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The Impact of Gender on Use of Cybercafé: A Survey of Cybercafé Users

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Abstract - **The study aims to know the Impact of gender on the use of cybercafé. The study focused on the frequency and purpose of using cybercafé by male and female users. It also focused on the problems encountered by male and female users while using Internet at cybercafé. An aggregate of 450 copies of questionnaires were circulated to the cybercafé user, of which 416 properly filled questionnaires were returned. Data was analyzed using SPSS 21.0 version. It was observed that male users had a long history of using cybercafé than female counterparts (p<.000). The data also indicate that there is an association between the frequency of visit to the cybercafé and the gender (p<.000). High cost of Internet services (74.2%), noisy environment in and around the cybercafé (55.76%) and slow Internet connection (49.75%) at cybercafé were major problems faced by the cybercafé users.**
Keywords: **Internet, Cybercafé, Gender differences, Indian**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Internet is drastically changing the way individuals live, work, communicate, recreate and participate in public life all over the world. But the growth and the penetration of the Internet are far from being distributed similarly around the globe (Haseloff, 2005). The Internet, today achieves considerable extents of the populace in developed countries, e.g. in UK (84%), Germany and Korea (82.7% each one), Japan (80%) and in the United States (78.3%), however, the circumstances is diverse in developed countries. In India, for instance, just 10.2% of the entire populaces are Internet users (Internet world statistics, 2012). The low rates of Internet get to in developing countries like India are frequently followed back to low rates of PC ownership and the high cost of hardware. Another barrier is the low-income level, which makes the Internet an expensive tool in developing countries. Close to these monetary variables, there are mixture of cognitive barrier like low literacy rates, the absence of English language skills or absence of e-education abilities to successfully utilize these new technologies (Warschauer, 2003).

As a result of the low penetration of ICT tools in Indian households, a generous extent of the Indian populace needs to depend on different modes of access to the Internet, mainly by utilizing open Internet access points. Cybercafés over the years have mushroomed all throughout India, and today they can even be found in residential communities and a portion of the greater town. They seem to serve a crucial portion of Indian society as access points for the use of computers and the Internet (Haseloff, 2005). There are around 1, 80,000 cybercafés in India, which have seven Computers on an average, and these are accessible for around 12 hours in a day. They serve more than 72 million strong English speaking populations in the country. These assessments demonstrate that cybercafés are gradually becoming part of contemporary Indian society (Haseloff, 2005).

Keeping in view the importance of cybercafé and increased dependency on the cybercafé by the public, this study attempts to examine the use of cybercafé by public in Shivamogga city. It also mainly intended to examine the impact of gender on the use of cybercafé.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A significant body of literature exists in the area of cybercafé use at national and international level. Few studies were also conducted during the last decade on the gender differences in the use of cybercafés.

A study by Mutula (2003) found that students use cybercafés mostly for study purpose while businessmen use cybercafés to execute business and for electronic money transfer. Another study by Odero (2003) found that cybercafé utilized by Postgraduate students more for study purpose though undergraduate students utilized for chatting, listen to music and for entertainment purposes. In the same year, Gitta and Lkoja (2003) conducted a study on the impact of cyber café on information service in Uganda. This study assessed the impact of cybercafé on the provision of information services in Uganda. The study shows that over 30% utilized the Internet every day and it is surprised to note that all female respondents used e–mail. Similarly, Mwesige (2004) study also found that the typical Internet users in Uganda were young educated males who could pay for Internet use. Besides inequalities in access to the Internet, there are also differences among individuals in using the Internet. Cybercafé have been used for diverse purposes by various segments of users.

Rathore and Alhabshi (2005) survey of cybercafés in Kota Baharu and Kuala Lumpur territories showed that the problem in the use of cybercafé is not entirely because of the users and operators alone, but also due to confusion on the part of the authorities. The authors also suggested how the situation could be improved despite the present drawbacks. Wahid et al. (2006) revealed that users with better education, greater personal capability and experience

have a tendency to utilize Internet at cybercafé for more serious purposes than others. Rideout and Hamel (2006) found that there is no gender difference in computer use, they discovered contrasts in how youngsters use computer.

