular uprisings in Arab world took many western analysts and Arab elites by surprise - a surprise that was justified, given the conspicuous silence of the Arab media towards the suppression of political dissent, human rights abuses and earlier emergent protests (Hafez, 2008). When Clad (2011), over examined the factors that explain the stability of authoritarian regimes (i.e. limited electoral campaigns, market reforms, diplomatic relations with major Western countries) western observers and Arab elites failed to appreciate how the dissent of diverse constituencies who possess few institutional channels to express their discontent, may find ways to express their demands through novel means of political mobilization and communication.

The cold war era was a period of gate keeping and secrecy. But even till today, Gulf countries have not permitted free flow of information. Human rights and democratic elections are merely eyewash in many countries of this region.

The Arab society is generally Muslim predominant in all aspects of life. Kaldor (2011) says, “governments and analysts perceived civil society as a solely Western privilege and phenomenon in general, while the Arab region was attached to ‘Islamic Exceptionalism’.” “But the demonstrations and uprisings of 2011, with Muslims and Christians standing together (Bayat , 2011a, b), proved that civil society not only exists in the region, but it is also a significant actor, with no cultural limitations and monopolies on human values. This was the foremost rationale behind the element of astonishment that besieged the West when the ‘Arab Spring’ occurred. One and all were studying the behavior of governments rather than societies in the region, so they were surprised.
The “top to down” approach focuses on political parties, large scale movements and larger than life leaders as agents of a change. The propagators of this approach did not understand the precariousness of people, movements, cultures, and social constitution in the Arab world. Western social scientists erroneously concluded that movements of ‘civil society’ did not exist in the Arab world, as movements need to be hierarchically organized, with recognized leaders and resources, an unrelenting assertion of rights and holding street marches, public meetings, demonstrations, and media statements. They ignored the working poor and oppressed sections of the society like youth and women. Ultimately, these classes of the society were the drivers of the political and social change. Religious barriers were broken and people united for a common cause.

However, the people at the bottom end of the society indulged in collective actions unknowingly, they had the same desires but never shared them and their problems which were never solved had brought them unknowingly on a common platform. Thus, we need to adopt the “bottom to top” approach to clearly understand the reasons behind the “Arab Spring.”

In the Arab world, no country can claim to be truly democratic, most are autocratic. Authoritarian states have flawed constitutions and whimsical laws, which often suppress the rights of their citizens. The formation of political parties is either prohibited or strict restrictions are in place on the functioning of opposition parties. The freedom of speech and expression is controlled. The same goes for civil society associations, which face restrictions and censorship on their development. The violations of citizens’ rights to life and freedom are committed through the malpractices of inhuman torture and illegal detention. Between 2006 and 2008, the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR) found examples of the official practice of torture in eight Arab states. In the same period, the AOHR reported on the more widespread practice of illegal detention in eleven countries across the region (Arab Human Development Report (AHDR, 2009, p. 8).

Environmental challenges are also being faced by the Arab countries. Desertification is an imminent threat. The desert covers more than two-thirds of the total land area of the region (9.76 million square kilometers of desert, or 68.4 per cent of the total land area). Desertification threatens about 2.87 million square kilometers or a fifth of the total area of the Arab countries (AHDR, 2009, p.5). According to UN estimates, the Arab countries will be home to some 395 million people by 2015 (compared to about 317 million in 2007, and 150 million in 1980). In a region where water and cultivable land are shrinking, population growth at these rates creates intense pressures under conditions of volatile growth, high unemployment and persisting poverty (AHDR, 2009, p. 4).

On the economic front, the oil driven growth has created weak structural foundations in Arab economies. Many Arab countries are turning into increasingly import-oriented and service-based economies. The types of services found in most Arab countries fall at the low end of the value-adding chain, contribute little to local knowledge development and lock countries into inferior positions in global markets. This trend has grown at the expense of Arab agriculture, manufacturing and industrial production. Overall, the Arab countries were less industrialized in 2007 than in 1970 (AHDR, 2009, pp.11-12).
Unemployment is also on the rise in most Arab countries. The exposure to the west through media, internet and education has given a flip to the dreams and aspirations of the Arab youth. Hollywood emerged as a window which brought in western air to their homes. Young people are the fastest growing segment of Arab countries populations. Some 60 per cent of the population is under 25 years old, making this one of the most youthful regions in the world, with a median age of 22 years compared to a global average of 28 (AHDR, 2009, p.5).

To make things worse, the majority of these young girls and boys constitute ‘the middle-class poor’ with high education, self-constructed status, wider world views, and global dreams who nonetheless are compelled, by unemployment and poverty, to subsist on the margins as casual, low-paid, low-status, and low-skilled workers (as street vendors, sales persons, boss boys, or taxi drivers), and to reside in the overcrowded slums and squatter settlements of the Arab cities’ (Bayat, 2011b).

To add to this, about 20.3 per cent of the Arab population is living below the two-dollars a day international poverty line. About 34.6 million Arabs are living in extreme poverty, ranging from a low 28.6 to 30 per cent in Lebanon and Syria to a high 41 per cent in Egypt and 59.5 per cent in Yemen (AHDR, 2009, pp. 13-14). Devoid of any democratic set up to air their grievances, new forms of media and communication technology became the arena for the expression of discontent. Social media which includes Facebook, YouTube, Weblogs, Twitter etc emerged as the platforms of free expression and discussion. Moreover, social media was away from the preying eyes of the Arab regimes. Finally, the internet and social media were the powerful tools for mobilization and assertion, paving the way for the uprisings of 2011.

**Internet Activism and its Political Uses**

According to Vegh (2003), internet activism is ‘a politically motivated movement relying on the internet’ using strategies that are either internet-enhanced or internet-based. We can further classify internet activism into three categories: The first is awareness and advocacy—which is to use the internet as an alternative news source to offset the information channels opposed to the interests of the activists. The second category includes ‘mediated mobilization’. This form of internet activism usually arouses people for ‘offline’ action, such as demonstrations and protests, as witnessed in Egypt. Finally, action/reaction activism—often dubbed ‘Hactivism’—is used to describe malicious attacks by activists to bring down or paralyze websites (Lievrouw, 2011).

Web 2.0 was a key tool for mobilization and communication, which describes an umbrella of social media available on the internet, including blogs, photo and file sharing systems, and social networking sites. Although these are largely meant for personal purposes and building relationships, political maneuvering and action also take place. For example, in postings protesting government actions on YouTube, or in utilization of still image and video functionalities on mobile phones during demonstrations and police confrontations (Aday & Livingston, 2008; Vasi, 2006; Carty & Onyett, 2006; Clark & Themudo, 2006).

This is the case because Web 2.0 is a highly scalable, accessible and cheap technology, which enables individuals not only to communicate with groups of other individuals,
but also to influence groups of other individuals as they share ideas, activities, events and interests within their networks (Blossom, 2007).

