

## **New Tools for Development Communication**

Archana Kumari

*Department of Mass Communication and New Media, Central University of Jammu, J&K*

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**Abstract:** In the changing world scenario of development and growing impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) on younger generation, new tools of development communication for the new generation must be explored. Whether the older generation were used to rely on traditional media for communication, the younger generation uses some new tools like internet, mobiles, animations etc. Thus these new communication tools can be proved to be most convenient way to reach out to the new generation and make them aware about development issues. This effort may go in vain without exploring the potential of these tools in making development communication more effective and productive. This paper tries to take a stride in the direction to find out the potential of new and heavily used communication tools for the purpose of development communication.

**Key words:** Traditional Media, ICT, Development Communication, CSCs.

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### **Introduction**

Development Communication is a relatively younger field within the discipline of communication. It is mainly concerned with the role of information and communication in social and economic development of an individual, society and nation (Bashiruddin, 2006). Development Communication tries to use mass media directly or indirectly for the improvement of the quality of life of people.

Nora Quebral tried to define development communication in 1975 – “Development Communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfillment of the human potential.” (Narula, 1994). This definition brings the two opposite streams ‘arts’ and ‘science’ at the same platform. Development communication is called an art

because it involves a lot of creativity to convey the message. At the same time it is a science because it follows a process or a system.

Development communication is said to be purposive in which the communicator intends to influence the receiver to achieve his goal. One of the goals of development communication is to provide complete information to the target audience about concerned plans and programmes. While imparting such knowledge and informations one cannot ignore the diverse age group of receivers. The target audience for a development programme can be youth, children and elderly people. People of various age groups and different gender have various sources of informations.

So, for development communication campaigns, the communicator should choose those means or channels which are interesting and easily acceptable for his/her target audience.

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\*Corresponding author(s):  
archanaaimc@gmail.com (Archana Kumari)

In Indian context, there is a wide range of communication media catering to its multicultural, multilingual and multidimensional society. It has been an effective user of oral communication in the ancient time for dissemination of religious, philosophical and cultural thoughts and ideas. Not only this, it has been using very effectively the traditional means of communication for development like folk dance, street play, folk songs, puppetry etc depending upon the nature of target audience. India has a rich tradition of using folk media for nation building activities like during the freedom struggle folk songs were used to popularize satyagrah and conveying political messages.

However, in the world scenario, communication through mass media has been an ever evolving process since the invention of printing by Gutenberg in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Germany. In India, the strength of press became visible since 29<sup>th</sup> January, 1780 with the launch of first formal newspaper Bengal Gazette by James Augustus Hickey (Parthasarthy, 1989). Today the people have access to a wide range of publications, published in different languages with various periodicities and catering to diverse interests virtually at their door steps.

Not only print media is thriving, new diverse alternative media is also fast rising in today's technologically advanced global media. With satellites beaming down information worldwide, with the Internet and cell phones enabling millions of previously silent people to speak and be heard, with television available around the world and with newspapers and journals designed for almost every preference, the quantitative reach of the global media is a miracle of human vision and technology (Merril, 2011).

In such changed technological advanced scenario, even the media audiences are also more attracted towards technically sophisticated and modern media. This is evident from worldwide acceptance of new media as easy source of information and news.

As Janet Kolodzy (2006) says,

Traditional news outlets, from newspapers to network news, have been losing audience. News audiences are seeking and demanding news from different outlets at different times of the day and in different ways. The audience for news has not disappeared, but it has dispersed. News audiences understand convergence and they are not afraid of it. They are blazing new trails in convergence, filling the vacuum left by many traditional news organisations. (p. 217).

Thus even development communication will have to keep pace with this changing scenario and cater the audience in the same way which is demand of the time.

### **Communication Revolution in India**

According to Marshall McLuhan (2001),

The technologies are ways of translating one kind of knowledge into another mode has been expressed by Lyman Bryson in the phrase "technology is explicitness." Translation is thus a "spelling out" of forms of knowing. What we call "mechanization" is a translation of nature, and of our own natures, into amplified and specialized forms." (p. 56).