Li and Kirkup (2007) studied the utilization of the Internet among Chinese and British students and found that men in both nations played more computer games than women. The Chinese were the most active games players. By and large, women were more slanted to utilize the Internet for study purposes and were higher among the British than in the Chinese group and the British students were generally more inclined to use Web-connected computers for study purposes.

Warf and Vincent (2007) study found that in the Arab countries, of 300 million Arabs, there are only 23.3 million Internet users, the majority of them rely on cybercafe due to high Internet access cost. Furuholt et al. (2008) looked at the Internet use of Indonesians and Tanzanians at cybercafé. It was observed that cybercafé were more prominent in these countries. Male were overwhelming user at the cybercafé. Favorite activities were e-mail, play games and chatting.

In 2009 Alam et al. conducted an exploratory study of cybercafé usage in Malaysia. This study looks at how regularly respondents visit the cybercafé in a week and month. It shows that most of the respondents 85(29.9%) visit cybercafé 1 to 3 times in a week. Meanwhile, 76(26.8%) respondents did notice they ordinarily visit the cybercafé 3 to 7 times a week. This is followed by, 25.4% of respondents who visit cybercafé once in two weeks. Only 12.0% of them visit to once a month and just 6.0% go to cybercafé less than once a month. Clearly, the cybercafe is one of the essential spots where people use the Internet frequently.

Batool and Mahmood (2010) found that cybercafe are the most popular public access Internet points in Pakistan. People visit cybercafé to fulfill their entertainment, communication, and academic needs. Users' profiles show that the cybercafés were mainly occupied by male users. Students were the regular users who visit mostly for entertainment, chat and email facilities. The respondents specified problems of low service quality, poor environment and lack of privacy at cybercafe.

Aladeniyi (2013) conducted a study on make use of cybercafé for Internet access by the students and found that 75 percent of the male students used cybercafe´ for research purposes. Google and Yahoo were the leading web search engines used to retrieve information, while the students gained Internet search knowledge and skills through teaching themselves followed by computer training. It was also exposed that irregular electricity supply was the main problem faced while using the cybercafé by the students. From the above discussion, it is observed that previous researchers generally focused on use of cybercafé in various countries and their Internet browsing levels. Even in India during the last decade, couples of studies have also been conducted on the use of cybercafé by the public. However, the impact of gender on the use of cybercafé has not been studied extensively. Thus, in this paper, cybercafé use levels of male and female users are investigated. A better understanding of the use of cybercafé by male and female users has a direct bearing on the various services offered by the cybercafé and their activities. Thus, this study seeks to enrich ongoing research efforts by exploring and identifying the impact of gender on the use of cybercafé, which will help to cybercafé owners as well as Internet service providers in India to offer better services to their customers.

III. METHODOLOGY

The survey method was employed to gather the data from the cybercafé users. The questionnaire was intended to elicit data on the individual characteristics of the users, frequency, and purpose of use of cybercafé, as well as the problems faced by the users at cybercafé. Before distributing questionnaires to the cybercafé users a formal interview was conducted with the owners of the cybercafés. The interview was more useful in refining the users questionnaires. The final versions of questionnaire were distributed physically by researchers to cybercafé users. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed in 41 cybercafé of Shivamogga city, Karnataka. Out of 450 questionnaires distributed, 416 duly filled copies of questionnaires were returned, constituting a 92.44% response rate. The duly filled questionnaires were statistically analyzed using SPSS for Windows (21.0 Version).