According to the ‘communication power’ theory, these wireless communication networks and networks of trust evolve into networks of resistance, ‘which prompts mobilization against an identified target’ (Castells, 2009). Castells’ model of communication power through wireless communication is visible in the background of the internet activism in the Egyptian uprisings. For example, a mobile phone user would spread information to people in his contact list, a Facebook or a Twitter user’s created content is spread to all ‘friends’ or ‘followers’, who can then choose to comment on it or forward it or even ignore or report. This allows the creation of networks of trust and, in the Egyptian case, the nurturing of a network of resistance against Hosni Mubarak. We need to carefully observe the impact of online insurgent politics of the internet activists that got multiplied through communication power to create the popular base for protest in the offline world.

In fact, and according to research conducted by the Arab Social Media Report (Shalem & Mourtada, 2011a), by the end of 2010 the total number of Facebook users in the Arab world stood at 21,361,830 million, up from 11,978,300 in January 2010 (a 78 per cent annual growth rate). Egypt, with around 4.7 million Facebook users, constituted, by the end of 2010, 22 per cent of total users in the Arab region; followed by Saudi Arabia (15 per cent, 3,213,420); Morocco (11 per cent, 2,446,300); United Arab Emirates (10 per cent, 2,135,960); Tunisia (8 per cent, 1,820,880) and Algeria (7 per cent, 1,413,280). In addition, by the end of 2010, the Arab region also had 40,000 active blogs (Ghannam, 2011). And all this in a region where youth between the ages of 15 and 29 not only make up around one third of the population, but also 75 per cent of Facebook users.

Internet led to creation of a ‘bottom to top’ movement. Information flow was well balanced and widespread. The movement was leaderless but unknowingly had evolved with a common ideology. Social media and blogosphere were the new instruments of liberation against the autocratic Arab regimes. A study on the Arab blogosphere found that at the beginning of 2009, criticism of domestic leaders topped the list of political topics discussed (Etling, 2009). In addition, the innovative uses by bloggers of the new digital media to organize protests and publicize state-sponsored abuses, also revealed that a ‘significant youth contingent was becoming politicized and increasingly adept at using blogs and social media to challenge the status quo’ (Radsch, 2011).

Therefore, it can be concluded that prior to the ‘Arab Spring’ of 2011, the social media had played their part in communicating, coordinating and channeling the rising tide of change from below. With the majority of the population of the Arab world under the age of 30 and tech-savvy, proficient at using the latest means of communication, they were able to hoodwink state censorship and mobilize for a common cause. A potent means of coordinating and communicating mass protests was in their hands now (mobile phone).

Keeping that in mind, let us examine how the social media during the Egyptian uprising empowered a ‘leaderless network’, mobilized public mobilization and created a strong civil society. Moreover, the collaboration between activists at regional and global level helped the ‘Arab Spring’ gain attention of the entire world.
Prelude to Uprising in Egypt
The brutal murder of 28-year-old Khaled said at the hands of Egyptian police in Alexandria in June 2010 can be called as the beginning to the end of the Hosni Mubarak rule in Egypt. His death became a cause célèbre for internet activists. The official word on his death that he died of choking was unacceptable to the public. Pictures of Said’s severely beaten corpse published by the blogger Zeinobia showed his skull and jaw with clear fractures that left the police claim that he had died of asphyxiation untenable (Zeinobia, 2010). One thousand people attended Said’s funeral in Alexandria, while activists protested outside of the Interior Ministry’s offices in Cairo (Al Amrani, 2010).

Wael Ghonim, an Egyptian working with Google established a Facebook ‘group’ open for all Facebook members and started a campaign against police brutality. Thus, leading to an online mobilization that ultimately led to the demonstrations in Cairo on 25 January 2011 and, eventually, Mubarak’s ouster. The group’s name in Arabic, Kulina Khalid Said (‘We Are All Khaled Said’ WAAKS) expressed the sentiment perfectly, and soon caught the sentiments of online community. He filled the site with video clips and newspaper articles about police violence. The distortions of the official media were exposed through facebook. He attracted users in huge numbers and created a forum for an online democratic participation. When organizers planned a ‘day of silence’ in the Cairo streets, for example, he polled users on what colour shirts they should all wear, black or white (Kirkpatrick and Sanger, 2011). By the end of 2010, the page had more than 500,000 fans, providing, one might argue, a means for ordinary people to connect with human rights advocates, while also trying to amass support against police abuse, torture and the way in which the Mubarak government permanent emergency laws allowed people to be jailed without charges (Preston, 2011).

Before the WAAKS movement, the year 2008 saw a series of labour strikes in Egypt. In 2008, two young activists created a Facebook page, the ‘April 6 Facebook Strike’, calling for a general strike to support the workers in the Nile Delta city Mahalla. Despite the fact that internet penetration in Egypt was low at that time, still, the page attracted 70,000 participants in just two weeks. The strike in Mahalla, turned violent when government fired on the protesters. Bloggers posted pictures of crowds tearing down posters of Mubarak and stepping on them, which spread through the blogosphere. One such post on Manalaa.net drew more than 40,000 views (Radsch, 2011; Faris, 2008).

Through such diffuse and horizontal actions, opponents of authoritarian regimes, felt that their views where widely shared and that enough of their fellow citizens where willing to join them (Khanis & Vaughn, 2011). The social media helped in spreading information like a wildfire and made people feel part of a common cause. A deep sense of unity and brotherhood was forged between the people.

Social Media and Uprising in Egypt
The overthrow of Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011 incited the people of Egypt as well. The Egyptian revolution, began with the ‘Day of Anger’ (25 January 2011) With the images of Mohammed Bouaziz setting fire to himself in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid in December 2010, posted on YouTube and Facebook, protesters in Egypt started organizing in small groups, went door to door passing out flyers that told people to attend the
protests, posted on Facebook pages Twitter. YouTube videos were used to arouse the people against the atrocities committed by the autocratic regime in Egypt. SMS were sent where people didn’t have access to the internet. They even dialed random numbers in the hopes that the exhortations to demonstrate would fall on sympathetic ears (Baker, 2011). In addition, the Facebook page of Khaled said not only became a focal point for the dissemination of popular protest throughout Egypt, but also scaled vertically through key Facebook sites overcoming the relatively limited penetration of social media (Mainwaring, 2011).

With a penetration rate of 5.5 per cent, but a large population which translated into around 6 million Facebook users, a core number of activists were able to connect to a much larger number of social contacts who could be influenced by information from those with Facebook accounts (Salem and Mourtada, 2011b). As a result, the common people came out on the Tahrir Square for the ‘March of the Millions’ (1 February), which forced President Hosni Mubarak’s to leave. Facebook pages, such as the ‘We are all Khaled Said’, were used as a means to provide information to the protesters, press management, and creating awareness of civil society on the demands and action taken by the activists. Images were also posted showing satellite maps marked with arrows indicating where protesters could go to avoid pro-government forces. Google maps and gathering points were posted to the activists, guiding them and boosting their morale by posting successful activities from other places and enhancing the feeling of unity. Mobile phones were used for private communication that couldn’t be detected by the State. The mobile cameras came in handy to capture images and videos.

