

An Exploration of Trend in Internet Usage and Perception of Information Credibility among Indian Post Graduate Students

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Abstract

Internet services have become very popular worldwide and India is not different. Since its launch in the year 1995, India is the third largest country in the world in terms of number of internet users. There are lot many studies about the use of internet among the student community worldwide but not much had been studied about the internet usage and perception of information credibility among the Indian students. This study had been conducted to study it. Also the popular sources used by the Indian post graduate students for the search were studied. The research also tries to find out if there is any difference between the usage pattern of the internet in term of gender. The perception of the students towards the credibility of the information available on the internet had also been studied.

Keywords: Internet. Postgraduate students. Surf. E mail. Information. Random search. Wi-fi. Brad band.

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1. Introduction

The internet services were launched in the year 1995. The state owned Videsh Sanchar Nigam limited (VSNL) was the first one to launch it and was the only player for the first four year. According to internet service provider association of India (ISPAI) in the first year the broadband usage shows a growth of 20% per month. In November 1998, the entry of private service operators was allowed by the government. Since then the internet usage is increasing rapidly day by day. Internet has impact in each and every area including higher education and research. The table given below (Table 1) shows the growth in the internet usage throughout the world.

Table-1.

Worldwide Internet users	2005	2010	2013
World population	6.5 billion	6.9 billion	7.1 billion
Not using the Internet	84%	70%	61%
Using the Internet	16%	30%	39%
Users in the developing world	8%	21%	31%
Users in the developed world	51%	67%	77%

Estimate.
Source: International Telecommunications Union.

(Source - <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/in.htm>)

There has been a gradual increase in the internet user and India is not far behind. It is the third topmost country with respect to internet users and is expected to leave USA behind by the end of 2014. The internet mainly offers two benefits to its users, communication and information. According to Asemi (2005) the source of information available on the internet is increasing day by day. This growth of information in quantity and variety via the internet has implication for how it is used in education. It would be inappropriate to talk about the internet growth without the taking its use in education. We all are aware that students in all the different countries are using the internet for information and communication. However we yet do not know how the Indian post -graduate students are using the internet. This paper is an effort to find out the usage pattern among the post graduate students in the Indian Institutes.

2. Literature Review

Internet has become a way of life for the college going students. For most of them it not just is a tool that helps them to share their views and be in contact with their fellow students and mentors but they also use interne to get

information about their studies and complete a wide range of projects. According to [Asan and Koca \(2006\)](#), [Usun \(2003\)](#) the internet is popular among the students for a number of reasons, it reduces time lag between the production and utilization of the knowledge. It also promotes international cooperation and exchange and promotes multidisciplinary research. [Laurillard \(1992\)](#) in his studies has found that computer based learning can increase the understanding of the theoretical and technical concepts. This concept was also supported by [Dryli and Kinnaman \(1996\)](#) who found that internet do enable the students to find out information and expert. He also found that the internet helps the students in developing critical thinking. [Schleyer et al. \(1998\)](#) in their study found that the internet users in dentistry used the internet for discussion of clinical cases and for obtaining diagnostic and therapeutic information. They also use it for procuring dental products and communicating with patients.

[Bao \(1998\)](#) studied the Seton hall University students and found that 40.27% of the students were using internet on daily basis. It was also found that both the faculty and the students uses the internet for the academic and non-academic purpose [Charp \(2000\)](#) who found from his studies that internet has brought about a positive change in the teachers and the instructors. There are many surveys on the use of internet world wide. [Hoffman et al. \(2000\)](#) found that internet usage is most prevalent among the youngsters. [Odell et al. \(2000\)](#) in their study about the use of internet among the college students found that male and female students uses the internet in different ways. There was a gap between the use of internet among the male and the female students. The study by [Korgen et al. \(2001\)](#) about the difference in the internet usage among different race and ethnicity students found that the internet use is affected by the presence of absence of computer in the country of origin. [Jagboro \(2003\)](#) studied the use of internet in Africa and found that majority of the postgraduate students are using the internet. It was the fourth most important source used by the students to search the material. [George et al. \(2006\)](#) in their research have found that in USA most of the information search at the university was basically through the internet. Most of the students were found to be using Google for their search. [Mishra \(2009\)](#) in his study about the use of internet at the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria found that for close to 61% of the respondents internet was very important, 75% were using it for research and Google was the most popular search engine. There are many more studies like that of John [Lubans \(1998\)](#), [Rena et al. \(2007\)](#) that show the use of internet among the students.

