



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

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Venue- Seminar Hall, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Jain Deemed-to-be-University, Palace Road, Bengaluru, India



Indigenous Language in the Age of Digital Humanities

Akshatha A G

Assistant Professor

NMKRV College for Women

akshatha0127@gmail.com

Mobile Number: 9739315868

ABSTRACT

Indian subcontinent is a land of diversity. Varied culture, tradition, language, ethnicity, religion, food style and many others aspects are the heart and soul of our country. The relationship between language and the internet is a growing area of policy interest and academic study. The idea of connecting such a heterogeneous population through the concept of digitization is challenging. Though there is an increase in the usage of internet with over 405million users, implementing software to support over 780 languages is strenuous. In India, over 220 languages have died in the past 50 years and 197 others are categorized as endangered by UNESCO. Digitization helps in storage and transmission of these languages apart from information, texts, image, document, etc. It aids better information exchange, enhanced preservation and organization of content. The paper attempts to study the importance of local languages in promoting and connecting the various sections of the society through digitization and present case studies to highlight the significance of native languages in the age of digital humanities. The problems faced in catering to various dialects of indigenous languages and developing software to languages without written systems will also be discussed.

Keywords: Indigenous language, Digitization, Digital humanities, Dialects

Introduction:

The change in socio-economic conditions, living standards, technological influences, development across the foreign and international relations, and other factors have actually contributed to transforming India into digital India. The investments across the digital sector are growing at an unexpected and unbiased rate, which makes it quite clear that by the year 2020, we can expect the investments in digital ads to grow further, in the

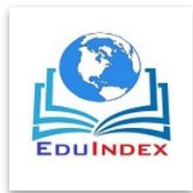
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range of 23%-28%. And, the disruption across Indian digital media would bring about a spontaneous hike in the revenue growth of up to US\$200b. [1]

Thus internet is used for several purposes to get information, entertainment, and official work, to connect with friends and relatives around the world and to do every day routine work. It is operated and managed through various devices like smart phones, tablets, laptops, desktops etc.

The number of local-language Internet users is rapidly growing at 47% year over year. This growing group of users is hungry for information, entertainment, and engagement in their own language, and their appetite for digital content signals an exciting potential—one that allows brands to reach out to a whole new audience. “Local languages are a high priority for well-established businesses in the country. They look at local language engagement as a driver to multiply their total addressable markets in the rural base, after covering the urban target audience,” reports the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) [2]

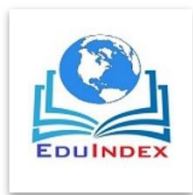
Digital Humanities is a blend of digital technology and various fields of humanities. It involves using of digital platform for the purpose of research, publishing etc. One field that parallels the digital humanities is new media studies of journalism. New media encompasses both ‘new media’ and ‘media studies’. It examines how our relationship with media has changed with the onset of global connectivity. Also, how traditional media is compelled to go digital and online to cater to the needs of the people.

Online newspapers differ significantly from the print media: Online readers read from a digital format on computer screen or on smartphone, they and move around by clicking on links and menu button. [3] People use internet for two purposes, first it is used as mediated interpersonal technologies, which are for social bonding, relationship maintenance, problem solving, and persuasion. Second the Internet is used as mass communication, which is for informational and leisure purposes.

Objectives:

- To study the increase in the readership of online news content
- To study the increase in the readership of online news in regional languages
- To find out the change in language preference of online news consumption.

Operational definition:



Digital humanities is digitization of the news available in the newspaper in the form of e-paper, websites, social networking pages etc. It is information in the digitized form.

Methodology:

The goal of content analysis is the systematic examination of communicative material (originally from the mass media in particular). This does not have to consist exclusively of texts; musical, pictorial, plastic or other similar material may also be treated. What is essential, however, is that the communicative material should be fixed or recorded in some form.

This study is a content analysis of the secondary data. Results from the research conducted by Indian Readership Survey (IRS) with Nielson holdings, KPMG India and Google were used for content analysis. Qualitative research of the data that indicated the readership numbers and percentages of online news readership were used.

Data Analysis:

1) Table 1.1 Internet reach and access



% REACH WITHIN 12+ INDIVIDUALS	TOTALS	TOTALS	URBAN	URBAN	RURAL	RURAL
	IRS'17	IRS'19 Q1	IRS'17	IRS'19 Q1	IRS'17	IRS'19 Q1
Universe size (000s)	104,60,04	107,85,43	36,26,05	37,69,76	68,34,00	70,15,67
Newspapers read	39	39	53	53	31	32
Accessed Internet	19	24	33	39	12	16



The table indicates the growth percentage of newspaper readership from 2017 to the first quarter (Q1) of 2019. Out of 10,46,004 samples 39% read hard copy of newspapers and in 2019 Q1, out of 10,78,543 samples 39% read hardcopy of various newspapers. The table also shows internet usage percentage from 2017 to 2019. In 2017 19% of the samples accessed internet and in the first quarter of 2019, 24% of the sample used internet. It also indicates the growth of internet usage in urban and rural areas. There is a progress of 6% in urban consumption and 4% in rural.