Egyptians in Tahrir Square ranged from young, well-educated students to doctors, lawyers, judges, workers and the unemployed. People cutting across age group and religion were united in this struggle. During the Internet blackout, Google and Twitter offered the ‘Speak-2-Tweet’, a service where users could call an international telephone number to post and hear Twitter messages without the internet. The ‘Small World News’ project “Alive” partnered with ‘Speak-2-Tweet’ to translate voice messages from protesters at Tahrir Square carried on the momentum of the protest, despite an internet blackout by the regime. Some recordings appeared on the ‘Speak-2-Tweet’ Twitter account from Egyptians who learned about the service during the blackout, possibly via phone calls with friends and family outside of Egypt (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011).

Non-government organizations worked in tandem with the activists to provide all kinds of support in terms of infrastructure and training. European social movements advised them how to use “ghost servers” in order to confuse the online monitoring of the government (Reissmann & Rosenbach, 2011).

‘Global Voices’ from Tunisia and the ‘Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights’ helped by using mobile phones and Twitter to share information about arrested activists. United States based non-governmental organizations imparted skills on video reporting and media management, mapping tools, choosing the best locations for photographing the demonstrations. The human rights organization ‘Witness’ taught them about camera operations and the use of audio recording devices, and the Kenyan NGO ‘Ushahidi’ built their online capabilities for reporting securely with mobile phones and building online content around it (Ishani, 2011).
The majority (almost 60 per cent) of Facebook users, also felt that the main impact of Mubarak blocking the Internet was positive for the uprising, spurring people to be more active, decisive and to find ways to be more creative about communicating and organizing (Salem & Mourtada, 2011b).

Participatory journalism arose with citizens donning the role of a journalist. These citizen journalists sent latest news and time to time updates from the streets of Cairo to the mainstream media. Finally, the Hosni Mubarak rule ended in Egypt.

Conclusion
In the Arab world, social media and internet became the tools of a historic change. The use of social networking sites went beyond entertainment and communication. It was used as a medium of expression, channel for communication with masses and most important feedback. However social media and internet cannot be given the sole credit for the uprising. The people’s angst with the autocratic rule, oppression, rising unemployment along with exposure to the western lifestyle were other factors that were instrumental in creating a movement that caused a stir in Egypt.

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Constructing a Comprehensive Coverage Criterion of Indian States and Union Territories News

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The study posits a twelve pronged formulation of indices to measure the over coverage and under coverage of the Indian states and union territories by newspapers on socio-economic, demographical and political aspects. Union territories (UT), mainly Delhi and Chandigarh were unjustifiably favoured on all twelve counts which clearly points out media’s biased leanings to cater to the regional aspirations and preference to the power center. Northern states were most favourably covered and the coverage reduced with increasing distance of the state from the power center i.e., the capital of India whereas north eastern states suffered severe coverage blackout. Quantitative and spatial indices were developed to see news coverage in a new perspective.

Keywords: Indian states, union territories, press coverage, media research

India is the biggest democracies in the world which has a unique culture and is one of the oldest and greatest civilizations of the world (Publication, 2010). It is federal in character, like most democracies. Such administrative division, which was effected on the basis of languages spoken in India, has some bearings on its socio-cultural and political fabric which, in turn, affects their media coverage (Arya, 2011a). It is a sovereign, socialist secular democratic republic with a parliamentary system of government which is federal in structure with certain unitary features (India, 2008). It has a unique blend of traditionality and modernity. It is also known as “Bharat” and it is a union of twenty nine states and seven union territories (Constitution of India, 2011). It has 640 districts, 5,924 sub-districts, 7,935 towns and 6,40,867 villages (Census post, 2011). A state is defined as politically organized body of people usually occupying a definite territory; especially one that is sovereign (State, 2011). The centrally administered territories are called union territories (Constitution, 2011). There are three pillars of the constitution: executive, legislative and judiciary. The press has the coveted place of serving as the fourth pillar which helps to strengthen the democratic fabric. Very soon, a fifth pillar may solidify the structure of the constitution in the form of “citizen journalism” (Arya, 2008b).

In January 2011, India assumed a nonpermanent seat in the UN Security Council for the 2011-12 term (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011) which reflects its growing clout on world’s stage and imminent superpower. Indian press is regarded as the ‘free press’ and it

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derives its freedom of expression enshrined in the fundamental rights under article 19 (b) of the Constitution. Freedom of speech and expression includes right to impart and receive information which includes freedom to hold opinions” (Union of India, 2002). But sometimes this right is exercised in a partisan manner by the media. There seems to be a relation between the health of the democracy and the media coverage. The Indian Supreme Court observed “One-sided information, dis-information, mis-information and non-information, all equally create an uninformed citizenry which makes democracy a farce (ibid). The media’s role as the agent of development and purveyor of knowledge are widely acknowledged.

The media is an important source of information and exposure to new ways of thinking and doing things (Kishore & Gupta, 2009). Various media accomplishes several tasks, using influence to shape perceptions or opinions, persuasion to convince audiences that certain messages are true, straight information delivery that directly affects attitudes. (Perse, 2001) Ideally, the media should serve as purveyors of egoless egalitarianism and modesty and strive to engender a “saner” national discourse (Dwivedi, 2007). But this idea does not hold good from the perspective of plurality. We seem to be painting a jaundiced view of society, which is already marred by innumerable fissures and sociopolitical divides (ibid). Daniel Learner (1958), in his book The Passing of the Traditional Society, mentions that there is a strong correlation between the indices of the mass media and the socio-economic and political development of a nation. Hence it is appropriate to map the coverage patterns in the above mention area.

**Literature Review**

The coverage aspect of the states has not been studied so extensively in media research. Not much literature is available on the representation of states in the Indian news media. However, a few studies relevant within the adopted framework are mentioned in this study. A content analysis by Whitney et al. (1989) of 5,190 network evening news stories appearing between May 1982 and April 1984 revealed two sorts of biases: (i) Geographical bias, whereby some geographical areas receive far more news coverage than is due to them on the basis of their population density; and (ii) Source bias, showing that governmental agencies and major institutions, particularly the business and major political parties, are the most frequent sources of news. Dominic (1977), in his study on the amount of network news time devoted to various states, reported that the ‘attention index’ showed ‘over coverage’ and ‘under coverage’ for some states in the United States. Arya (2008b) developed the economic attention index (EAI) to assess the coverage of the Indian states and union territories’ news in English dailies and concluded that a positive correlation existed between the GDP of the states and UTs and the percentage of their news coverage. He argued that the coverage of Indian states and UTs in the news media varied not only in terms of their economic status but also in those of their political consciousness and their proximity to the power center (ibid).

Arya (2011a) developed the coverage parity index (CPI) by subtracting the percentage of news coverage from the space coverage, density attention index (DAI) by subtracting the density percentage of each state from its news coverage and the political attention index (PAI) by subtracting the share (in percentage) of a state or UT in parliament
seat(s) from the percentage of state and UT’s coverage. News coverage clearly reflects the media’s grossly unbalanced representation, highlighting some states disproportionately and neglecting others partially or totally (ibid).