In India studies were conducted on the use of internet among the students. A study conducted by [Kaur and Manhas \(2008\)](#), on the use of internet service and resources in the engineering colleges of Punjab and Haryana found that all the respondents makes frequent use of internet as they have access to it either in the college or at homes. In the research it was found that more than 75% of the students were using the internet services for the educational and research process and Google and Yahoo were the most popularly used search engines. Another study conducted by [Malik and Mahmood \(2010\)](#) about the web search behavior of students of the university of Punjab found that 59.9% of the students used the internet to search the material of their interest, Google was the most popular search engine followed by yahoo. The major constrain that these students' faces with respect to then use of internet was slow speed and information overload loading to more of poor and irrelevant information.

Though lots of studies about the use of internet among the students in different countries have been found, there is no research about the use of internet among the Indian postgraduate students, especially the management students. The present study is an effort the find out the usage of internet among the management students.

3. Scope of Study

The scope of this study is limited to the students studying in the Delhi NCR region. This region consists of students from all the different nook and corner of the country. All the students surveyed were the student of the post graduate program in management (Post Graduate Diplomas in Management or Master of Business Administration). The survey was conducted in the summer of 2014

4. Objective of Study

The research was conducted with the following objectives in hand

- i. To study the pattern of use of internet among the post graduate students.
- ii. To find out the purpose for which the internet is used most of the time.
- iii. To find out the device used for the internet connectivity most frequently.
- iv. To find out if there is any gender difference in the average use of internet.
- v. What is the opinion of the students toward the credibility of the information available on the internet?

5. Hypothesis

H_{10} = There is no significant association between the gender and the frequency of use of internet.

H_{1a} = There is a significant association between the gender and the frequency of use of internet.

H_{20} = There is no significant association between the gender and average time spent per day on internet.

H_{2a} = There is a significant association between the gender and average time spent per day on internet.

H_{30} = There is no significant association between the gender and the purpose for which the internet is used.

H_{3a} = There is a significant association between the gender and the purpose for which the internet is used.

H_{40} = There is no significant association between the gender and the kind of information preferred on the internet.

H_{4a} = There is a significant association between the gender and the kind of information preferred on the internet.

6. Research Methodology

In this study a questionnaire was used to conduct the study. Before administering the questionnaire the validity of questionnaire was tested with a focus group interview. The questionnaire's reliability was tested by test re-test method on 50 students. For this a pilot study was conducted. After this the final questionnaire was constructed which

was administered to 500 students. But of these questionnaires only 469 were returned and 18 questionnaires were found to be unsuitable due to incomplete information only 451 questionnaires were found suitable and the study is based on the analysis of these 451 questionnaires.

7. Data Analysis and Findings

7.1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

A total of 451 respondents were surveyed, of these 385 were Male and 66 were females. Most of the students surveyed were in the age group of 20-25 years, 92% students were in this age group also 91.8% students were found to be using the internet on their own laptops or desktops and 4.7% were using it on their mobiles. Only 3.5% students were using other sources like cyber café or friends laptops for it (Table 2)

Table-2.

Variables	Particular	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	385	85.4
	Female	66	14.6
Age	20-25 Years	415	92
	25 Years and above	36	8
Usage Instrument	Own Computer/ Laptop	414	91.8
	Mobile	21	4.7
	Others (café/ Friends Computer)	16	3.5
Internet Skill	Very high	118	26.2
	High	212	47.0
	Fair	121	26.8
Source of Internet	Broad band	104	23.1
	Data card/ 3G	311	69
	Wi-fi of campus	29	6.4
	Cyber cafe	7	1.6

It was also found from the study that 26.2% students consider themselves as having very high internet using skills and 47% consider it to be only high at the same time 26.8% consider themselves to be having fair internet skills.

7.2. The Pattern of Usage of Internet

When the students were asked how frequently they access internet, 90.5% says that on daily basis whereas only 1.8% students use the net once a week. It is a routine task for the students to use it. The study also indicate that the students are spending a considerable amount of time on internet, most of them were spending more than 3 hours per day on internet (39%) whereas only 6.2% were spending less than an hour on daily basis. All the 100% students were found using Google as the search engine. (Table 3).

Table-3.

Variables	Particular	Frequency	Percentage
Usage Frequency	Daily	408	90.5
	Twice a week	35	7.8
	Once a week	8	1.8
	Others	0	0
Time Spent	Less than an hour	28	6.2
	1-2 hour	123	27.3
	2-3 hour	117	25.9
	More than 3 hours	176	39.0
	Other (As required)	7	1.6
Search Engine Used	Google	451	100.0

7.3. The Purpose for Which the Internet is Used Most of the Time

When the students were asked about the purpose of using internet, most of the time it was e- mails (31) followed by random search (29.5), 14.4% students were found using it for chatting and only 11.8% use it for research projects. The percentage of students using it for music or videos is far more than the percentage of students using it for e - books. 11.5% students were found to be using internet for music or videos whereas only 1.8% uses it for e- books. Most of the students preferred the material in the form of soft copy only. (Table 4)

Table-4.

