

Impact of Internet on Society -Pakistan Community

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Abstract

Internet Usage is continuously on the increase both in terms of number of users and the amount of activity. It serves as a medium for information dissemination among people and organizations regardless of physical distances and boundaries. These developments affect on the daily life of people and thus in general affect the whole society and its culture. The study highlights some of the developments caused due to Internet usage like e-commerce, e-banking, e-health, e-materialization, e-governance, e-learning and computer supported social networks.

During the study a local survey was conducted. The major objective of the survey was to analyze the changing social contexts and factors influencing the transformation from a real community to a virtual community by the adoption of Internet. Few of the survey results have presented in detail in the Survey Section.

Key terms: *Internet, e-commerce, Electronic Media, Information Technology*

1.0 Introduction

Today, Internet usage is incredible, both in terms of number of users and the amount of activity. The forms and extent of the absorption of the Internet are viewed as a barometer for a nation's level of freedom and democracy, its commercial energy, its desire to become part of the increasingly interconnected new world order and its vulnerabilities. With the capability of global broadcasting, it acts as for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers. The rapid growth of the Internet makes it difficult to understand its current impact, let alone its future impact. In other words, while the number of users grows arithmetically, the value and impact of the Internet grows exponentially. With this much advancements, we are now facing some social issues like social isolation, demolishing the cultural values by

introducing pornography and virtual relationships for which it is quite necessary to investigate the social implications at this point of time. By analyzing these issues we will be come up with better policymaking in the region and build a strong nation.

The main focus of this short paper is to provide the brief information of the survey conducted on Internet and its impact on Pakistan society. In this paper, broad and high level aspects of cultural issues are discussed with particular emphasis on Internet. This paper is not focusing on discussing upcoming Internet technologies and their relation with cultural issues.

2.0 Internet and Pakistan

2.1 Country Profile

Pakistan has a population of 144 million and area of 800,000 Sq. Km. It has 4 administrative provinces, federally administrated tribal and Northern areas and disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The capital of Pakistan is Islamabad. 33% of the people live in urban areas and 67% live in rural areas. Per capita income in Pakistan is about US \$ 400. 56% people (adult) are illiterate according to survey conducted by UNISCO in year 2000.

2.2 Internet Penetration

Digicom launched the first international Internet service in Pakistan in 1995. The licensing of commercial Internet service providers began in 1996. By mid-1999 licenses to provide Internet services had been issued to approximately 100 organizations,. By mid-2000, the number of Pakistani users had grown to 500,000. In year 2005, the total number of Internet Service providers has crossed 2000 mark and subsequent Internet users have reached to a roaring total of 10.5 Million.

2.3 Internet developments

- *E-learning* – Already been initiated and provided by Government supported Virtual University of Pakistan in more than 700 cities
- *E-banking* – Online and internet transactions provided by almost all major banks of Pakistan
- *E-health* – Not everywhere but initiatives has been taken by Government of Punjab, Sindh
- *E-Crimes* – Government of Pakistan is setting up special tribunals in the Federal Capital and provincial headquarters to investigate and check the incidents of e-crimes (under Electronic Crimes Bill-2006 finalized very soon), which has remained unpunished for lack of specific law.
- *E-Commerce* – Online Auctions, E-Billing, Online selling's of Computer and Books has been started by major shops
- *E-Governance* – Government is working a lot in order to establish e-governance system across every department.

3.0 Survey

3.1 Objective

The objective of the research survey was to gather information about impact and usage of Internet in Pakistan. The main objective of the study was to collect information about the most favorite activity of the people on the Internet and to know how much Internet is pertaining in our cultural values and to analyze if Internet has changed the sociological order.

3.2 Survey Targets

Survey questionnaire was developed and distributed among different age group among were students, parents, executives and even who are retired. In a nutshell target audiences are those who have some direct or indirect involvement in using Internet technology. The results were then tabulated from 1311 respondents.