Thus technologies are bound to change the society. In case of India too, new communication technologies such as satellites, cable television, wireless telephones, internet and computers are bringing about noticeable change in society. The new media possess both the characteristics of interpersonal communication and mass communication, which are very strong forms of communication. Interpersonal communication refers to face-to-face communication between two or among a small number of individuals. In such communications feedback is immediate. Similar traits are visible in new media which allows high degree of interactivity and involves two or more people in the process of communication. It also requires a means of communication which may be a computer or mobile, similar to mass communication. Some type of hardware equipment is always involved in mass communication. While talking about communication revolution, there is no doubt that it started from the press and passed through radio, television, telecommunication to internet and convergent media.

### **The Press**

India publishes more daily newspapers than any other country in Asia in various regional languages, in Hindi and in English. In 2000, there were over 27,000 newspapers and periodicals in India published in 93 languages. Some 5000 dailies are read by 100 million readers in 14 languages (Kripalani, 1997). According to Paranjy Guha Thakurta (2011), there were over 82,000 publications registered with the Registrar of Newspapers as on 31 March 2011(para 9). However in a nation like India with a high rate of illiteracy, around 40 percent, the effects of these newspapers and periodicals are limited to only elite class. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Indian newspapers also

underwent a facelift in order to keep up with magazines and with the rise of television. During the 1990s, many publishing groups, such as Living Media Private Limited (Publisher of India Today) and Bennett Coleman (Publisher of The Times of India) moved into the production of television programs and launched internet portals, gaining a wider audience as compared to the print media (Singhal & Rogers, 2011).

### **Radio**

Radio broadcasting began in India during the British colonial era in 1927 with the establishment of Indian Broadcasting Company. When India got independence, there were only six radio stations in country, all located in metropolitan cities (Singhal & Rogers, 2011). By 1980, radio covered about 90 percent of the population and over 78 percent of the area in the country. Expenditure on radio broadcasting in the first plan (1951-56) was just over 2 crores. By the 7<sup>th</sup> Plan (1985-90) it increased to 700 crores. In 1991, there were 102 full-fledged radio stations which were production centres. The number of broadcasting centres which included relay centres was 205. The population covered was 97.5 percent while area covered was 91 percent. The numbers of transmitters were over 300 (Dua et al., 2006). By 2000, broadcasts of All India Radio programs were heard in 110 million households (two-thirds of all Indian households) in 24 languages and 146 dialects (Singhal & Rogers, 2011). After a slow start in late 1990s, FM radio is coming of age in the new millennium. There are over 250 FM (frequency modulation) radio stations in the country (and the number is likely to cross 1,200 in five years) – curiously, India is the only democracy in the world where news on the

radio is still a monopoly of the government (Thakurta, 2012, para 9).

Though unlike press, radio is relatively cheaper and caters to the illiterate population of India, it has some limitations too. It only appeals to the ears and cannot provide any visual. In spite of the fact that in India radio had been a unique effective channel for reaching to the vast audience of villagers and semi-urban lower middle class and poor population, the rise of television in India pushed it back.

### **Television**

Television came to India rather late, on September 15, 1959. For starting television in India, UNESCO offered a grant of twenty thousand dollars to buy community sets. The USA also offered some equipment. Philips India offered a transmitter at a low price. Ultimately the Government set up a TV station at Delhi on an experimental basis. The aim declared was to discover what TV could achieve in community development and formal education. The transmission could cover an area of 40 km in and around Delhi. Programmes were beamed twice a week. Each programme was of 20 minutes duration. The viewers were members of 180 tele-clubs (Dua et al., 2006). Television flourished in mid-1980s with the popularity of serials like Hum Log, which increased the number of television sets purchased. By 2000, more than 40 private television networks were broadcasting in India, including private networks like Zee-TV, STAR TV, SONY, CNN, BBC and many others (Singhal & Rogers, 2011). The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has allowed nearly 800 television channels to uplink or downlink from the country, including over 300 which claim to be television channels broadcasting

“news and current affairs” (Thakurta, 2012, para 9).

### **Telecommunication**

Telecommunication is one of the most emerging tools of effective communication not only in India but in the whole world. Now-a-days all kinds of communication related services are available on mobile, whether it is news or advertising or any other form of information.

