

IMPACT OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT) ON MASS MEDIA TO TRANSFORM HUMAN LIVES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Manjari Bhatnagar*

ABSTRACT

The 19th century was a prime witness to a colossal transformation in the world of technology when the printing press came into existence. And in the next century telecommunications brought about a similar revolution. On the threshold of the 21st century, the world had shrunk considerably thanks to a closely networked society. Today, almost two decades into the 21st century, we are living in a Global Village. The globe has shrunk so much that at the stroke of a click, one can connect to any place from Cuttack to Canada. At the stroke of a click, a post is accessible to everyone from Singapore to Somalia. The only condition obviously is – the availability of the Internet. Here, the 'stroke' of a click is to accentuate on the power of a single click to travel and access information in a matter of a few seconds. Its effect on the human factor, across the planet, is monumental. This is exactly where the Information and Communications Technologies surfaces in relevance. The birth of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg in the 15th century, that of the telegraph in 1837 followed by the telephone in 1876 made rapid strides in the field of technology and development. These monumental discoveries were quickly sidelined by the astounding advent of the radio in 1901 and the television shortly after.

KEYWORDS: Transformation, Telecommunication, Networked Society, Communications Technologies.

Introduction

Today, Gutenberg's discovery, the printing press, has witnessed a striking makeover, many times over, in the past centuries even as the telegraph has long been buried. The mobile phone has successfully muffled the existence of the landline. The radio and the television however, are leading the show in all their glory. But this power game may not favour them for long. For, their existence now seems to be under threat with the rise and rise of the digital platform. Of course, the computer leads the way against the backdrop of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) scenario today. In spite of its modern avatar, this precursor to digital technology is probably one of the most significant factors that triggered the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Review of Literature

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has never been as enriching as it is now. Its present avatar has been a prime witness to the advent and burial of incalculable technologies. ICT has, in the recent years, provided a diverse platter of communication capabilities to the society. It has added a new dimension to modern communication technologies. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) includes all the technologies involved in providing access to information through telecommunications. To a lay man this would simply translate as ICT being 'very similar to Information Technology but focussing primarily on communication technologies.' The man on the street recognises these communication technologies as internet, wireless networks, cell phones etc.

Definitions

The Collins Dictionary defines Information and Communications Technology as ICT refers to activities or studies involving computers and other electronic technology. ICT is an abbreviation of 'Information and Communications Technology.'

* Blogger, Travel Journalist, Academician & Researcher, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

According to Techopedia

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) refers to all the technology used to handle telecommunications, broadcast media, intelligent building management systems, audiovisual processing and transmission systems, and network-based control and monitoring functions. The Cambridge Dictionary defines ICT as the use of computers and other electronic equipment and systems to collect, store, use, and send data electronically: The bbc.co.uk has a more detailed definition about this system. An ICT system is a set-up consisting of hardware, software, data and the people who use them. It commonly includes communications technology, such as the Internet. All references to the Information and Communication Technologies start with the dawn of the Digital Revolution. Considered to be the onset of the Information Age (also referred to as the Digital Age or the Computer Age), the role, functions and mechanisms of ICT are always in a process of blistering change. The term Information Age was first coined in the 1980s but now has more profound terminology – the New Media Age. And it's unstoppable.

Relevance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) on Humans in Every Day Life

Today, the world exists as a closely networked unit. It was never so close. This proximity has largely been a contribution of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) industry. Often mistaken for a version of Information Technology (IT), ICT encompasses a much broader scope. Modern information and communication technologies are in the throes of creating not only enhanced communication capabilities at a ferocious pace, but also a towering infrastructure that will herald a new era with the introduction of every new upgrade. So how does ICT affect the human factor? Today's close-knit global human society exists in a world where the concept of physical proximity has lost its meaning. It's no mean task to just pick up the phone and chat to someone across several continents. Or post a piece of information on the social media platforms to disseminate it to even the remotest corner of the Earth.

Face to face conversations with friends and family over platforms like Skype are a common trend. Just like educational sessions that can be conducted online. The medium of entertainment too has acquired a farm fresh approach given the bandwidth of technology. Entertainment has crossed the limitations of being cramped in the idiot box (television). Also, it no longer travels only on the waves (radio). ICT's most recent gift to mankind is the digital platform. Entertainment has traversed beyond the time slots. The intense rush to be on time for a certain television or radio programme has ceased to exist. Thanks to the websites, blogs, YouTube channels of these media houses. Short films and web series are attracting as many viewers online as they would have grasped online. This, without going through the hassle of an ever-bulging budget. The digital platform also eliminates the compulsion of waiting for months and sometimes years, in order to release their labour of love.

