

Usage and Impact of Smart Phones Among Youth: Digital India in Reality

Dr. Kaluvoya Anitha^a, Dr. Kasuba Sirisha^b

^a Assistant Professor of Dept. of Mass Communication and Journalism, St. Francis College for Women (Autonomous), Hyderabad.

^b Assistant Professor of Dept. of Economics, St. Francis College for Women (Autonomous), Hyderabad

Abstract

India is moving quickly towards its dream of ‘**Digital India**’ to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. As a result, mobile penetration in India is creating records every year in the global market. Simultaneously the social media platforms are pulling mobile users towards its attractive content to mint money. Is growing mobile usage a real indicator of digital India? Do these smartphones are really making their users smart enough? The growing market for smartphones is a positive indicator for growth in communication networks but it is also hard to ignore the impact of smartphones on mental health and cyber theft. Therefore, this study was designed to find out not only the usage of smartphones among youth but also their impact on their mental health and perceptions towards cyber security. A mixed methodology was adopted to meet the set objectives. The study reveals that there is a huge usage of smartphones among youth and they all are aware about its effects on their mental health and threats to cyber security, but they are not able to resist using mobile phones daily as it has become part of their life, and they lack cyber security knowledge though they are aware of cybercrimes in society. So, it is important to understand that digital India is not about smartphones and technology but it is about producing smart Individuals.

Keywords: Smartphones, youth, Digital India, cyber security, mental health, Mobile Communication

Introduction

Smartphones have changed our lifestyle totally. These day people are seen all the time with phones in their hands. From working class to college students, housewives and even small kids use smartphone for varied reasons. People work with mobiles while they commute, chat with friends and families across the world, do shopping online, book film tickets and flight tickets, transfer money and many more. It is no more a source for only communication, but a great entertainer and educator. A smartphone is a computing platform portable device that combines mobile telephone and computing functions into one unit. They are distinguished from feature phones by their stronger hardware capabilities and extensive mobile operating systems which facilitate wider software, internet and multimedia functionality alongside core phone functions such as voice calls and text

messaging (Wikipedia).

Though in 1992 smartphones were introduced, but people didn't use the term "smartphone" until 1995, It was called the Simon Personal Communicator, and it was created by IBM more than 15 year before Apple release the iPhone(Steven Tweedie, 2015). People had to pay roughly Rs 4,900 for a prepaid SIM at a call rate of Rs 17 per minute for incoming and outgoing to own a mobile phone in 1995. In India, 27years ago in 1995, the first -ever mobile phone call was made by former West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu , to the then union Telecom Minster Sukh Ram at Sanchar Bhavan in New Delhi. (Rishabh Mansur, 2020). This sparked the beginning of a telecom revolution in India -a movement led by the likes of Jio, Airtel Vodafone, idea and BSNL today. India has the highest mobile data consumption rate in the world with 12 GB per user a month, and our country is adding 25 million new smartphone users every quarter. As per 2021 statistics 1.18 billion mobile connections, 700 million Internet users, and 600 million smartphones, which are increasing 25 million per quarter. With the strong 4G network system these days people are making video calls and watching films through OTT platforms as the data rates have gone down. Reliance Jio's disruptive foray in September 2016 has not only triggered an intense price-war with cost- effective data tariff in the industry but also hastened the incumbents migration to next generation technology (Muntazir Abbas, ET Bureau, 2021).

According to the latest edition of the "Ericsson Mobility Report" four out of every ten mobile subscriptions in 2026 will be 5G. The growing subscription and population coverage of 5G technology is going to be the fastest of any generation of mobile connectivity. The report states that 5G subscriptions and coverage across the world population could reach to 60% with 3.5billion users by 2026.

The society has taken big leap toward digitalization due to pandemic from 2020. Mobile networks have become crucial aspects for everyday life and 5G technology will be key to future economic Prosperity. The report mentioned that 4G will continue to be the dominant technology in 2026 accounting for 63 per cent of mobile subscriptions. In India, the average monthly mobile data usage per smartphone continues to show robust growth, boosted by the rapid adoption of 4G and people working from home during Covid-19. It also revealed that the reliance of people on their mobile networks to stay connected as well as work from home during Covid-19 has contributed to the average traffic per smartphone user increasing from 13.5GB per month in 2019 to 15.7GB per month in 2020. The average traffic per smartphone is expected to further increase to around 37GB per month in 2026.