At the time of independence in 1947, India had 84,000 telephone lines for its population of 350 million. Even after 33 years, by 1980, the condition of telecommunication was not much improved and India had 2.5 million telephones and 12,000 public phones for a population of 700 million (Singhal & Rogers, 2011). However, major breakthrough happened in 1990s and India had installed network of over 25 million telephone lines, spread across 300 cities, 4,869 towns and 310,897 villages, making India's telecommunications network the ninth largest in the world (Bahadur, 1999 as cited in Singhal & Rogers, 2001). By February 2012, there were 9435 lakh phones allotted for a whopping population of 121 crore people with an overall teledensity of 78.10 percent ([http://www.dot.gov.in/network/Material\\_for\\_DOT\\_s\\_WEBSITE\\_February\\_2012.pdf](http://www.dot.gov.in/network/Material_for_DOT_s_WEBSITE_February_2012.pdf)).

Mobiles are important part of telecommunications and in India, mobile telephony was introduced in 1995 along with pager services. By 1998, India had one million cell phone users in its four metropolitan cities with 45 percent in Delhi, 35 percent in Mumbai, 12 percent in Calcutta and 8 percent in Chennai (Cable Waves, 1997 as cited in Singhal & Rogers, 2011). By February 2012, the number of wireless phones or mobile



phones rose to 9111 lakh, out of total number of allotted phones of 9435 lakh ( [http://www.dot.gov.in/network/Material\\_for\\_DOT\\_s\\_WEBSITE\\_February\\_2012.pdf](http://www.dot.gov.in/network/Material_for_DOT_s_WEBSITE_February_2012.pdf)). It is obvious from this data that a large number of phone users are using mobile phones in India.

This shows tremendous growth in India's telecommunication growth as well as projects the capacity of mobile telephony to emerge as easy and effective vehicle of communication with its wide reach.

### **Internet and convergent media**

It began primarily as a non-commercial means of intercommunication and data exchange between professionals, but its more recent rapid advance has been fuelled by its potential as a purveyor of goods and many profitable services and as an alternative to other means of interpersonal communication (Castells, 2001 as cited in McQuail, 2005). Its diffusion proceeded most rapidly in North America and Northern Europe. In the USA it appeared to reach a ceiling of diffusion in 2001, at around 60 percent to 70 percent of the population. (Rainie and Bell, 2004 as quoted in McQuail, 2005).

In India, first computer was installed in 1955 at the Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta. By 1972, there were 172 computers in India, but sales of personal computers in India crossed the one million mark in 1999. The installed base of PCs in the country was about five million in 2000, translating into about five computers for every 1000 people (Singhal & Rogers, 2011). According to a report by BBC News, India had 15 million computers and five million net connections in August 2005 and the government wanted to increase the number to 75 million computers and 45 million net

connections by 2010 ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/4735927.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4735927.stm)). Today, there is an unspecified number of websites aimed at Indians (Thakurta, 2012).

A report by industry body Assocham along with independent research firm ComScore said that among the Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) nations, India has been the fastest growing market adding over 18 million Internet users during the last one year (Assochan-Comcore survey). The internet user base in the country is approximately 125 million, the study added. India is also among the top three fastest growing markets worldwide in the last 12 months, the study said.

Not only in terms of quantity, in terms of quality also the convergent media has potential to appeal all age of people since it conveys text, audio, visuals, all forms of communication simultaneously. With the emergence of convergent media, it has not remained an easy task to distinguish these media from each other as it used to happen earlier. Denis McQuail (2005) has given following four reasons for this:

- I. Some media forms are now distributed across different types of transmission channel, thus reducing the original uniqueness of form.
- II. The increasing convergence of technology only reinforces this tendency.
- III. Globalization is reducing the distinctiveness of any particular national variant of media content and institution.

- IV. The continuing trends towards integration of national and global media corporations have led to the housing of different media under the same roof, encouraging convergence by another route.

#### **How effective New Media is as medium?**

According to Marshall McLuhan, "Medium is the message" - means the impact of medium itself is much stronger than the message. It is said that best communication is that which appeals to maximum number of senses of human beings. Media is an extension of body and senses. Each medium of communication has its own appeal to senses of human beings (McLuhan, 2001). In this regard, convergent media proves to be most appealing for its audience. Also, Rice et al. (1983) observed that 'the notion that the channel of communication might be as important a variable in the communication process as source, message, receiver and feedback, may have been overlooked'. Referring to the work of Toronto school, they added that 'one need not be a technological determinist to agree that the medium may be a fundamental variable in the communication process.'