On the similar lines Arya (2011) developed geographical attention index (GAI), literacy attention index (LAI), voters’ attention index (VAI) and state legislative attention index (SLAI). He found that all states, except the northern states, lost heavily on the above four indices and the loss exceeded as the state moved away from the ‘power center’ and the ‘place of publishing’, the capital of India. UTs emerged as clear gainer with tremendous over coverage. Arya (2011) developed quantitative and spatial versions of human development attention index (HDAI), media exposure attention index (MEAI) and income attention index (IAI) by subtracting their proportionate scores from the per cent coverage received in frequency and space aspects. Madhya Pradesh got the honour of being the only state to be grossly over covered quantitatively whereas Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh got their highest places in spatial category. UTs were showered with stupendous over coverage on all counts.

The Study
The scientific research studies on media coverage of geographical entities like states and UTs are relatively unknown phenomenon. The study borrows heavily from Daniel Learner (1958) and amplification effect of media. Learner mentions that there is a strong correlation between the indices of the mass media and the socio-economic and political development of a nation. Watson (1998) discusses amplification effect of media which says that by giving intensive coverage to certain stories and issues, their importance is amplified. The overall coverage intensity of northern, central, southern and north eastern states would project a region wise status of coverage in order to represent the data in a more comprehensive and lucid way. Various indices represent an individual and cumulative news coverage criterion on every possible dimension which deserve the media attention. All the indices’ quantitative and spatial variants would highlight the frequency coverage and the given space respectively. Correlation between all the indices reflect a kind of association, positive or negative and forms an idea about the concentration of coverage parameters. The study was necessitated in view of the lack of body of literature on the coverage aspect of administrative units i.e. states and UTs. The present study illuminates the full spectrum of factors which deserve to be counted in order to estimate the over coverage and the under coverage.

Objectives
The overall objective of the study was to measure the quantum of over coverage and under coverage of all Indian states and union territories on various socio-political and economic parameters. Following are specific objectives posed to guide the study.

(i) What are the region-wise over coverage and under coverage of northern, central, southern and north eastern states on all twelve indices
(ii) What are the composite over coverage and under coverage of states and UTs on all indices
(iii) What are the statistical correlation between all the indices

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Indian States and UT News: U Arya

**Theoretical Framework**
The framework of this study is based on the agenda setting theory (Shaw & McCombs, 1977) and the attention index (Dominic, 1977). The agenda setting theory states that the mass news media have a large influence on the audience by their choice of what stories to be considered newsworthy and how much prominence and space be allocated to them. The theory then leads us to classification, where the agenda can be of two types: the first being public agenda, which consists of issues that are relevant to the large population or public; and the other being policy agenda, which consists of issues that are important from policymakers’ point of view. Two more components of the theory further guiding the study such as (i) Public agenda: issues discussed and personally relevant to members of the public; and (ii) Policy agenda: issues that policymakers (legislators) consider important.

The attention index was developed by Dominic (1977) to measure television news coverage allocation to the different states in the United States of America. Each state’s relative news time was compared to its population and an ‘attention index’ was created by subtracting the ratio of each state’s population to the national population from its percentage of news coverage. Dominic’s framework underpins various indices developed out of this study. As discussed earlier, Whitney et al. (1989) argument of geographical biases also support the framework partially. (Media Asia, 2011)

**Methodology**
The researcher employed quantitative content analysis to fulfill the objectives. Content analysis may be defined as a methodology by which the researcher seeks to determine the manifest content of the written, spoken or published communications by a systematic, objective and quantitative analysis (Zito, 1975: 27). As it is clear from the definition, this process is basically descriptive and certain well-defined textual codes or elements are teased out by measuring the occurring frequency.

*Selection of newspapers*: The three highest circulated and read English dailies, *The Times of India* (TOI), *The Hindu* and *Hindustan Times* (HT), were selected for the study. TOI has a circulation of 11,02,521 and a readership of 7.4 million, *The Hindu* has an 11,68,042 circulation and 4.05 million readership, and HT has a circulation of 11,03,644 and a readership of 3.85 million. These are the three largest nationally circulated and read English newspapers.

*Reference period*: The study’s reference period was the months of July, August and September 2007. This period was chosen in view of the non-occurrence of any special event like elections and major sports event, which would have adversely affected the sample’s quality.

*Sample selection*: Newspaper content analysis results based on a 12-day sample would be quite similar to those available from a sample of more than 12 days (Ahmed, 1996, quoted in Bansal, 2002). Accordingly, a random sample of 36 editions out of 273 editions of newspapers were taken, which resulted in the collection of 1,243 observations. The rationale behind the sample selection is supported by the fact mentioned by Dominick and Wimmer (1994: 170) that the number of dates should be a function of the incidence of the phenomenon in question. More the occurrence less the sample size and vice versa. The newspapers’ special pages on regions and states were taken as the universe. The unit of analysis was a single news item from these pages.
Operationalising variables: Human development index is defined as the measurement of development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income into a composite index (Human Development Reports, 2011). Media exposure is defined as the percentage of people in exposed to the media (National Family Health Survey III, 2006). Per capita income was computed by dividing the total income with population size. The quantitative coverage parity index (CPI) was developed by subtracting the per cent share of news coverage from the per cent space coverage (Arya, 2011a). Apart from mapping the coverage intensity on above 4 indices, a comprehensive list of 8 more indices, thus totalling 12, were drawn by subtracting the concerned parameter’s proportionate share from percentage news share.

Area attention index (AAI) = percentage coverage – states proportionate geographical area, literacy attention index (LAI) = percentage coverage – proportionate literates in states, voters attention index (VAI) = percentage coverage – proportionate voters in states, population attention index (PAI) = percentage coverage – proportionate population, economic attention index (EAI) = percentage coverage – proportionate GDP, human development attention index (HDAI) = percentage coverage – proportionate HDI score, media exposure attention index (MEAI) = percentage coverage – proportionate MEAI score, income attention index (IAI) = percentage coverage – proportionate per capita income, density attention index (DAI) = percentage coverage – proportionate population density of area, legislative attention index (LAI) = percentage coverage – proportionate assembly seats of states and political attention index (PAI) = percentage coverage – proportionate parliamentary seats. Quantitative attention indices were developed by subtracting index’s parameter’s proportionate per cent values of from percentage news coverage. Similarly, spatial attention indices were developed by subtracting the individual index’s parameter’s proportionate per cent values from percentage space coverage.

Statistical methods: The data was subjected to the frequency and percentage analysis along with the Pearson correlation in Excel Stat software between all eleven indices.

Findings and Discussion
A hypothetical scale ranging from 0 to 6 points has been devised in order to better understand and standardise the under coverage and over coverage phenomenon on a common platform. The states having score of 6 or more are categorised as ‘grossly covered’, between 3 to 6 as ‘mildly over covered’, between 0.5 to 3 as ‘feebly over covered’ and between 0 to ± 0.5 (zero) as flatly covered. Those under zero had similar classification in negatives. The positive and negative scores indicate over coverage and under coverage respectively.