2) Table 1.2 (a) and (b): Readership of Online newspaper of English and Regional languages

IRS 2017	ALL INDIA	URBAN	<u>NCCS A1</u>
Universe	104,60,04	36.3	2.3
Newspapers Read (Online)	4%	8%	26%

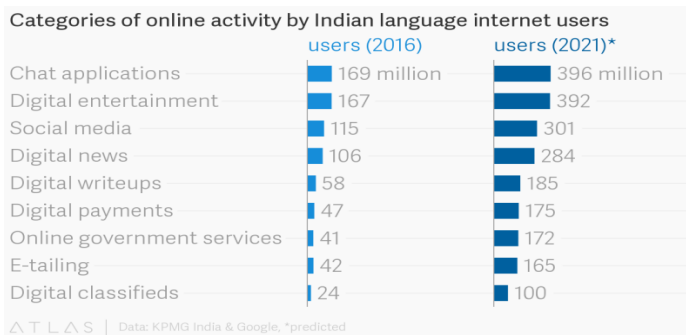
IRS Q1 2019	ALL INDIA	URBAN	<u>NCCS A1</u>
Universe	107,85,43	37.7	2.4
Newspapers Read (Online)	5%	9%	27%

The above tables 1.2 (a) and (b) indicate the readership of online newspapers in both English and regional languages. 4% of the total sample read online newspapers in 2017 and 5% of the total samples read online papers in 2019. The percentage is more according to New Consumer Classification System (NCCS)



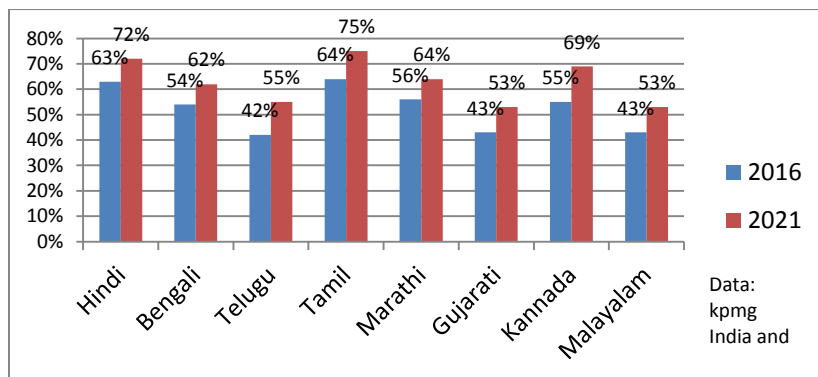
classification system under A1 category (UG/PG general and professional). In NCCS A1 26% of the samples used online newspapers where as 27% used online newspapers in in year 2019.

3) Table 1.3: Categories of online activity by Indian language internet users



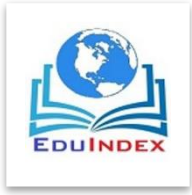
The above table indicates the online news readership of 4,612 urban citizens and 2,448 rural Indians. According to the data mentioned above, in 2016, 106 million Indians choose indigenous language news over English news and the percentage is expected to grow to 284 million by the year 2021.

4. Table 1.4 Adoption of Indian language internet for digital news



The table shows the percentage of samples who prefer regional languages over English for consumption of digital news. Hindi (63%), Bengali (54%), Tamil (64%), Marathi (56%), Kannada (55%) are the languages most preferred for digital news. It also indicates the expected growth from 2016 to 2021.

Discussion:



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The study reveals that there is an increase in the usage of internet in both urban and rural India. Launching of smart phones at minimal price and maximum features is the key to such a drastic change. The number is expected to double in the next decade.

As per the data, the rise in the use of online news consumption (from 4% to 5%) is though a small number, the increase in the consumption in Indigenous languages seems to have upsurged.

Digital news has caught up easily because of its simplicity. Data is usually accessible through an app or a website with mobile compatibility. The data shows that currently, there are 106 million users viewing digital news in local Indian languages. This figure is anticipated to add up to 284 million users by 2021. However, Hindi, Marathi, Bengali and Tamil make up 80% of the current users. The major categories of type of news viewed are general, sports and politics.

Languages like Hindi (72%), Tamil (75%) and Kannada (69%) is estimated to rise and target the majority of the population by 2021. Thus is a dire need to increase the amount of online content in Indigenous languages and help the people stay informed and updated

Conclusion:

Despite accommodating the world's second largest English-speaking population, it is India's indigenous language speakers that are creating and consuming the content in the digital space. It is estimated that the total Indian language internet users consuming digital news in Indian languages will surpass English users by ~85million in 2021. Hence there is a need to create a larger market for indigenous languages by creating more content in the languages that are in demand.

Rural users of internet are spending 15% more time than urban counterparts in consuming digital news paving way for a new trend. It is important to notice that more than 90% of the internet users use mobile phones to access, operate and consume information through internet. Therefore, news content should be optimized for consumption on mobile phones.

Unlike western countries, the increase in the consumption of digital news is not a threat to newspaper circulation in India. Newspaper industry continues to boom even after the technology has improved to a great



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extent. Print media, as a traditional form of media, has maintained its place. They have started online portals and websites to cater to the needs of their target audience.

Early adoption of technology by the younger generation of the country and awareness to preserve local languages are the key reason for the increase in the number of online news consumption. News organizations and corporations should realize the need of the hour and produce more content to have a wider reach.

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