Whether writing, printing and electronic media like radio and television are examples of traditional technologies which are essentially one way in nature, interactivity is a distinguished feature of new technology. The expression 'new media' has been in use since 1960s and has had to encompass an expanding and diversifying set of applied communication technology (McQuail, 2005). The two driving forces of change from 'traditional media' to 'new media' are – satellite communication and the harnessing of the computer. The key to

immense power of the computer as a communication vehicle lies in the process of digitization that allows information of all kinds in all formats to be carried with the same efficiency and also intermingled. In principle there is no longer any need for various different media that have been described, since all could be subsumed in the same computerized communication network and reception centre (McQuail, 2005). Alongside computer-based technologies there are other innovations that have in some degree changed some aspects of mass communication (Carey, 2003 as cited in McQuail, 2005). New means of transmission by cable, satellite and radio have immensely increased the capacity to transmit. New means of storage and retrieval including the personal video recorder, CD-ROM, compact disc, DVD etc have also expanded the range of possibilities and even the remote control device has played a part. While not directly supporting mass communication, many new possibilities for private 'media-making' (camcorders, PCs, printers, cameras etc in digital form) have expanded the world of media and forged bridges between public and private communication and between the spheres of professional and amateur (McQuail, 2005).

Thus main characteristics of new media can be – Interactivity, Social presence or sociability, Media richness, Autonomy, Playfulness, Privacy and Personalization. New media is highly interactive in terms of offering messages between sender and receiver. According to Short et al., 1976 and Rice, 1993, the user of new media also experiences a sense of personal contact with others. New media also provides a kind of richness to the extent to which it can bridge different frames of reference, reduce ambiguity, provide more cues, involve more senses and be more personal. It also provides autonomy to the user



in terms of control of content and use. New media can be used for entertainment and enjoyment as against utility and instrumentality. It helps user in maintaining privacy, thus providing a rare combination of being social by keeping one's privacy. One more important advantage of new media is personalization; means the content and uses are personalized and unique.

On the basis of above mentioned characteristics, Denis McQuail (2005) has distributed 'New Media' in following four categories:

- I. Interpersonal communication media – These include telephone, more appropriately mobile and e-mail. In such media, in general, content is private and helps in establishing relationships.
- II. Interactive play media - These are mainly computer based and video games, also virtual reality devices. The main innovation lies in the interactivity and perhaps the dominance of 'processes' over 'use'.
- III. Information search media – This is a wide category, but the internet/WWW is the most significant example, viewed as a library and data source of unprecedented size, actuality and accessibility. Besides the Internet, the mobile is also increasingly a channel for information retrieval.
- IV. Collective participatory media – The category includes especially the uses of the internet for sharing and exchanging information, ideas and experience and developing active computer-mediated personal relationships. Such uses range

from the purely instrumental to affective and emotional (Baym, 2002 as cited in Mc Quail, 2005).

The above discussion clearly indicates that new media or convergent media is a very effective medium of communication and it itself reflects the potential of a powerful medium. It not only provides a range of choices to the users with all possible dimensions of communication, but also enables the communicator in form of medium with technologically advanced features.

### **How can the convergent media be effective in development communication?**

Communication in India means not only the transfer of information, but also the participation in the society and the community (Namra, 2004 as cited in Yin, 2009). The Indian brand of development journalism aspires to focus on the needs of the poor and their effective participation in development planning. India being a country of villages, where 833 million population still lives in rural area and a number of government plans are directed towards them, the possibility to reach to them by using new media must be explored.

