

Examining The Contribution Of Educational Institutions In Fostering Digital Media Literacy: An Analysis Of The Impact Of Curriculum Integration Of Digital Media Training On Students' Skill Development.

Saurabhi Shetye^{1*}, Dr. Gayatri Indrakanti²

^{1*}Department of Multimedia and Mass Communication, Chikitsak Samuha's Patkar- Varde College, University of Mumbai, Mumbai, India. Email: saurabhi.shetye@gmail.com

²Department of Mass Communication, S.K. Somaiya College, Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Mumbai, India
Email: gayatri.i@somaiya.edu

Abstract

Digital Media Literacy plays a pivotal role in helping students assess the complexities of the wide virtual landscape. Educational Institutions have started incorporating various courses related to the same and are comprehensively focusing on improving the digital skill set of students. This research is based on a longitudinal study that measures the proficiency of students before starting with the course where in they are presented a questionnaire related to investigating students' attitudes towards digital media, their online habits, and their perceptions of the importance of media literacy and studies the changes noticed in the same, after ending the course. This paper aims to analyze and track the perception of students about digital media literacy and to assess their proficiency over an extended period of six months. The findings of this study highlight that the digital literacy provided as a part of curriculum at various levels of education not only centers around the concept of digital literacy but also inculcates skills that transfer to real-life scenarios and subsequent academic or professional pursuits.

Keywords: Digital Media, Media Literacy, Media Awareness, Skill Development, Ethical Awareness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital media has become a crucial part of information communication, with its development trends discussed in various aspects (Hong-wen, 2006). With the ever evolving technologies, Digital Media is enhancing the patterns of communication, especially in visual context. Vivid videos, bright images and highly engaging content has invited people from various age groups to try and test the medium, for various reasons ranging from personal, professional or academic, likewise. In higher education, digital media has significantly impacted teaching and learning behaviors, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis, with potential benefits in examination preparation, instructional content assistance, and student self-study enhancement (Klein, 2023). The wide range of digital media applications, including digital images, photography, video, audio, and multimedia production, has transformed media content creation and distribution (Earnshaw, 2017). In the business context, digital media has revolutionized communication and content dissemination, although it has also presented challenges (Michael, 2015).

As Digital Media evolves, the need for academically incorporating formal education about the medium in various professional courses have become a common observation. The importance of educating people about digital media is underscored by the need to develop critical thinking and responsible behavior in the digital age (Matos, 2016). Digital media has a significant impact on education, enhancing the sharing of knowledge and creating effective learning environments (Singh, 2019). Media and information literacy are crucial skills in evaluating digital media content, and educators play a key role in teaching these competencies (Gretter, 2018). Integrating social media into formal education can have positive effects, provided that students are taught to understand and use it correctly (Koç, 2018).

This research focuses on a nuanced exploration of Digital Media Literacy education, employing a longitudinal study to evaluate the efficacy of the discipline in shaping students' understanding and application of digital literacy concepts. The research begins by meticulously assessing students' proficiency levels before commencing a Digital Media Literacy course. Through a comprehensive questionnaire, the aim is to unravel students' attitudes towards digital media, their online habits, and perceptions of the importance of media literacy. This initial evaluation sets the stage for understanding the baseline proficiency, providing valuable insights into the starting point for educational interventions.

A core objective of this research is to track the evolution of students' proficiency over a six-month period, spanning the duration of the digital media literacy course. Adopting a longitudinal approach, the aim is to unveil the trajectory of students' development in digital literacy skills, shedding light on patterns of growth or potential challenges encountered during their learning journey. Beyond theoretical knowledge, the research delves into the practical application of acquired digital literacy skills in real-world scenarios. By scrutinizing the transferability of these skills to diverse contexts, including academic and professional pursuits, the goal is to elucidate the broader impact of digital media literacy education on students' ability to meaningfully engage with and contribute to the digital landscape.

An essential facet of the study is the investigation and quantification of the shift in students' perspectives towards media literacy throughout the course. By examining changes in attitudes, habits, and perceptions, the aim is to delineate the cognitive evolution of students as they engage with and internalize the principles of digital media literacy.