3.3 Survey Methodology

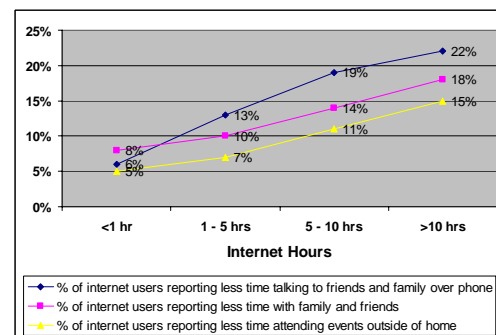
Surveys can be a powerful and useful tool for collecting data on human characteristics, attitudes, thoughts, and behavior. And, sometimes, conducting a survey is the only available option for acquiring the data necessary to answer an important research question. We have used questionnaires for the research, since target audience included all age groups; therefore many school, college and university students were visited personally to get the questionnaires filled. Survey results have been presented and are analyzed in the next section.

3.4 Results

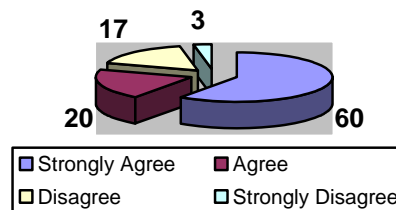
We are highlighting and analyzing few results, which will give you an overview, that how Internet has affected our society via various means.

3.4.1 Internet Causing Social Isolation

The below result gauge the amount of time spent on socializing and using the Internet. By taking into account the survey result we see the usage of the Internet is drastically increasing and the time, which they use to give to their families and friends, has reduced. People now prefer to sit and browse rather than talking to their acquaintances, family and friends.

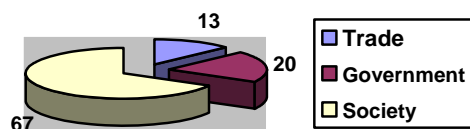


3.4.2 Do you think Internet is the major source for Pornography?



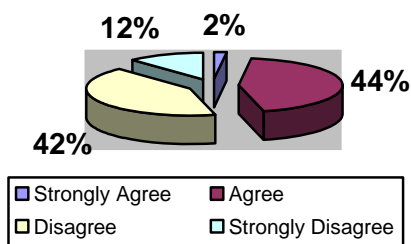
3.4.3 where do you think Internet is impacting the most?

According to the survey results, 67% of the people think that Internet has changed our social lives/society and 20% think the government is impacted most while 13 % thinks of trade. As internet is playing an important role in research and education but also serving as a catalyst to a country's socio-economic, cultural and political development. Where there is positive aspect there is always the other side of the coin. It has benefited to some extent but has also polluted few



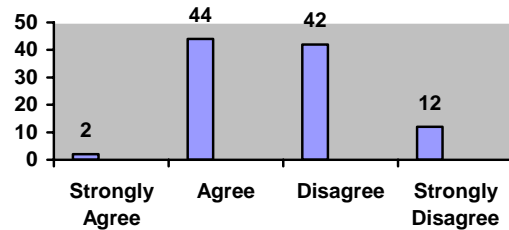
3.4.4 Whether Internet has created boundaries amongst people?

According to the survey majority of the people in all age groups and gender agreed with the idea. When we say boundaries we are referring to their preference over Internet and family.



3.4.5 Does Internet plays a vital role in demolishing the cultural values in the society?

According to the survey results, 44 percent of the people agreed and 2% strongly agreed with the idea while 42% of the people disagreed and 12% strongly disagreed with idea. The data reveals that Internet has not played a major role in abolishing cultural norms, and beliefs.



Conclusion

In Pakistan the Internet users are more than 11.5 million. By June 2007 it will reach to 12 million and they further plan to penetrate the population at the rate of 7.2 %. It is quite evident from the survey that people are using Internet for office and personal work as Internet is now the integral part of a communication system but on the other hand there are some important aspects to note that people are spending less time with their families, reading newspapers/books, playing outdoor games and watching T.V. Internet is taking over the place for communication with friends and families because of its ease and cheaper access. Most of the people also agree that the usage of Internet has some negative impact on our cultural values, due to easy accessibility of pornographic materials. There are some incidents reported that a few countries have blocked most of the blogs due to some conflicts related to the religion. The point to ponder is that rather than digitally segregates ourselves by thinking of negative impacts we need to cross the bridge from digital divide to digital dividend world.

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