The growing smartphone subscription across the country has a greater potential to transform industries and societies to smart cities to make digital India a reality. As every coin has two sides, even this growing technology has a darker side and that is smart phones impact on MENTAL HEALTH. Smart cities are built with smart people but the question is "How smart are people getting with growing technology" it is a million dollar question. Statistics show huge growth on complaints related to mental health of smartphone users of all age groups. This makes it important to look at this issue in depth. The present study is designed to know the usage of smartphones among youth and its influence on their mental health.

Review of Literature

1. [Campbell, Marilvn](#) (2005), explores in their study on “*The Impact of the Mobile Phone on Young People's Social Life*” the impact of the mobile phone on youth peer relationships, on family relationships and on the institution of the school. Young people use the mobile phone in positive ways to organize and maintain their social networks. However, there are also negative impacts on young peoples’ peer relationships. These can include ostracism and cyber bullying. Similarly, the mobile phone has lead to changed dynamics in the family, with issues of safety and surveillance from a parental perspective leading to negotiated changing freedoms for young people. While functional coordination can be beneficial for the family, other problems can arise such as financial difficulties, non-custodial parent access, as well as over reliance on the mobile phone for safety issues and intrusion into young peoples’ lives.
2. [Mohammed Usman](#) (2020) argues that as a trend, teenagers are more inclined to the newest gadgets of any sort. Whenever a new multimedia or electronic gadget is launched-just see the queue in any outlet-you will see a large number of youngsters filing the crowd-isn't that? Frankly speaking, youngsters are becoming tech-savvy than ever; It is now crucial part of majority of the lives of the youth. However, researches say that excessive use of mobile phones may cause serious problems to anybody in different aspects. In this study he presents the impacts, especially negative impacts of mobile phones on our youth today.
3. [Mudasir Rather](#)(2019) identifies in his study that the impact of Smartphones is visible in all areas of life including business, education, health, marketing, social life etc. But it is not out of place to mention here that every technology has its pros and cons within. It has also caused various health hazards and brought miseries to people especially children which include Eye strain, Neck and back pain, Hypertension, etc.
4. [Clarissa Teheodora Tanil, Min Hooi Yong](#) (2020), examined in their study on “ **Mobile Phones: The effect of its presence on learning and memory**” the effect of a smartphone’s presence on learning and memory among undergraduates. A total of 119 undergraduates completed a memory task and the Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS). As predicted, those without smartphones had higher recall accuracy compared to those with smart phones. Phone conscious thought significantly predicted memory accuracy. They found that the presence of a Smartphone and high phone conscious thought affects one’s memory learning and recall, indicating the negative effect of a Smartphone proximity to our learning and memory.
5. [Oluwafemi J, Olusola & L.Maarhuis](#) (2021), highlighted in their study that Smartphone addiction has negative impacts on student learning and overall academic performance. The greater the use of a phone while studying, the greater the negative impact on learning. The skills and cognitive abilities students needed for academic success are negatively affected by excessive phone use. The results of this meta-analysis implied that addicted users show a diminished level in learning.

AIM

- To find out the usage and impact of Smart phones among Youth in India and also to understand the actuality of the digital India.

OBJECTIVES

- To know the consumption of smart phones among users
- To delve the perceptions of smart phones users
- To learn which brands are popular and why among youth
- To gauge the understanding of users on the impact of smart phones physically and psychologically

METHODOLOGY

The current study attempts to understand the consumers increased usage and consumption of smart phones. The present study delves the perceptions of the smart phone users and aims to know which brand is popular in the market. The study also tries to examine the physical and psychological effects of smart phones on its users.

This study was based on mixed method including both quantitative and qualitative research methods. From the quantitative method, an online descriptive and analytical survey was administrated. The Questionnaire was used for the data collection. The online data collection was exercised among the smart phone consumers among pan-India viewers to meet the research objectives. A total of 280 respondents from various places, including students, home makers, employed and unemployed were considered. In addition, in-depth interviews were exercised among 40 participants to probe the uses and gratification approach of smart phones to gauge the understanding of impact of smart phones physically and psychologically.