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The survey instrument attempted to elicit answers to the following research questions

1. *RQ1:* What is the frequency and purpose of use of cybercafé by male and female users?
2. *RQ2:* Is there any association between the gender and satisfaction level with the facilities offered at cybercafé?
3. *RQ3:* What are the reasons for using cybercafé rather than home computers by male and female users?
4. *RQ4:* What are the problems encountered by male and female users while using Internet at cybercafé?

V. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The study also formulated the following research hypotheses. Chi-square test (X^2) was calculated using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows Version 21.0 to test the following hypotheses.

1. *H1: F*requency of use of cybercafé is associated with gender.
2. *H2:* There is an association between the gender and level of satisfaction with cybercafé facilities.
3. *H3:* Purpose of use of cybercafé differs among the male and female users.
4. *H4:* Reasons for using cybercafé rather than home computer are associated with the gender of the users.

VI. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A. Demography of Respondents

The users were asked to express their gender, age, occupation and social background. It is clear from the table-I that most of the public were in the age group of 20-30 years (56.7%). This age group dominance could be indicative of the huge number of users who were in colleges and have acquired awareness about Internet services (Sairosse and Muttula, 2004). Users were also asked to mention their occupation. The result shows that public were from different backgrounds and profession with the majority being students (65.6%) followed by professionals (20.7%) which include teachers, lecturers, lawyers and even a few of them were also medical professional whilst self-employed accounted for 33 (7.9%). According to the results of the present survey, the typical cybercafé users were very young and majority of them were male (64.2%).

TABLE I DEMOGRAPHY OF RESPONDENTS

Demography of respondents (n=416)		Counts	Percentage
Gender	Male	267	64.2
	Female	149	35.8
Age Group	Below 20 years	141	33.9
	20-30 years	236	56.7
	30 years above	39	9.4
Occupation	Professionals	86	20.7
	Students	273	65.6
	Business Men	24	5.8
	Self Employed	33	7.9
Background	Rural Area	210	50.5
	Urban Area	206	49.5

B. Year of Experience in the Use of Cybercafé

The respondents were also asked how long they had been using the cybercafé. The main intention of asking this question was to know the association between the gender and their year of experience in the use of cybercafé (Table II). 43.82% of male and 46.79% of female had 1-4 years of experience in the use of cybercafé. But 7.11% of male and only 2.68% of female users had more than ten years of experience in the use of cybercafé. It was observed that gender had an impact on the experience in the use of cybercafé. So male had a long history of using the cybercafé than female (figure-1). This data is also supported by the Chi-square analysis indicating that there is a significant association between the gender and the years of experience in the use of cybercafé (X^2=20.518, df=3, p=.000).

TABLE II YEAR OF EXPERIENCE IN THE USE OF CYBERCAFÉ

Gender	Year of experience in the use of cybercafé			
	Less than 1 year	1-4 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years
Male (n=267)	80 (29.96)	117 (43.82)	51 (19.10)	19 (7.11)
Female (n=149)	66 (44.29)	70 (46.97)	09 (6.04)	04 (2.68)
Total (n=416)	146 (35.09)	187 (44.95)	60 (14.42)	23 (5.52)

Note: The percentage is given in parenthesis
Because of multiple choice questions, the total Number is more than 100 percentages

C. Frequency of Visit to Cybercafé

Respondents were asked to mention the frequency of use of cybercafé and it was found that most of the respondents visited cybercafé regularly (Table-III). 38.46% of them visited the cybercafé '2-3 times a week' while 24.75% said they were daily visitors. Only 17.30% of users were occasional users (Figure-2). A closer look at the data on the frequency of visits by the users shows that the frequency of visit to cybercafé has affected by the gender of the users. For instance, 32.58% of male and only 10.73% of female visited the cybercafé daily while 33.70% of male and 46.97% of female visited 2-3 times a week. The data presented in the table clearly indicate that there is an association between the frequency of visit to the cybercafé and the gender. This is also supported by the Chi-square analysis (x^2=24.934, df=3, p=.000)