Home chefs and vloggers too are generously displaying their skills, talents and expertise to a salivating bunch of interested flock. This swarm of talent would have otherwise been tucked away far from the spotlight but thanks to the emergence of ICT, talent has found a new avenue to fame. Several such chefs, gardeners, bloggers, spiritual healers, vloggers are now so famous that they are considered brands! On the corporate avenue, companies find it easier to connect with existing and potential customers through their blogs, websites, Facebook pages, Instagram pages and even other social media platforms like Twitter. Customer preferences and customer expectations are regularly monitored to score points on customer satisfaction. Professionals make it a point to update their profiles regularly on LinkedIn for a faster, smoother and suitable career leap. To complement their efforts, job portals like naukri.com, monsterindia.com, shine.com, timesjobs.com etc are more than happy to be of help. It's no longer imperative to sit before the television to soak in all the latest happenings across the globe. Applications on the mobile phone flash notifications by the second even as mega celebrations, glamorous high society events or catastrophic tragedies uncoil. Details can be immediately sought by visiting the concerned website or switching on the television. Every newspaper worth its salt has an e-paper too, making its daily edition accessible from any part of the planet.

In short, almost every corner of this Global Village has inhabitants walking around with a radio, a camera and a news platform on his/her palm. A point to be pondered, and appreciated, is that it all comes free. The only payment required is that of the internet package.

Connectivity is the key to existence today. And ICT has enabled just that. A sensible fusion of various systems related to information has resulted in a brand new approach towards its production, use, storage and dissemination.

Research Objectives

- To find out if ICT has touched the lives of the common man.
- To find out if ICT has made a positive impact on the lives of its users.
- To find out if ICT has a promising future.

Research Methodology

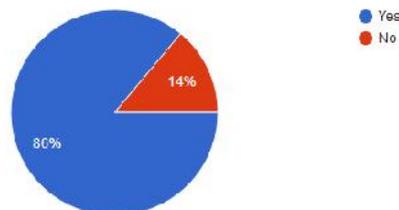
The study is exploratory in nature. Primary data was collected from around 40 respondents through Google Forms. Based on this, the study has arrived at a conclusion which is mentioned at the end of the study.

Facts & Findings

A plethora of questions related to Information and Communications Technologies was sent across in a questionnaire format, the results of which are given below.

Do you think that the world is now a global village?

43 responses



A massive 86 per cent respondents feel that the world is now a global village. This indicates that Information and Communications Technologies has shattered all sections of societies across all age groups.

Has the internet transformed your life into a faster one?

44 responses



When asked if the internet had transformed their lives into a faster one, a mammoth 97.7 per cent of the respondents answered in the affirmative.

Do you think that the news comes faster to you now through the digital apps, smartphones and tablets?

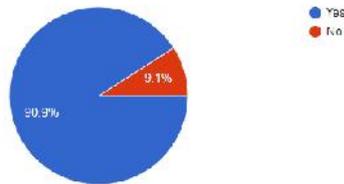
43 responses



It was the same percentage of people who felt that news trickles in at breakneck speed given that the smartphones, tablets etc are equipped with applications of news channels and websites.

Do you agree that the smartphone/tablet brings the camera to you free of charge?

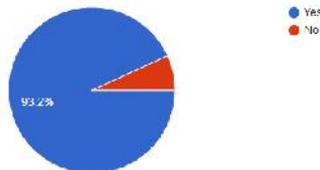
44 responses



Almost 91 per cent respondents agreed that the smartphone/tablet has brought the camera to them free of cost.

Do you agree that the smartphone/tablet brings the radio to you free of charge?

44 responses



Almost 93 per cent of the respondents said that the radio was a free buy when they purchased the smartphone/tablet.

Has ICT made your living conditions and standards cheaper?

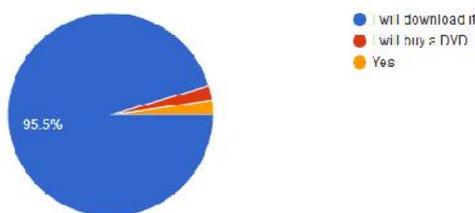
41 responses



A splendid 95.5 per cent respondents stated that their living conditions were cheaper thanks to ICT. Ditto for the standards.

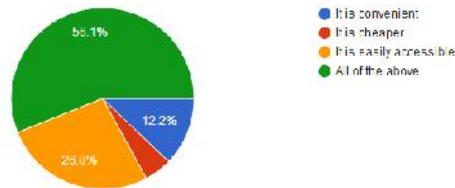
If you wanted access to a hit song/album, would you buy a DVD or would you prefer to download it on your laptop/smartphone?

44 responses



Why would you download it? Ignore this question if you will not download it.

