

Digital Media Access and Usage during Covid 19 LOCK DOWN 3.0: Survey of Connected Indians

This academic research was conducted to understand how Lock down period digital media usage has impacted physical life of people. **SNDT Women's University** professor Mira K Desai designed a Survey on Google form, link of which was shared on WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter. The objective was to understand nature and reach of digital media during Lock Down 3.0 (April and May 2020).

Interestingly the survey shared at early morning of **5th May to 17th May fetched 367 responses from all over India** and even few Indians abroad covering about **70 unique cities/locations**. Five forms were removed considering that they were from outside India in order to maintain uniformity.

Profile of Respondents: The preliminary findings from 362 respondents in the age range of 16 to 61 years with proportion of male to female being 3:7 suggest educational background included school pass-outs to PhDs. The average age of the respondent was 37 years. Half of the people filling up the survey were service people with rest homemakers and business people besides students and retired people. Three fourth of the people were 'earning money' whereas ten percent reported that due to lock down they were not earning whereas 15 percent were not earning on their own mostly being students.

Online Devices: Digital media has arrived in Indian household as seven in ten reported that 'everyone in the house has their own device'. It is only ten percent who were the 'only people using digital device in their house'. 16 percent of the people have been using 'shared' devices whereas eleven people reported to have 'borrowed' laptop. One percent people stated that they made "timetable in the family for the device usage". While almost everyone owns mobile phone, the proportion of those owning mobile to laptop was 3:2. Few of the people reported ownership of tablet and desktop, proportion of those was equal. In terms of devices eight in ten people used ear phone whereas only four in ten had been using headphones. Ten percent each uses Kindle reader and Fire Stick. Five percent have been OTT users and five percent reported using other devices. Six of the ten use home Wi-Fi whereas close to half of them use prepaid and twenty percent use postpaid mobile data packs to go online. 13 percent of the people use shared hotspot to connect internet. About one in ten people reported that they had to reduce being online to save money. Two in ten said they used their family members hotspot to remain connected. Cumulatively three in ten people faced challenge of being online during lock down.

Interestingly majority (six in ten) of the people reported that they go online only when required whereas three in ten said 'they are always online'. There were few (3.5 percent) who reported that they are 'hardly online'. Also the reason for six in ten people to go online is their work or for entertainment whereas thirty percent do it '*only for work*'. Remaining eight percent go online either '*for time pass*' or for 'entertainment'.

Language of Digital Media Consumption: About half (45.2%) of the people use "only English" content whereas few (3.5%) use "Only Indian Languages". Most people (48.2%) accessed digital media in "English and Indian Languages" while they are online. Proportion of "Indian as well as Foreign Languages" was similar to those using only English content online.

Time Spent on Digital Media: Lock Down created “time” for people who were otherwise busy with their physical life. As evident there was enormous increase in the amount of time spent on digital media due to lock down. While before lock down only eight percent people used to spend 90 percent of their time online but during lock down the proportion became 37 percent people. Prior to the lock down the proportion of large majority (60%) who were not limitedly online, became mere 17 percent of the people.