DISCUSSION

Some of the significant finding from the quantitative data collected from survey are startling. Out of 280 participants, majority (93%) were from the age group of 18-25, 62% among them are Female. Almost all the respondents (98%) use smartphones and each person in the family owns at least one smartphone.

51% of the respondents prefer mobile outlets to buy a new product than online. Majority the respondents (91%) stated that the purpose of using smartphones was not only for communication, social networking but also to capturing pictures and videos do online shopping, ticket booking etc.

On the other hand, respondents feel comfort factor (38%) is more important than design, battery backup or services to buy a smartphone. Interestingly respondents feel smart phone pricing is more affordable for upper middle-class and above range people. The study shows that most of the respondents prefer Apple phones (35%) over oneplus (31%), Samsung (22%) brands. Users are not satisfied with the pricing structure of smartphones and expect them to reduce. Study shows that 25% of users feel battery backup needs to be improved for smartphones.

The **In-depth interviews** have revealed several findings. First, it highlights that all of them use smartphones and prefer to replace them only after 2 years that too only if there is any damage. Apart from using smartphones for making and receiving calls, they use it even for connecting with people on social media, take pictures, videos, and for entertainment and education purposes. Respondents

say Smartphone has made things quite easier and they are convenient to use, starting from booking a cab to sending an email, chatting with friends for everything they are dependent on phone. Interestingly some admit they are addicted to their phones. All the respondents feel there is drastic change in their lifestyle after they starting using smartphones.

Majority of them concede smartphone are effecting their mental health as they sleep late night and waking up late , feel lazy, like to be in isolation, not eating food on time, decreased focus on studies, tired eyes etc.... Smartphone users said they do not visit suspicious websites with pop ups and messages which initiate the downloads without their permission and they also install anti-virus and hacking security apps to save their phones from hacking.

Most of them don't check whether their phones are being hacked or not. They feel there are many advantages and life has become comfortable after they started using smartphone but more than advantages there are many disadvantages with smartphones which are leading to many problems in society.

Users said anytime if they lost their smartphone or they are being stolen, the first thing they do is blocking the SIM card and IMEI number, later back up all the data and media from the cloud, file a complaint. The expectation of the participants from future smartphones is to increase in security measures, better battery quality and more advanced technological devices where artificial intelligence can be added.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent that the youth currently use smartphones greatly. Even though online shopping has increased still people would like to buy their smartphones only after a thorough examination from outlets who provide good services too. Smartphones have become part of their lives for varied reasons such as communication, interaction, chatting, online shopping, online education, watch web series and movies. Though Apple is a highly preferred brand by most of them they feel it's affordable by only upper-middle-class families and above. They have serious complaints about battery backup issues but hoping for improvement in future models.

The other end smartphone users admitted their phone usage has increased and due to which they are mostly awake at night, became lazy, wants to be in isolation, etc... This might disrupt normal sleep habits among them and could lead to fatigue, which can cause depression and anxiety symptoms in the future. Clinical psychologists predict these habits indicate that they are at greater risk for depression the following year. All the respondents are well aware of cybercrimes taking place in society but they lack knowledge how to protect themselves from such crimes and lack knowledge on security measures.

Ericsson Mobility Report says that the average traffic per smartphone is expected to further increase to around 37GB per month in 2026 indicating huge penetration for smartphones, but on the other side, psychologists warn great threat to the mental health of the younger generation due to high usage of phones. With these two contradicting conditions simultaneously mounting it's hard to image digital India in reality as glaring. So, it is important to understand that digital India is not about smartphones and technology but it is about producing smart Individuals.

REFERENCES

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smartphone>
2. <https://www.businessinsider.in/tech/the-worlds-first-smartphone-simon-was-created-15-years-before-the-iphone/articleshow/47665223.cms>
3. <https://yourstory.com/2020/07/india-mobile-phones-smartphone-market-25-years/amp>
4. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/indias-growing-data-usage-smartphone-adoption-to-boost-digital-india-initiatives-top-bureaucrat/articleshow/87275402.cms?from=mdr>
5. <https://news.abplive.com/news/ericsson-claims-india-5g-subscription-to-surpass-350-million-in-2026-1401038>
6. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/smartphones-revolutionize-our-lives-but-at-what-cost>
7. <http://www.trffcmedia.com/topics/why-are-smartphones-so-important-in-daily-life>
8. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3630207
9. <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mudasir-Rather-2>