Region-wise score: For arriving at a snapshot of the region wise over coverage or under coverage (Table 1), four categories of the states were formed (i) northern states: Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand; (ii) North eastern states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, including Sikkim as eighth one; (iii) Central states: Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal; and (iv) Southern states: Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Union territories gained the lion’s share i.e. highest CPI (138 per cent), though central states got slightly more (150
per cent) but with unequal values, which translates into less number of news items and correspondingly more space in column centimeters. Southern states followed the scene with exactly equal CPI (flatly covered) which in turn was trailed by north eastern states (–2.64 per cent), central states (–22.5 per cent) and loss making northern states (–44 per cent). Quantitatively, biggest over covered were northern states (27 per cent) with central and southern states extremely heavily under covered (–143 per cent and –112 per cent respectively) and huge loss to north eastern states (–102 per cent). Biggest spatial over coverage went to northern states (13 per cent) and central states (7 per cent) and rest of the states got a raw deal pioneered by north eastern states (–104 per cent) and highest negative spatial penchant for southern states (–113 per cent). Northern states emerged as overall gainer on both counts whereas north eastern states were overall losers.

**Northern states:** Northern region got extremely high quantitative over coverage on density attention index (21.5 per cent), human development attention index and income attention index (8 per cent each) and mild over coverage on economic attention index (5.6 per cent) and media exposure attention index (4 per cent) and as shown in (Table 2A),. Feebly over coverage was on legislative attention index (3 per cent). The indices’ spatial versions had negative under coverage with the only exception for legislative attention index (18 per cent), human development index (4.07 per cent) and income attention index (0.58 per cent) (Table 2B). The states suffered gross under coverage for area attention index (–9.6 per cent), population attention index (–18.2 per cent), area attention index (–15.48 per cent) followed by almost similar gross under coverage for, literacy attention index (–17.24 per cent), political attention index and voters attention index (average – 16.64 per cent), area attention index (–15.5 per cent) and legislative attention index (–14 per cent). The states spatially gained mildly (1.5 per cent) only on density attention index whereas the spatial coverage versions of indices proved costly for central states to the tune of –24 per cent for population attention index, average near about –23 per cent for literacy attention index and voters attention index, political attention index and legislative attention index (Table 3B). Media exposure attention index suffered grossly with –10 per cent, human development attention index and income attention index lost grossly with –9 per cent and mildly with –6 per cent share respectively. Here, the central states were over covered only on 1 index both quantitatively and spatially through weighing heavily for the former.

**Central states:** The coverage picture was not rosy for central states on both, quantitative and spatial aspects (Table 3A). The states gained extensive over coverage only on quantitative density attention index (7.5 per cent) and flat on income attention index and almost flat (0.10 per cent) on income attention index. All states lost heavily with gross under coverage on population attention index (–18.2 per cent), area attention index (–15.48 per cent) followed by almost similar gross under coverage for, literacy attention index (–17.24 per cent), political attention index and voters attention index (average – 16.64 per cent), area attention index (–15.5 per cent) and legislative attention index (–14 per cent). The states spatially gained mildly (1.5 per cent) only on density attention index whereas the spatial coverage versions of indices proved costly for central states to the tune of –24 per cent for population attention index, average near about –23 per cent for literacy attention index and voters attention index, political attention index and legislative attention index (Table 3B). Media exposure attention index suffered grossly with –10 per cent, human development attention index and income attention index lost grossly with –9 per cent and mildly with –6 per cent share respectively. Here, the central states were over covered only on 1 index both quantitatively and spatially through weighing heavily for the former.

**Southern states:** These states were grossly over covered with equal quantitative and spatial scores (9.70 per cent) for density attention index only whereas coverage on all other indices ended up in red (Table 4A). Southern states had the uniqueness of having nearly equal or
largely identical values of quantitative and spatial versions vis-a-vis other states. Maximum quantitative coverage loss accrued to the economic attention index (−23.47 per cent) followed by political attention index, literacy attention index and voters attention index (average −15.20 per cent each), legislative attention index (12 per cent), population attention index (−13.6 per cent) and area attention index (−11.21 per cent). The states lost least on media exposure attention index (−7.56 per cent) and income attention index (−6.17 per cent). Same coverage scene was visible for the spatial indices which exactly tread the quantitative line. Hence only one index carried positives (Table 4B).

North eastern states: All seven sister states plus Sikkim proved to be unluckiest with negatives for all indices and for both versions (Table 5 A). Media exposure attention index and human development attention index turned out to be costliest coverage propositions (−28 per cent and −25 per cent respectively). Economic attention index, literacy attention index and voters’ attention index saw minimum coverage loss with (−1 per cent, 2.8 per cent and 2.6 per cent). The study also found no significant difference existed between the values of quantitative and spatial indices (Table 5 B).

Coverage of all Indices
All these eleven indices tend to represent the whole gamut of coverage parameters which are based on different rationale which justify media coverage expectations by the states. It shows that northern states snatched the biggest quantitative gross coverage pie lead by Haryana (59 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (12.53 per cent) and Jammu & Kashmir (8.67 per cent). The only exception was a central state Madhya Pradesh with second highest over coverage (56 per cent). Mildly over covered were also the northern states of Uttarakhand and Rajasthan with 5.4 per cent share each. Only one southern state Kerala was feebly over covered (1.31 per cent). No state was flatly covered quantitatively on all eleven indices. Quantitative scores were quite surprisingly as 20 out of 28 states showed gross under coverage by unusually high margins like West Bengal (−52 per cent), Gujarat (−38 per cent), Maharashtra (−32 per cent); Orissa (−28 per cent); Assam and Karnataka (−24 per cent each); Tamil Nadu (22 per cent); Andhra Pradesh and Bihar (−19.54 per cent each); Jharkhand and Punjab (−17.9 per cent); Chhattisgarh, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura (average −12.8 per cent); Nagaland and Himachal Pradesh (11 per cent each); Goa (−16 per cent); Arunachal Pradesh (−13.35 per cent); Meghalaya (−9.86 per cent); and Sikkim (−6.89 per cent). No state was mildly or feebly over covered.