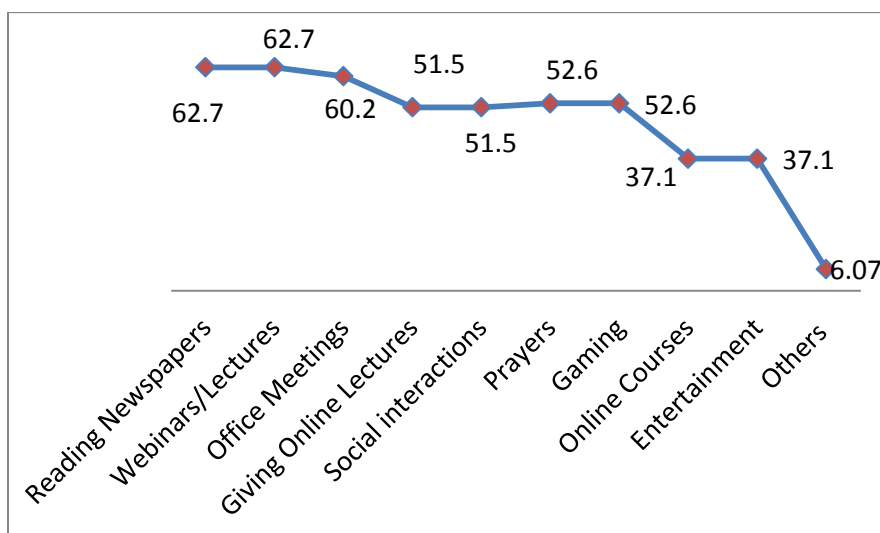
Percent Distribution Users Amount of time spent on Digital Media due to Lock Down

<i>Percent Daily Time Spent ></i>	<i>90</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>10</i>
Before Lock Down	7.9	30	45.8	16.3
During Lock Down	36.8	46	15.3	1.9

Platforms & Purpose of Usage: The most accessed platforms during the Lock Down were WhatsApp followed by YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Almost everyone was on WhatsApp. Total 18 platforms were reported by the people and the most frequently undertaken activity is either ‘looking for information’ or ‘watching videos’ by seven in ten people. Half of the people chatted with other people and looked for Covid updates. And one fourth of the total respondents said ‘they called people they had not spoken to for a long time’.

Seven in ten people reporting to be using their own money to remain connected and said that their data usage increased during lock down. Interestingly same proportion of people stated that they see their ‘physical world’ change after lock down. Two in ten people made new friends that too online during lock down. Figure-1 shows that most of the respondents undertook ‘reading newspapers’ and ‘attending webinars/lectures’ through digital media. Half also gave online lectures and similar proportion engaged in ‘social interactions’.

Figure-1 Activities undertaken on Digital Devices during Lock Down



The “others” included ‘Tracking news’, ‘Reading books and research materials’, ‘Office work’, ‘Knowledge sharing’, ‘Searching YouTube for recipes’, ‘taking Art sessions’, ‘taking Viva-voce’, ‘Web

series viewing’, ‘taking Students online tests’, ‘Thesis guidance’, ‘Planning my you tube channel/App’, ‘Self work on social media’, ‘Editing assignments and projects Online’ and ‘entertainment’.

Lock Down & Digital Life

Majority (65%) people stated their life changed ‘partially’ because of lock down wherein one third (28%) reported that it has changed completely. For seven percent people lockdown changed nothing. In response to another question majority (63%) said that during lock down they realized that the digital life was everything, one fourth were not sure about it whereas remaining ten percent did not agree that digital life was everything. In order to understand if people experienced any digital traumas in terms of frauds or threats they were asked set of questions.

As Figure-2 clearly indicates while proportion of those facing either of the problem was one fourth, cheating emails and financial frauds were the most experienced problems on digital media during lock down. Fourteen percent faced digital abuse and similar proportion experienced breaking of real friendships during lock down. Eight percent of the respondent reported threat to their life in online environment.