TABLE III FREQUENCY OF VISIT TO CYBERCAFÉ

Gender	Frequency of visit to cybercafé			
	Daily	2-3 times a week	4-5 times a month	Occasionally
Male (n=267)	87 (32.58)	90 (33.70)	49 (18.35)	41 (15.35)
Female (n=149)	16 (10.73)	70 (46.97)	32 (21.47)	3 1(20.80)
Total (n=416)	103 (24.75)	160 (38.46)	81(19.47)	72 (17.30)

Note: The percentage is given in parenthesis

D. Time Spent at Cybercafé

The amount of time the respondents usually spend at cybercafé is shown in Table IV. As it shows clearly, most of the respondents (52.16%) spent 1 to 2 hours. There were only 5.04% who spent more than 3 hours at cybercafé. Other than that, 29.80% of them have normally stayed at cybercafé for less than 1 hour. Surprisingly the amount of time spent at cybercafé is not associated with gender of the respondents ($p>0.05$).

TABLE IV TIME SPENT AT CYBERCAFÉ

Gender	Time spent at cybercafé			
	Less Than 1 Hours	1-2 Hours	2-3 Hours	More than 3 Hours
Male (n=267)	78 (29.21)	136 (50.93)	37 (13.85)	16 (5.99)
Female (n=149)	46 (30.87)	81 (54.36)	17 (11.40)	05 (3.35)
Total (n=416)	124 (29.80)	217 (52.16)	54 (12.98)	21 (5.04)

Note: The percentage is given in parenthesis
Because of multiple choice questions, the total Number is more than 100 percentages

E. Level of Satisfaction about Cybercafé Services

The public were asked to state how they valued the quality of services provided by cybercafé owners (Table V). 57.67% of male and 59.73% of female users felt that the services were good, whereas 34.08% of male and 27.51% of female felt that the services were very good. Only few of them opined that the services were poor (1.87%- male and 3.35%- female).Overall, 58.41% of users opined that the services offered by the cybercafé were good. The statistical test was carried out to know the relationship between the gender and the satisfaction with cybercafé services. The chi-square test indicates that there is no significant relationship between the gender and their satisfaction about the cybercafé services ($p>0.05$).

TABLE V LEVEL OF SATISFACTION ABOUT CYBERCAFÉ SERVICES

Gender	Level of satisfaction about cybercafé services			
	Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor
Male (n=267)	91 (34.08)	154 (57.67)	17 (6.36)	5 (1.87)
Female (n=149)	41 (27.51)	89 (59.73)	14 (9.39)	5 (3.35)
Total (n=416)	132 (31.73)	243 (58.41)	31 (7.45)	10 (2.40)

Note: The percentage is given in parenthesis

F. The Purpose of Using Cybercafé

The users were asked to mention their purpose of use of cybercafé. A variety of options were provided, from which they could select one or more options. The table-6 illustrates that cybercafé was used for a variety of purposes. The majority of male (48.37%) and female (63.75%) used for study/research purpose followed by e-mail (male-42.78%, female-55.70%) and to see exam results (mlae-33.33%, female-45.63%). Responses showed that only a negligible percentage of cybercafé users used the Internet for money transfer, e-shopping, and to make international calls (Figure-3). A closer look at the data shows that there is a significant association between the gender and purpose of cybercafé use ($X^2=30.919$ df=13 p=.003).

TABLE VI THE PURPOSE OF USING CYBERCAFÉ

The Purpose of using cybercafé (n=416)	Gender	
	Male(267)	Female(149)
Study/Research	129(48.37)	95(63.75)
To see exam result	89(33.33)	68(45.63)
E-Mail	178(42.78)	83(55.70)
Reading online news	52(19.47)	16(10.73)
Online chatting	105(39.32)	43(28.85)
Online job work	63(23.59)	35(23.48)
Computer games	59(20.09)	21(14.09)
Searching for job	66(24.71)	41(27.51)
E-Shopping	28(10.48)	09(6.04)
For downloading software	74(27.71)	26(17.44)
Money transfer	40(14.98)	11(7.38)
To make international calls	20(7.49)	08(5.36)
For entertainment/ sports	87(32.58)	43(28.85)
Visiting pornographic sites	27(10.11)	10(6.71)