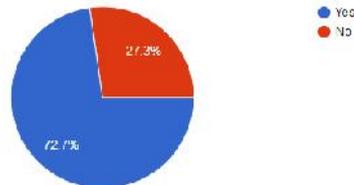
41 responses



Ninety five per cent people stated that they would rather download a song or an album rather than buy it over the counter. As many as 56.1% of them admitted that downloading a desired song or an album is preferable as it's convenient, cheaper and easily accessible.

Do you use the computer/laptop at your work station?

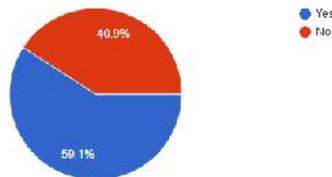
47 responses



Almost 73 per cent respondents work on a computer or a laptop.

Do you mind receiving videos related to disasters, tragedies, wedding of celebrities and other such eventful occurrences on your WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram etc?

44 responses



A sizeable 50 per cent of the respondents said that they did not mind receiving videos of tragic events or celebrations on their social media platforms or messaging services.

Does this type of circulation of events on social media help you to stay in touch with the goings on across the world?

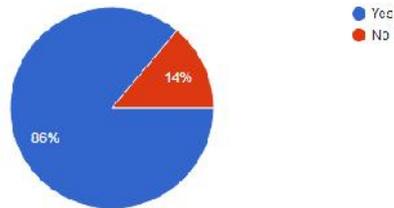
44 responses



A happy figure of 95.5 per cent of the respondents said that circulation of such content kept them in sync with the world.

Do you think that the world is now a global village?

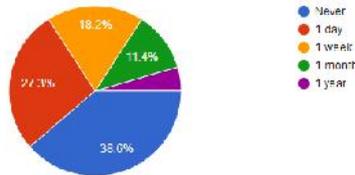
13 responses



A spectacular 86 per cent of the respondents look at the world now as a global village due to the benefits of ICT.

How long can you live without the mass media (Radio, TV, Newspapers and digital platform)?

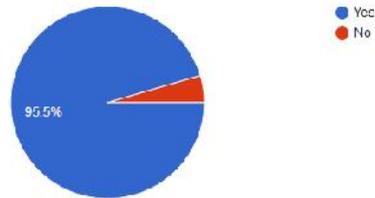
44 responses



Almost 39 per cent of the respondents confessed that they would never be able to live without the mass media. Around 27 per cent of the respondents said that they could manage without the mass media for a day around 18 per cent of the respondents stretched this period to a week.

Are you happy that you have access to general entertainment any time any where?

44 responses



Of the surveyed respondents, 95.5 per cent said that they were happy about 'anytime accessibility' to general entertainment from anywhere.

Do you think that ICT has made it easier for you to contact companies regarding complaints?

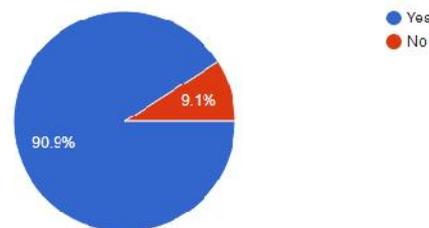
44 responses



Lodging a complaint about damaged or inferior quality products has become extremely easy. Every single respondent has agreed to it. For the corporate sector too, this is a boon as an interactive session or discussion opens new vistas of communication.

Do you think online shopping due to ICT is comfortable and convenient?

44 responses



Considering online shopping is the future of shopping, as many as 91 per cent of the respondents stated that ICT has changed the drudgery of shopping into a comfortable and convenient one.

The essence of this study thus unfurls interesting and dramatic new dimensions. After the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) swooped on the human civilization, no life has remained untouched from it. The fast paced life is punctuated generously with a plethora of comforts and conveniences served by ICT to this generation on a golden platter.

Conclusion

Given that people in general are more than happy having Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) at their disposal, it is crucial to note that ICT has already become an integral part of an urbanite's life. There exists a feeling of immobility if the cell phone is lost or if the television set conks off, or if the internet connection fails. In a nutshell, ICT is not the future. It's already the present. And alarmingly, what seems to be the zenith of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) today may soon fade into oblivion. For, every new version will be a notch up of the existing technology. And this, it looks like, will be a never-ending phase.

The world is now bidding an affectionate good bye to the Information Age. For, it's now on the threshold of the 'Experience Age'. Natives of the Information Age are now looking beyond just accessing information. Artificial Intelligence is already taking over mechanics and mechanisms both. Robots and driverless vehicles have already made their presence felt. The Internet of Things (IoT) is already on the brink of building a bridge between the digital and the real world. It won't be long before the experience of shopping online will involve touching and smelling the offered products. There will be 28 billion connected devices by 2021 says the 2016 Ericsson Mobility Report. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is fast blurring the lines between the digital and the real world. The 'Experience Age' has just about started.

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