All states benefitted in space wise coverage scenario with a leading pack of six states cornering stupendous gross over coverage chunks lead by West Bengal (50 per cent) and trailed faintly by Uttarakhand and Bihar (36 per cent each), Rajasthan (23 per cent), Haryana and Jharkhand (20 per cent each). Like quantitative version, here also 19 out of 28 states were in the red zone of gross under coverage by unusually high margins lead by Gujarat (−36 per cent), Andhra Pradesh and Orissa (31.3 per cent each), Tamil Nadu (−26 per cent), Assam (−24 per cent), Punjab (−22 per cent), Karnataka (19 per cent), Goa and Maharashtra (18.3 per cent each), Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura (−13.35 per cent each), Madhya Pradesh, Manipur and Mizoram (12.26 per cent each), Meghalaya and Nagaland (−10.7 per cent each). Sikkim lost by least margin (−8 per cent).
From CPI point of view, West Bengal (96 per cent) and Bihar (80 per cent) got topmost rank in securing more space to less number of news items whereas this was just opposite in case of Madhya Pradesh (–69 per cent) and Haryana (–40 per cent) which means quantitative coverage exceeded very much out of proportion than the spatial one. All north eastern states other than Sikkim and Tripura got zero value which means a perfect harmony between news quantity and space. Further elaboration revealed positives on Uttarakhand (57 per cent), Jharkhand (43 per cent), Rajasthan (18 per cent), Maharashtra (14 per cent) Karnataka (5 per cent) and Gujarat (2.40 per cent) which effectively means that only 8 out of 28 states reported over spacing for news that too by astronomically high magnitude. Fifteen states showed reddish CPI values mainly Andhra Pradesh (–12 per cent), Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir (average –8.34 per cent), Tamil Nadu and Punjab (–4.38 per cent), Goa and Himachal Pradesh (average –1.86 per cent), Sikkim, Kerala and Orissa (–1.20 per cent each), Meghalaya, Tripura and Chhattisgarh (–0.72 per cent).

Quantitative correlations between different indices

Pearson’s correlation revealed a highly strong positive correlation between human development attention index and media exposure attention index (0.99), density attention index (0.92) and income attention index (0.90) as seen in Table 6. Media exposure attention index was correlated to income attention index (0.90) and density attention index (0.93). Income attention index was correlated with density attention index (0.83). Similarly, literacy attention index was positively correlated to population attention index (0.99), political attention index (0.98), legislative attention index (0.85) and economic attention index (0.82). Area attention index was positively correlated with legislative attention index (0.56), economic attention index (.55), literacy attention index (0.43) and population attention index (0.42). Voters’ attention index had a mild positive correlation with legislative attention index and economic attention index (0.45 each). Population attention index had correlation with only one index i.e., economic attention index (0.74). The correlation phenomenon suggests a strong relationship between the particular indices and the nature of relationship is beyond the scope of this study.

Spatial correlations between different indices

Table 7 shows that the spatial correlation phenomenon had 18 instances of negative correlations and 16 instances of positive ones. Strong positive correlation existed between population attention index and literacy attention index (0.98), political attention index (0.97), legislative attention index (0.79) and economic attention index (0.65) whereas it was negatively correlated with human development attention index (–0.37), media exposure attention index (–0.37), income attention index (–0.38) and density attention index (–0.15). Similarly, economic attention index was correlated to literacy attention index (0.75), political attention index (0.69) and legislative attention index (0.65). On the flip side, negative correlation existed between economic attention index and human development attention index (–0.17), media exposure attention index (–0.15) and density attention index (–0.11). Human development attention index was found to be strongly positively correlated with media exposure attention index (0.98), density attention index (0.92), income attention index (0.87) and negatively correlated with literacy attention index (–0.33), political attention index (–0.20) and area attention index (–0.11). Media exposure attention index had positives with income attention
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index (0.86) and density attention index (0.89) and negatives with literacy attention index (–0.34) and political attention index (–0.20). Area attention index didn't have any positive correlation with any index but only negatives for density attention index (–0.19) and income attention index (–0.11). Legislative attention index was correlated to political attention index (0.87) whereas income attention index had strong positives for density attention index (0.78). Hence it can be inferred that the spatial versions had more uneven correlations vis-a-vis quantitative which indicates a kind of coverage uniformity for the latter.

Conclusion
The national media coverage scene acts like a stage for the states where agenda is set in the readers’ mind. It is the duty of the public relations officers of the governments concerned to project their side of the imagery before external and internal publics. However, many-a-times media’s agenda takes its own course independent of the attempted versions by the government mouthpiece. Ideally, the media should serve as purveyors of egoless egalitarianism and modesty and strive to engender a “saner” national discourse (Dwivedi, 2007). But media’s subliminal coverage proclivities combined with regional coverage obligations paint a different picture.

The eleven pronged coverage measurement approach along with the twelfth CPI encapsulates the complete coverage compendium in order to arrive at a mapping of states and UTs position based on every possible indicator of socio economic, demographical and political aspects. UTs, mainly Delhi and Chandigarh were unjustifiably favoured on all twelve counts which clearly points out media’s biased leanings to cater to the regional aspirations and ‘preference to the power center. This phenomenon is further supported by the exceptional positive gross quantitative and spatial over coverage to all indices of the northern states mainly lead by Haryana and Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Maximum number i.e. eight instances of over coverage on different indices occurred in the northern states which is a highly favourable treatment by all measurement standards.

Central states were accorded the coveted treatment positive CPI which translates into the ‘detailed news’ in contrast to the northern states where quantity of the news item was more than the corresponding amount of space. The quantitative legislative attention index was found to be most positively related to maximum number of other indices which again indicates the importance of the limelight and highlight which the states deserve in the media reportage. However, the spatial scene was fragmented where population attention index was having maximum correlations than other indices. The rate of coverage fall was directly proportional to the distance from the power center i.e. New Delhi. The states farthest from the national capital suffered coverage loss and this is true for all the states namely central, southern and north eastern states. Even the UTs other than northern Chandigarh and New Delhi were not covered at all which conclusively points out towards the ‘concentrated coverage culture’ and ‘power center’ proposition.

North eastern states were nearly blacked out, some totally and others partially, from the Indian media coverage scene. Though a few states like Assam, Manipur, Sikkim etc received some coverage but that too was totally negatively skewed focusing on terrorism, separatism, bomb blasts, blockades and military interventions. This selective and biased coverage is projecting the all seven sister states in poor light before the rest of the India and
vice versa which is not in alignment the spirit of the constitution. The findings are in concurrence with Whitney et al. (1989). In a nutshell, this overall media performance undermines the role of media as the purveyor of knowledge, awareness and education thus ensuring an egalitarian society. More such studies are recommended to uncover the further deeper roots of media bias to standardize the process of media coverage.

Note
1 Coverage parity index was excluded from the overall score due to its nature of being an outlier parameter.