Note: The percentage is given in parenthesis

G. Reasons for Using Cybercafé Rather than Home Computer

Users who had Internet connection at home were asked to state why they preferred to use cybercafé (Table-VII). The intention behind asking this question was to determine whether there were any social related reasons for using cybercafé rather than using Internet at home. Majority of male (67.79%) and female (68.45%) users opined that high-cost connection at home was the reason for using cybercafé. They also agreed that cybercafé offers affordable prices as compared to home computer (67.41% in case of male and 61.07% in case of female). However, there is a difference in the opinion of the male and female users regarding their use of cybercafé rather than home computers (Figure-4). For instance, 49.06% of male users opined that they visit cybercafé to make friends, but in case of female this percentage was 36.24%. Statistical analysis also indicates that there is an association between the gender and the reasons for using cybercafé rather than home computers (x^2=13.292, df=6, p=.039).

TABLE VII REASONS FOR USING CYBERCAFÉ RATHER THAN HOME COMPUTER

Gender	Reasons for using cybercafé rather than home computer						
	Price is affordable at cybercafé	To make friends	Disconnected at home	To visit town	Nonavailability of some service at home	Privacy Problem	High-cost connection at home
Male (n=267)	180 (67.41)	131 (49.06)	77 (28.83)	82 (30.71)	135 (50.56)	162 (60.67)	181 (67.79)
Female (n=149)	91 (61.07)	54 (36.24)	53 (35.57)	30 (20.13)	97 (65.10)	82 (55.03)	102 (68.45)
Total (n=416)	271 (65.14)	185 (44.47)	130 (31.25)	112 (26.92)	232 (55.76)	244 (58.65)	283 (68.02)

Note: The percentage is given in parenthesis
Because of multiple choice questions. the total Number is more than 100 percentages

H. Problems Encountered by Users at Cybercafé

Table-VIII illustrates the problems encountered by the users at cybercafé. Surprisingly high cost of the Internet at cybercafé ranked highest with 309 (74.2%) users. Even though the charges levied on searching the Internet at cybercafé is affordable compared to home computers, still majority of users felt that the Internet service cost is high. Sairosse and Muttula (2004) also found that the users of the cybercafé faced the similar problem and they stated that the majority of the users are students who have to depend on their parents or sponsor for financial support. Even in India majority of students are depending on the parents for their pocket money. Thus they felt that the charges levied on searching the Internet at cybercafé is one of the problems for them.

Users of the cybercafé also stated that majority cybercafés had small size cabins (59.85%) and the users could not sit in the browsing center for longer hours. The noisy environment in and around the cybercafé (55.76%) and slow Internet connection (49.75%) were also major problems for users.

TABLE VIII PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY USERS AT CYBERCAFÉ

Gender	Problems encountered by users at cybercafé				
	High cost of Internet service	Noisy environment	Small size cabin	Inadequate computer	Slow Internet response
Male(n=267)	199(73.8)	148(54.28)	158(57.14)	76(33.80)	136(48.57)
Female(n=149)	110(74.7)	84(57.28)	91(62.62)	41(22.33)	71(50.97)
Total(n=416)	309(74.2)	232(55.76)	249(59.85)	117(28.12)	207(49.75)

Note: The percentage is given in parenthesis
Because of multiple choice questions, the total Number is more than 100 percentages

I. Improvements needed at cybercafé as suggested by users

Users were asked to know the improvement or additional services they expected from the cybercafé owners. The result presented in table-IX shows that the expectations of the cybercafé users are diverse in nature. Not surprisingly the majority of users (93.26%) opined that the speed of the Internet connection should be improved. They also demanded reduction in the charge levied for searching the Internet at cybercafé (50.72%). They also urged to provide free Internet training to the users of cybercafé (47.59%). The minimum charge levied for searching Internet in Shivamogga city is about Rs 15-20 per hour. This charge is probably not affordable to the majority of students since they have depended on their parents.