2. PRELIMINARIES

LITERATURE REVIEW

The need for digital media education is underscored by the challenges and opportunities presented by digital technologies (Buckingham, 2007). This education should focus on developing critical approaches to digital media (Buckingham, 2006), and promoting digital literacy that encompasses a broad understanding of mediated representation (Buckingham, 2007). It should also address the role of digital tools in the lives of teenagers, including the risks and benefits (Subrahmanyam, 2010). Overall, digital media education is crucial for equipping students with the skills to navigate and critically engage with the digital world.

As young individuals in modern societies become more reliant on digital media, the inclusion of media education in policies is gaining prominence, especially in technologically advanced regions outside the Western hemisphere (Park, Biddix, 2008). The training of digital media professionals is a complex and evolving field, requiring a balance of art and technology skills (Song, 2011). In the digital era, the use of engaging and relevant instructional media is crucial for effective learning (Akrim, 2018). However, the integration of digital technologies in the classroom presents its own set of challenges (Letramentos, 1976). To address these issues, a comprehensive training plan for digital media technology professionals is needed, encompassing curriculum design, teaching methods, and personnel training (Si-zhong, 2013).

The continuous advancement of digital media and the opportunities they provide for communication and information access underscore the importance of cultivating effective, responsible, and critical behavior in citizens. This applies not only to their role as consumers but also as communicators and producers of media messages. This paper analyzes the challenges posed by digital media in the education of young individuals, emphasizes the significance of reflecting on the concept and objectives of media literacy, and puts forward recommendations for potential courses of action. (Matos, et al., 2016). Digital Media training incorporates the basics as well as the changing dynamics and the pervasive shift from analog to digital media and the impending prospect of digital terrestrial broadcasting has significant implications for content and the content maker's role. This helps students to adapt to new age technologies and encompass the skills needed for the growth of the medium. The influence of multimedia extends across various domains, significantly affecting Internet marketing, the music and motion picture industries, education, and healthcare. Consequently, its relevance permeates marketing and information systems, suggesting a pertinent role within business curricula (Records, Pitt, 2003). The participants of research undergraduate students of the age eighteen to twenty, years of age. Youngsters dedicate substantial periods to screen-based activities. Confronted with this circumstance, it becomes imperative to provide them with media education, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of information and image cultures. An educational approach aims to provide universal assistance for their cognitive, emotional, and social development, necessitating the involvement of key figures in their education, family members, teachers, and leaders in extracurricular activities. (Gautellier, C. 2015).

2.1 Preliminaries1

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, a quantitative research design is employed to systematically investigate the impact of digital media training on student's skill development, The training emphasized on 5 modules Growing from Basic to Advanced, including the following-

Module 1- Basics of Social Media, Creating an Ad for Instagram, FB, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and Snapchat

Module 2- Influencer Collaborations, Affiliate Marketing, Facebook Groups, Basics of Google Ads.

Module 3- Search Engine Optimisation. Black Hat/ White Hat SEO, Keywords Identification, Meta Tags, On Page & Off Page SEO

Module 4- Creating Ads & Listings Products on Amazon, Flipkart and other eCommerce sites. And Pay Per Click Marketing, Understanding ROI and Maintaining KPIs.

Module 5- Use of AI in creating Digital Media Content/ Ads. With list of Tools that help creation of content easier as well as affordable

The primary data collection was facilitated through a survey conducted via Google Forms, engaging 150 participants from these industries. This being a pre-test, post-test research, Data was collected twice, once before and once after intervention. Under this, the survey included questions from above modules, with a likert scale, which the participants had to fill according to their assumed proficiency. The five point likert scale stated level 1 to 5, where 1 was lowest and 5 was highest.

1- Novice

2- Intermediate

3- Proficient

4- Advanced

5- Expert

The research adopts an explanatory approach, aiming to examine the cause-and-effect relationships underlying the influence of training on skill development.