References
Dwivedi, M. (2007). The media charade: “We” are also part of the world simulacra. *Communication Today*, 10(3), 1–7
### Table 1. Region wise compendium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Total quantitative index value (A)</th>
<th>Total spatial index value (B)</th>
<th>Coverage parity index (B-A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern states</td>
<td>27.01</td>
<td>40.50</td>
<td>-22.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern states</td>
<td>-101.29</td>
<td>-104.38</td>
<td>-2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central states</td>
<td>-142.81</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>103.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern states</td>
<td>-112.97</td>
<td>-112.99</td>
<td>-0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Territories</td>
<td>207.97</td>
<td>405.91</td>
<td>198.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Northern States - Table 2 A Quantitative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>% Coverage</th>
<th>% Spatial coverage</th>
<th>Population attention index</th>
<th>Economic attention index</th>
<th>Area attention index - AA1</th>
<th>Literacy attention index - LA1</th>
<th>Voters attention index - VAI</th>
<th>Legislative attention index - LAI</th>
<th>Human development attention index - HDAI</th>
<th>Media exposure attention index - MBI</th>
<th>Income attention index</th>
<th>Density attention index</th>
<th>Political attention index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-1.89</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>-3.86</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>9.69</td>
<td>-2.22</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>-2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
<td>-2.49</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
<td>-1.34</td>
<td>-1.28</td>
<td>7.44</td>
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<td>0.64</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>5.1</td>
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### Northern States - Table 2 B Spatial

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### Central States - Table 3 A Quantitative

| State             | % Coverage | % Spatial coverage | Population attention index | Economic attention index | Area attention index - AAI | Literacy attention index - VAI | Voters attention index - LAI | Legislative attention index - LAI | Human development attention index - MEI | Media exposure attention index - MEI | Insecurity attention index | Density attention index | Political attention index |
|-------------------|------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Chattisgarh       | 1          | 0.94               | -1.02                       | -0.53                    | -3.11                      | -1.00                        | -1.16                         | -1.18                               | -1.69                            | -1.86                     | -0.73                    | 0.53                     | -1.03                    |
| Gujarat           | 1          | 1.2                | -3.93                       | -6.54                    | -4.96                      | -4.39                        | -4.23                         | -3.42                               | -2.11                            | -2.69                     | -2.92                    | 0.2                      | -3.7                     |
| Madhya Pradesh    | 9.1        | 3.36               | 3.22                        | 4.65                     | -0.27                      | 3.47                         | 4.02                         | 3.52                               | 6.51                             | 6.22                      | 6.62                     | 849                      | 4.02                     |
| Bihar             | 2.7        | 2.22               | -5.85                       | -0.56                    | -0.64                      | -4.77                        | -5.37                         | -3.48                               | 0.22                             | 0.03                      | 1.31                     | -0.04                    | -4.41                    |
| Jharkhand         | 0.7        | 0.68               | -1.94                       | -1.22                    | -1.74                      | -1.73                        | -1.82                         | -1.29                               | -2.11                            | -1.59                     | -2.36                    | -0.35                    | -1.84                    |
| West Bengal       | 1.7        | 1.94               | -5.87                       | -6.65                    | -0.76                      | -6.10                        | -5.38                         | -5.23                               | -1.45                            | -1.59                     | -0.78                    | -1.11                    | -5.66                    |
| Orissa            | 0.5        | 0.4                | -3.07                       | -1.79                    | -4.24                      | -2.98                        | -3.30                         | -3.47                               | -2.13                            | -2.71                     | -1.50                    | -0.23                    | -3.69                    |
| Total             | 16.7       | 10.74              | -18.2                       | -12.38                   | -15.48                     | -17.24                       | -16.99                        | -14.48                              | -2.76                            | -4.19                     | -0.10                    | 7.49                     | -16.31                   |

### Central States - Table 3 B Spatial

<p>| State             | % Coverage | % Spatial coverage | Population attention index | Economic attention index | Area attention index - AAI | Literacy attention index - VAI | Voters attention index - LAI | Legislative attention index - LAI | Human development attention index - MEI | Media exposure attention index - MEI | Insecurity attention index | Density attention index | Political attention index |
|-------------------|------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Chattisgarh       | 1          | 0.94               | -1.08                       | -0.59                    | -3.17                      | -1.06                        | -1.22                         | -1.28                               | -1.75                            | -1.92                     | -0.79                    | 0.47                     | -0.99                    |
| Gujarat           | 1          | 1.2                | -3.73                       | -6.34                    | -4.76                      | -4.19                        | -4.03                         | -3.22                               | -4.72                            | -2.69                     | -1.19                    | -0.88                    | -9.72                    |
| Madhya Pradesh    | 9.1        | 3.36               | -2.52                       | -1.09                    | -6.01                      | -2.27                        | -2.22                         | -0.77                               | 0.48                             | 0.48                      | 0.47                     | 0.47                     | -0.58                    |
| Bihar             | 2.7        | 2.22               | -8.55                       | -3.26                    | -3.34                      | -7.47                        | -8.07                         | -6.38                               | -6.45                            | -3.69                     | -4.96                    | -0.04                    | -1.96                    |
| Jharkhand         | 0.7        | 0.68               | -2.64                       | -1.92                    | -2.43                      | -2.52                        | -1.99                         | -2.13                               | -1.61                            | -3.06                     | -0.35                    | -1.84                    | -6.66                    |
| West Bengal       | 1.7        | 1.94               | -7.57                       | -8.35                    | -2.86                      | -7.80                        | -7.08                         | -6.90                               | -1.21                            | -1.35                     | -2.48                    | -1.11                    | -5.66                    |
| Orissa            | 0.5        | 0.4                | -5.17                       | -1.89                    | -4.34                      | -3.08                        | -3.40                         | -3.17                               | -2.23                            | -2.81                     | -1.60                    | -0.33                    | -3.79                    |
| Total             | 16.7       | 10.74              | -24.16                      | -18.34                   | -21.44                     | -23.20                       | -22.95                        | -20.01                              | -8.72                            | -10.15                    | -6.06                    | 1.53                     | -22.27                   |</p>
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### North Eastern states - Table 5 A Quantitative

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### Table 6. Quantitative correlation matrix (between indices)

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### Table 7. Spatial correlation matrix (between indices)

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Public relations: Scope and Challenges in Digital Era

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National Institute of Fashion Technology, Kangra, India

With the emergence of new media in 21st century communication industry has been revolutionized. Although digital or social media provides an advantage to reach the audience in minimum time but it is critical to draft a right message for this medium. Digital media has indeed changed the way of communication for public relation practitioners around the world. Now information is disseminated much quicker through the internet and mobile phones. In this digital era, it is imperative that public relation would need to adapt to technological advancement happening around the world and utilize this advancement as tools to effectively reach its audiences and achieve the communication objectives. To achieve public relation, it has become important for a PR practitioner to adapt to these new changes. The new technologies and methods of communication have made public relations a much more versatile and effective tool. New communication technologies allow inventive ways to accomplish a public relation campaign to build stronger association and trust between businesses and target consumers.

Public Relations and Technology: Public relations professionals across the world today are exposed to range of new communications channels. Web-based media tools like blogs, podcasts, online video and social networks have become a platform for voicing opinions for people around the globe. Although mainstream media is playing the main role in dissemination of information even then social or new media are influencing the tradition media. Innovation in technology has been influencing the public relations practitioners do their work. One of the basic functions of public relation; press release, once typed on paper and now mostly sent via e-mail or fax. As far as history of public relation is concerned, a PR Newswire sent the first electronically transmitted press release on March 8, 1954 in New York.

Literature Review: Initial researches in the area public relation have found that using digital or social media has seen as common practice in of public relations now but (Galloway, 2005) many public relations practitioners are finding it difficult to adopt and struggling with the impact of new media, and particularly the Internet.