Variables	Particular	Frequency	Percentage
Purpose	E mail	140	31.0
	Random Search	133	29.5
	Chatting	65	14.4
	Research projects	53	11.8
	E- Book	8	1.8
	Music / Videos	52	11.5
	Form of information preferred	Soft Copy	392
	Printed	59	13.1

7.4. Device Used for the Internet Connectivity Most Frequently

Most of the students (69%) were found to be using data card or 3G services for internet connectivity followed by broad band connection (23.1%). There were 6.4 percent students who use Wi-Fi of the college/ institute/ university campus to surf the net.(Table 5)

Table-5.

Variables	Particular	Frequency	Percentage
Source of Internet	Broad band	104	23.1
	Data card/ 3G	311	69
	Wi-fi of campus	29	6.4
	Cyber cafe	7	1.6

7.5. To Find Out If There Is Any Gender Difference in the Average Use of Internet

For achieving this objectives four hypothesis were made. These hypotheses were tested using the chi square test. The result of the chi square test was as follows:

For hypothesis 1

H₁₀= There is no significant association between the gender and the frequency of use of internet.

H_{1a}= There is a significant association between the gender and the frequency of use of internet.

Table-6. Test Statistics

	Gender	How Frequently Do You Use Internet
Chi-Square	2.256E2 ^a	664.874 ^b
df	1	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 225.5.

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 150.3.

The test statistics results shows that null hypothesis is not rejected, thus there is no significant association between the gender and the frequency of use of internet. Thus each of different gender people are using the internet in there own way, the usage frequency of internet is independent of gender of the student. (Table 6)

H₂₀ = There is no significant association between the gender and average time spent per day on internet.

H_{2a} = There is a significant association between the gender and average time spent per day on internet.

Table-7. Test Statistics

	Gender	How Much Time Do You Spend Everyday
Chi-Square	2.256E2 ^a	221.140 ^b
df	1	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 225.5.

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 90.2.

For this hypothesis also since the test statistics shows p value less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected, thus we can conclude that there is no significant association between the gender and average time spent per day on internet. (Table 7)

H₃₀ = There is no significant association between the gender and the purpose for which the internet is used.

H_{3a} = There is a significant association between the gender and the purpose for which the internet is used.

Table-8.Test Statistics

	Gender	For What Purpose Do You Use Internet Most Frequently
Chi-Square	2.256E2 ^a	175.488 ^b
df	1	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 225.5.

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 75.2.

The test statistics for this hypothesis shows that the p- value is less than 0.05, hence null hypothesis is not rejected, and therefore there is no significant association between the gender and the purpose for which the internet is used. Any gender person can use the internet for any purpose.

H₄₀ = There is no significant association between the gender and the kind of information preferred on the internet.

H_{4a} = There is a significant association between the gender and the kind of information preferred on the internet.

Table-9. Test Statistics

	Gender	What Kind Of Information Do You Prefer
Chi-Square	2.256E2 ^a	245.874 ^a
df	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 225.5.

The result indicated that there is no significant association between the gender and the kind of information preferred on the internet. People of all the different gender prefer a mix of information.(Table 9)

7.6. Perception of Students towards the Information Credibility on Internet

When students were asked about their perception towards the authenticity of the information available on the internet, 36% says that they have occasionally faced the problem of data authenticity. That mean they have not received the authentic data. Only 8.4%students says that they frequently faced the problem of data authenticity. (Table 10)

Table-10. Data Authenticity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Rarely	15	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Rarely	88	19.5	19.5	22.8
	Occasionally	163	36.1	36.1	59.0
	Frequently	147	32.6	32.6	91.6
	Very Frequently	38	8.4	8.4	100.0
	Total	451	100.0	100.0	

8. Findings and Conclusions

The research indicated that most of the students were using laptops for surfing the internet followed by using it on mobile. Hence we can conclude that the laptops are more popular among the students for the surfing, mobile phones are used only in emergencies. Also they all do not have internet connectivity on their mobiles. Google was found to be the popular search engine all the 100% students surveyed were using Google for the search. More than half of the students were having data card, which they use for surfing the internet, hence they do not depends upon their college/ hostel/ accommodation place for the internet connectivity, they want to have freedom of surf. E- mail and random search wre the main reason for the students to use internet. This concludes that many times they are hooked to internet without any purpose and are busy for the random search looking for the information. Also the study do not find any significant difference in the average time spent by male and the female students, this indicates that all the students are spending on an average more than three hours per day on the internet checking mails and doing random search. Also no significant difference was found between the male and the female students on the frequency of use of internet and the information searched , thus they all were using the internet daily and were also using it to search information research projects, e-mails, random searches. Most of the students were facing the problem of not getting authentic or accurate data, this may be because most of them are not having a very high internet usage skill.

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