Furthermore, the research embraces a longitudinal study, enabling the tracking of changes and patterns over time in the identified sectors. This longitudinal aspect contributes a temporal dimension to the research, offering insights into the evolving impact.

Lastly, to enhance the analytical depth, the study incorporates the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as an additional tool for data analysis.

Overall, the chosen methodology ensures a comprehensive and rigorous exploration of the multifaceted influence of multimedia across various domains.

2.2 Preliminaries2

Discussions and Results

Pre-Test:

In the pre-test, conducted as part of the research, majority participant responses indicated a varied range of digital media literacy levels. A substantial number of participants asserted expert level 'in fundamental topics, including but not limited to the basics of social media, unsponsored advertisements, and fundamental skills related to content creation such as video editing, image manipulation, and caption composition.

The majority of participants asserted an 'advanced' level in various domains, including digital media advertisements, sponsored or collaborated posts on social media, ethical content creation, awareness about scams and frauds, and fundamental knowledge regarding the utilization of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the realm of digital media.

A huge majority of participants claimed to be 'novice' or 'intermediate' about niche topics such as Search Engine Optimization, Pay Per Click Advertising, Keywords Identification, Meta Tags, On Page & Off Page SEO, eCommerce listing and marketing.

Few participants selected the 'advanced' category for any of the topics.

While interpreting responses about training in Digital Media, The findings emphasize that the current teaching methods in various courses might not be optimizing the learning experience. The prevalence of traditional teaching approaches and challenges faced by students without personal access to platforms warrant a reevaluation of the pedagogical strategies employed. Students were unable to understand technological concepts via methods such as the 'Chalk and Talk' method, and hence demanded technologically enhanced classrooms for Digital Media Training.

The observed discrepancy between technological advancements and static course content signals a need for continuous updates to ensure the curriculum aligns with the dynamic nature of the digital media landscape. These results call for a holistic reexamination of the educational approach to bridge gaps in accessibility, interactivity, and content relevance for an enhanced and impactful learning experience in the realm of Digital Media.

Post Test:

Following the implementation of the digital media literacy intervention, the post-test results demonstrated a notable positive shift in participants' proficiency levels. The majority of respondents exhibited an 'expert' level of understanding in fundamental topics, showcasing enhanced competence in areas such as social media basics, unsponsored advertisements, video editing, image manipulation, and caption composition.

Similarly, a significant portion of participants demonstrated an 'advanced' proficiency in various domains, including digital media advertisements, sponsored posts on social media, ethical content creation, awareness of scams and frauds, and understanding the basics of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the digital media landscape.

However, it is noteworthy that a considerable number of participants still maintained a 'novice' or 'intermediate' proficiency level in specialized topics like Search Engine Optimization, Pay Per Click Advertising, Keywords Identification, Meta Tags, On Page & Off Page SEO, eCommerce listing, and marketing.

In the context of digital media training, the findings revealed that while the intervention led to positive advancements in understanding and proficiency, challenges persisted. Participants continued to face difficulties comprehending technological concepts through traditional teaching methods such as the 'Chalk and Talk' approach. Consequently, there is a growing demand for technologically enhanced classrooms for more effective digital media training.

The observed positive shift in proficiency levels, coupled with the persisting challenges, underscores the need for ongoing improvements in pedagogical strategies. The dynamic nature of the digital media landscape necessitates continuous updates to course content and teaching methods, ensuring alignment with technological advancements.

These results highlight the importance of a comprehensive reassessment of the educational approach to address gaps in accessibility, interactivity, and content relevance, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience in the field of Digital Media.