Researchers have also found that existing professionals are not fully accepting new media as they are ill-equipped to do so and some of them have a fear of the technology (Alfonso & de Valbuena Miguel, 2006). It some studies it also came across the fact that new media is forcing PR to change as it is increasing the stakeholder strength via facilitating

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communication within and between different stakeholder groups (Van der Merwe, Pitt & Abratt, 2005).

In one of the studies, it has been reiterated that the new media technology and internet have provided public relation professionals a capability to gather information and keep an eye on public opinion on issues, and directly connect with its publics about all the concerning issues (McAllister & Taylor, 2007). In some studies it was also found that public relations practitioners were keen to use new technology (Porter & Sallot, 2003), but its adoption in its one the major functions of public relation; media relations was not taking benefit of the potential offered by the internet (Alfonso & de Valbuena Miguel, 2006).

In studying key elements of the website homepages of companies in the USA and South Korea, it was found that ‘public relations practitioners have not started using the internet to increase interaction between organizations and their publics’ (Jo & Jung 2005, p. 27). It was found that none of the social media specialists employed in major public relations firms had worked in public relations before. They were specifically hired in 2006 and 2007 for their social media skills from backgrounds in technology journalism, digital marketing and advertising, and blogging respectively.

In 2009 a survey by Donald Wright and Michelle Hinson (n=574) finding revealed that there is strong interest in social media by PR practitioners. Though, Wright and Hinson also reported that “meaningful gaps exist when measuring differences between what is happening and what should be happening in terms of all of the social media”, especially when it come to knowing what are considered the most important social media (2009, p.19). Wright and Hinson acknowledged these new tools of social media and social networks most used by practitioners were Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (2009, p. 15). The study also revealed that PR professionals still rely largely on traditional media for accessing news, with 85 per cent using newspapers ‘very frequently’ or ‘somewhat frequently’ on a five point Likert scale, 79 per cent relying predominantly on television news, and 71 per cent relying mostly on radio news, compared with 58 per cent who say they frequently get news from blogs.

These quantitative findings indicated that social media is still under-utilized as opposite to its perception. Only 4 per cent of PR practitioners reported spending more than half of their time working with social media. However, only 11 per cent say they spend 26 to 50 per cent of their working time engaging with social media and 30 per cent spend 11 to 25 per cent. Almost half (48 per cent) public relation practitioners spend less than 10 per cent of their working time engaging with social media, and seven per cent spend no time at all with social media (Wright & Hinson, 2009, pp. 23-24). Wright and Hinson also found that 73 per cent of respondents reported that social media have changed the way they communicate and 72 per cent believe social media have enhanced public relations (2009, p. 23).

In their follow up study, ‘how social and other emerging media are being used in public relations practice; the result of Wright and Hinson (2013) study revealed that the use of these new media is increasing each year. Respondent believed that new media have improved public relations practice, particularly when it comes to external audiences.

Results also showed that public relations practitioners believe that the social and other emerging media are get better in terms of accuracy, credibility, honesty, trust and truth telling.
Respondents also thought that new media can be an effective regulator for traditional news media. It can also advocate a transparent and ethical culture in corporate and transparency in organizations.

**Objectives:** The objectives of this study are (i) to understand the scope and challenges of public relation in the digital era in Indian public relation industry and (ii) to examine the challenge digital age has brought in the public relation practice.

**Methodology:** Keeping in mind the topic of the study it was decided to do an in-depth review of the recent studies in the area to understand the direction of the research work done so far. To analyze how these technological advances have impacted locally in India, primary research modeled on a study conducted by Wright and Hinson (2009) was done. A web based survey of PR practitioners working in different public relation agencies, public relation executives working in different companies, executives of government public relation departments and public relation professionals working in non-government organization in Delhi (India) was done. Sample of 200 individuals were selected and contacted through e-mail.

**Results:** Response to the questions
(i) Importance of social media in overall communications and public relations in organizations

- Nearly 30 per cent of respondents believed that the use of social networks was very important and 35 per cent believed that it was somewhat important.
- 20 per cent respondent indicated that Micro blogging site Twitter was very important for their communication. Blogs also got the same response; 20 per cent respondent believed that blogs were very important for their communication. Electronic forum or message boards to be least important according to 40 per cent of respondents.

(ii) Importance of social media in building public relations among client’s with the organization

- 50 per cent felt that blogs should be considered most important followed by social networks on 40 per cent. Video Sharing at 30 per cent. Podcast were the least important once again amongst the respondents.

(iii) Changes in organizational activity by using social media

- 40 per cent of respondents strongly agree that social media have changed the way their organization communicates.
- 55 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that social media have changed the way their organization handles external communication.
- 40 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that social media have affected their internal communication, but 40 per cent either disagree or strongly agree that it has changed its internal communication ways.
(iv) Relationship between social media and traditional media

- The results indicated that 50 per cent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that social media and traditional media complement each other and; nearly 30 per cent disagree that they are in conflict with each other.

(v) Social media perception in public relation

- Around 60 per cent respondents agree or strongly agree that social media have enhanced the public relations practice.
- Around 50 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that social media have influenced mainstream media and only 30 per cent disagree to this perception.
- More than half of respondents agree that mainstream media influence social media, where as 20 per cent strongly agree.
- Nearly 60 per cent of respondents agree that social media have made communication more instantaneous.
- 50 per cent of respondents viewed social media as less accurate than traditional media. Around 40 per cent of respondents disagree or strongly that social media are more credible than traditional media.60 per cent respondents do not view social media as trusted news sources.40 per cent of respondents disagree about social media being truthful.
- Around 60 per cent of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that social media do advocate a transparent or ethical culture.70 per cent of respondents agree that social media offers a cheap way to develop relationships with members of the public.
- Nearly 70 per cent of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that social media serve as a watchdog for traditional media.40 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that social media are impacting corporate and organizational transparency.

(vi) Opinion of social media compared to traditional media

- This result indicated traditional media is perceived to be honest and accurate. Around 50 per cent respondent agreed or strongly agreed that mainstream media are expected to be honest.
- Regarding response to Social media, 50 per cent respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that social is perceived to be honest and accurate.

(vii) Usage of media as information source

- The results indicated that around half of the respondent never uses social media tools as news sources. Newspapers are most trusted source of news where 50 per cent of respondents use them followed by TV news at 40 per cent.
Results indicated that respondents still rely heavily on traditional media as news source.

(viii) Social media usage

- Regarding the usage of social media LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter is most used by the respondents.
- YouTube not that frequently used and my pace is least used social media platform by the respondents.

Conclusion: It is evident from the results that PR practitioners have started understanding the importance of the social or digital media. Although its adoption in practice is in the nascent stage. Professionals do think that using these new tools would certainly help them in achieving effective public relation but they still rely heavily on the tradition media tools at the moment. Result also indicate that professionals are not adequately equipped to utilize the potential of the this new age media as yet and they believe that a training in new media tools will surly help in achieving organization’s goals.

Regarding the suggestion for the further research it will be interesting to do this survey annually and monitor the adoption of these digital media tools and measure their effectiveness in public relation as done by Wright and Hinson in USA.

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