TABLE IX IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED AT CYBERCAFÉ AS SUGGESTED BY USERS

Gender	Improvements needed at cybercafé as suggested by users					
	Improve speed of Internet connection	Video conference facility to be available	Reduction in access Charge	Free Internet training to customer	Ensure that system are virus free	Provision of more Computer
Male (n=267)	248 (92.88)	118 (44.19)	124 (46.44)	121 (45.31)	116 (43.44)	129 (48.31)
Female (n=149)	140 (93.95)	45 (30.20)	87 (58.38)	77 (51.67)	64 (42.95)	72 (48.32)
Total (n=416)	388 (93.26)	163 (39.18)	211 (50.72)	198 (47.59)	180 (43.26)	201 (40.31)

Note: The percentage is given in parenthesis
Because of multiple choice questions, the total Number is more than 100 percentages

J. Testing of hypotheses

After analyzing the data, the formulated hypotheses were tested and presented in the table-10. It shows that out of four hypotheses, three of them were supported and only one hypothesis was not supported. Thus it can be concluded that the gender has an impact on the use of cybercafé.

TABLE X TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

Sl No	Hypotheses	Result
H1	Frequency of use of cybercafé is associated with gender	Supported
H2	There is an association between the Gender and level of satisfaction with cybercafé facilities.	Not supported
H3	Purpose of use of cybercafé differs among the male and female users	Supported
H4	Reasons for using cybercafé rather than home computer are associated with the gender of the users.	Supported

VII. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study clearly indicate that the use of cybercafé by the public in India is gradually growing. Computer literacy also appears to be a major reason for the use of cybercafé. It was observed that the cybercafé users in the present study were predominantly young people and most of them were male. The findings of the present study are similar to the previous studies. For instance, males are dominant among cybercafé´ customers and use the Internet more frequently than female (Furuholt 2008).

There is a significant difference in the use of cybercafé by male and female. For instance, 7.11% of male and only 2.68% of female users had more than ten years of experience in the use of cybercafé. Similarly, 32.58% of male and only 10.73% of female visited the cybercafé daily while 33.70% of male and 46.97% of female visited 2-3 times a week. Majority of male (48.37%) and female (63.75%) used for study/research purpose followed by e-mail (male-42.78%, female-55.70%) and to see exam results (mlae-33.33%, female-45.63%).

In the light of the research findings, the following recommendations are made

1. The year of experience in the use of cybercafé and frequency of visit to cybercafé by female is comparatively less them male counterparts. Hence it is suggested that the cybercafé owners should provide separate cabins and computers for female users in order to make them more comfortable at cybercafé.
2. It was also observed that there is a difference in the purpose of use of cybercafé by male and female users. Very few female users were using various sources and services of Internet as compared to male users, for instance, online chatting (male-39.32%, female-28.85%), computer games (male-20.09%, female-14.09%) and money transfer (male-14.98%, female-7.38%). Hence it is very essential to conduct free Internet training program for the users in general and more specifically for female users so that the users can make use of various Internet services.
3. The cybercafé staff should take necessary steps to increase the bandwidth of the Internet connection.
4. The amount charged for Internet services may be reduced for regular users, which will attract more customers to use the cybercafé services for a longer duration and greater frequency.
5. The cybercafé owners should conduct training programs for the users regarding the use of Internet sources and services.

VIII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One limitation of this paper is that respondents who participated in this study were basically from single city in Karnataka state. This could potentially reduce the generalisability of the findings. But paper has important implications to future researchers to identify the relationship between the various attributes such as age groups, social background, and professions of customers on the use of cybercafé.

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