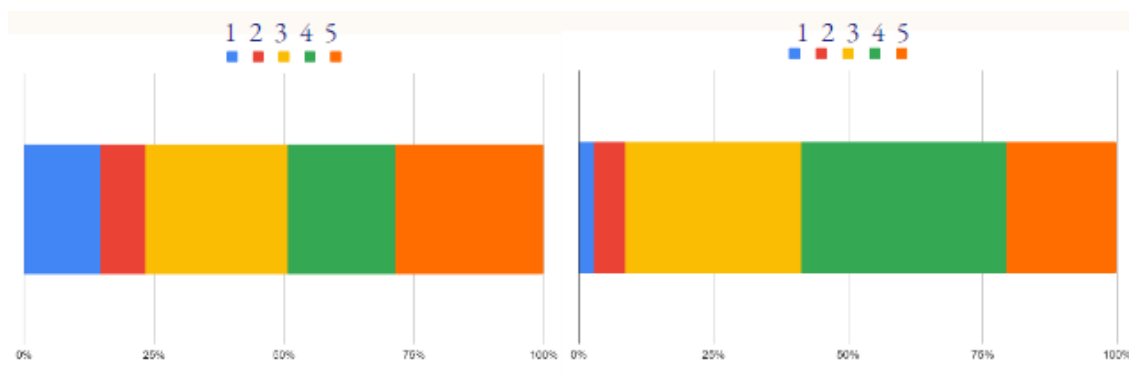


FIGURE 1: Overall proficiency in accessing digital media platforms, before and after the training.

In conclusion, this research highlights the significant role of Digital Media Literacy education in shaping students' proficiency and skill development, as evidenced by a comprehensive pre-test and post-test analysis over a six-month period. The initial findings unveiled a diverse range of proficiency levels, with expertise in fundamental areas but challenges in niche topics and traditional teaching methods. The subsequent post-test demonstrated a positive shift towards 'expert' or 'advanced' status, indicating the transformative impact of the Digital Media Literacy course. However, persistent challenges underscored the need for ongoing improvements, particularly in comprehending specialized topics and adapting teaching methods to the dynamic digital landscape. This study emphasizes the broader impact of Digital Media Literacy education, urging a holistic reevaluation of educational approaches to bridge gaps in accessibility, interactivity, and content relevance. Ultimately, the research advocates for an adaptive and innovative educational paradigm that equips students with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, ensuring their preparedness for real-world applications in the digital age.

3. REFERENCES

- Hong-wen, X. (2006). Development Trends of Digital Media. China Digital Cable TV.
- Klein, C. (2023). Understanding the Relevance of Digital Media in Higher Education. *International Journal of Technology in Education and Science*.
- Earnshaw, R.A. (2017). Applications of Digital Media.
- Matos, A.P., Festas, M.I., & Seixas, A.M. (2016). Digital media and the challenges for media education.
- Singh, B., & Paul, M. (2019). THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA ON EDUCATION. *Journal of emerging technologies and innovative research*.
- Gretter, S., & Yadav, A. (2019). Teaching Media and Information Literacy in the 21st Century. *Advances in Library and Information Science*.
- Koç, E. (2018). The Importance of Placing Digital Media in Education.
- Gautellier, C. (2015). [The need for education and regulation regarding the use of digital media]. *Soins. Pédiatrie, puériculture*, 282, 29-31 .
- Song, J.Y., & Sun, S. (2011). On the Personal Training Mode Majoring in Digital Media Technology. *Advanced Materials Research*, 271-273, 1553 - 1556.
- Akrim (2018). Media Learning in Digital Era.
- Letramentos, E., Escola, U., Rede, D., & Pública (1976). *Teaching & Training. Group Analysis*, 9, 203 - 216.
- Si-zhong, X. (2013). A Study of Training Plan for Digital Media Technology Professional. *Journal of Wuxi Institute of Technology*.
- Buckingham, D. (2007). Media education goes digital: an introduction. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 32, 111 - 119.
- Buckingham, D. (2006). Defining digital literacy – What do young people need to know about digital media? *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, 1, 263-277.
- Subrahmanyam, B.K., Šmahel, D., (2010). Digital Youth: The Role of Media in Development.
- Park, H.W., & Biddix, P. (2008). Digital media education for Korean youth. *The International Information & Library Review*, 40, 104 - 111.
- Matos, A.P., Festas, M.I., & Seixas, A.M. (2016). Digital media and the challenges for media education.
- Records, H.A., & Pitt, R.E. (2003). Teaching Digital Multimedia as a Component of Business Education. *J. Inf. Syst. Educ.*, 14, 31-40.