According to a survey of Internet and Mobile Association of India in June 2012, there are **38 Mn** users in Rural India who have accessed **internet** which is **4.6%** of the rural population at least once in their lives, although an encouraging growth, the penetration is still very low considering the huge population of 833 Mn. Of these Internet users, there are **31 Mn** users who have accessed the internet at least once in the past one month. The mobile revolution has been an accelerator for bringing the rural user online. As of June 2012, there are **3.6 Mn Mobile** Internet users. This has grown

7.2 times in the past 2 years. This distribution can be shown by a table given below:

Rural Population, 2012	833 Million
Computer Literates	70 Million
Claimed Internet Users	38 Million
Active Internet Users	31 Million
Mobile Phone Users	323 Million
Mobile Internet Users	3.6 Million

(Source: IMRB I-Cube 2012, All India Estimates, June 2012, Census 2011, TRAI)

Some of the important trends in rural internet usage are:

1. **Computer Science Corporations (CSCs)** play an important role in providing internet access to the majority. Of the Internet users, **57.7%** have used the facilities at a CSC. Most of the internet users access internet at CSCs for getting information on **Education**.
2. Mobile phones have come up as an important point of internet access after CSCs, Public access centers and Homes. **12%** of the internet users access internet on their **mobile phones**.
3. **Entertainment** is by far the most important reason for internet access with 90% users aware of it and **75%** using it. 65% - 80% of users are aware of other services like **communication** and **e-commerce** and are willing to use it in the future. Innovative and user friendly content will be the enabler for the rural folk to use these services.

4. Usage of **vernacular language** is on the rise and availability of content in local language encourages the rural user to go online. Although 79% of the users access content in English, **32%** of the users access content in Hindi as well.
5. **42%** of the non users have said that they are **not aware** of the internet and **59%** have stated that they can't access the internet as they do not have an **internet connection**. Lack of awareness and infrastructure are the primary reasons for not accessing the internet.

(Source - Survey of Internet and Mobile Association of India in June 2012)

This trends clearly shows that though reach of mobile phones and internet in rural India is not great, it is neither avoidable. People are not literate, but mobile literacy is high in number. So these new tools can be used for the purpose of development communication effectively. Whether it is power of messaging of mobile or power of interactivity of internet, it can be tapped for the betterment of society through development communication.

Not only region wise but also generation wise, new media's adaptability is high. Children and youngsters are potential users of this new media. According to Kolodzy (2006), "the news audiences of tomorrow are immersed in convergent news offerings today. News organisations worldwide are tapping the potential of this new emerging audience" (p. 245). In the marketing promotion, *Time For Kids* notes that by the age of ten, children have developed half of their consumer attitudes and skills. News designed for children in an era of camera phones, instant messaging, blogs, podcasts and video games may have clues as to



how news may need to be designed to captivate that audience so they can thrive in their complex adult world (Kolodzy, 2006). In the similar ways development messages can be designed for the future generation of tomorrow, so that they can be made aware about the challenges of development in today's world and better be prepared for tomorrow. Since this generation is much comfortable and adaptable for the convergent media than the older generation, it is better to reach to them in their mode of communication only.

In India too, young generation is adopting this new media very fast. "Interestingly, about 75 per cent of online audience between the age group of 15-34 years, India is one of the youngest online demographic globally," Assocham Secretary General D S Rawat said (PTI, Oct 29, 2012). He said the trend is expected to continue in coming years given the age distribution in the country. Among the age segments, 15-24 years of age group has been the fastest growing age segment online with user growth being contributed by both male and female segments (PTI, Oct 29, 2012). There is a need to orient this potential audience in constructive direction instead of letting them waste their time and energy in unproductive channels of communication. The development messages can be designed in attractive forms of communication for this generation like cartoons. Such experiments have been proved effective in entertainment industry with huge success of mythological animation films like 'Return of Hanuman', 'Jumbo'. Such films are very low budget films and attract not only kids but also their parents and grandparents. Thus animations programmes can be an effective and attractive tool of development communication for the young generation.

## **Conclusion**

The world is still going through the phase of communication revolution. There are a large number of communication tools available in market in various forms and people are adopting them fast. There are permutations and combinations that in how many ways these new tools can be used. The best way is to channelize this high level potential in right direction means in the direction of the growth of nation, the world. Otherwise these would be used in some unproductive work, just to make money by selling different kind of small time pleasures. There is no argument that this new media should not be used for entertainment, but why not fruitful entertainment so that with the development of science and technology human kind and its world also develop. By intermingling techno-savvy audience and highly effective new media, a new direction to the humanity can be given.

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