Figure-2 Online Frauds & Difficulties faced during Lock Down

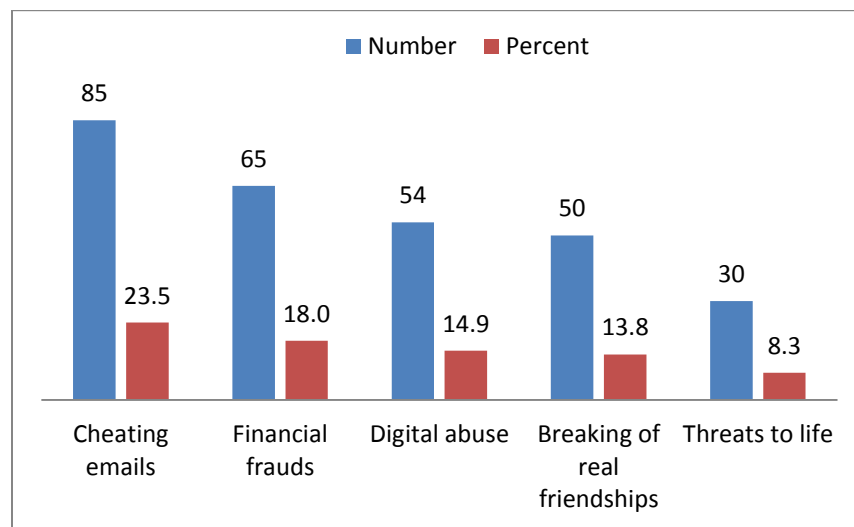
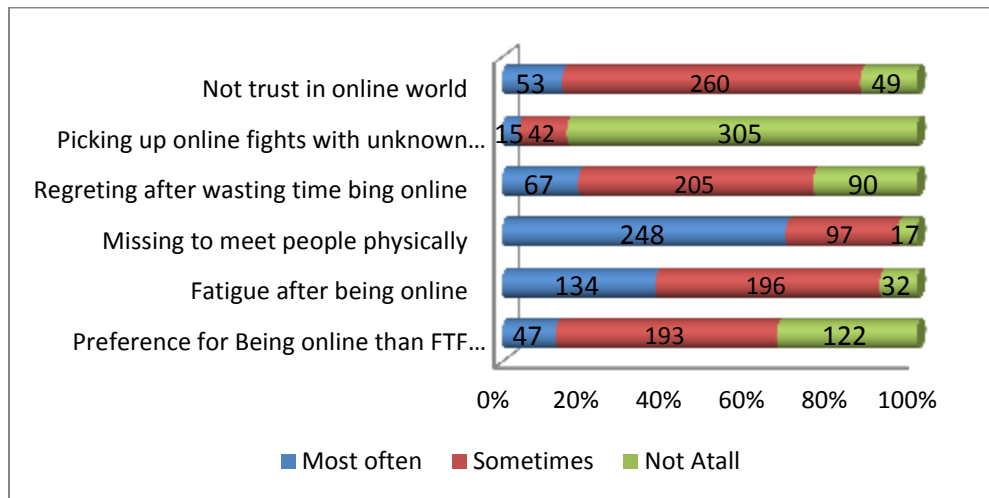


Figure-3 indicates the most often the respondents “missed meeting other physically”, followed by “feeling fatigued after being online”. Most people refused to the statements that they “picked up online fights with unknown people” and “they preferred being online than being Face to Face”. Large majority (72%) of the people still “sometimes” have no trust in the online world. Half of the people (57%) after being online expressed that they “sometimes” feels that they wasted time whereas two in ten most often feel that way. Except for 17 people all the people reported that they missed meeting people physically due to lock down and digital in no way compensates for face to face interaction and similarly in another statement except for 47 people who ‘most often’ preferred being online than into face to face interaction.

Figure-3 Relationship with Online life during Lock Down



Conclusion

This online study undertaken during lock down 3.0 very clearly suggest that Indians have gone online and have become used to digital life but it is still not a regular feature for few households. Borrowing devices, making timetable for device usage and using hotspots of other family members are still part of connected reality for Indian households. Mobile is the most frequently used device to connect Internet followed by laptop.

Lock down led to huge increase in the digital media usage as evident from the data and most activities which were done in the physical world; like reading newspapers, conducting meetings, classes, social interactions, even prayers were taken up in the digital environments. Most frequently undertaken activities on digital media were looking for information or watching videos. For large majority life changed at least partially due to lock down and dependence on digital media also was immense.

Indians value social interactions and clearly evident half of the respondents used digital media even for social interaction. Most of them prefer face to face interaction to digital connect and few experienced frauds and cheating and most of them still do not trust digital media fully.

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