International Journal of Advanced Mass Communication and Journalism

Bhavya HC
Research Scholar, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Devanagari University, Karnataka, India

Effectiveness of virtual reality possibilities during COVID-19: A Study

Bhavya HC

Abstract
Life with unheard challenges of the 21st century flooded over the world with the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic has not only impacted the physical health but also the living style of every individual. Technology played a vital role in helping us to get over it. As the Corona virus spreads, so do innovations to fight it in other way. When physical distance and quarantine was mandatory, only technological remedies saved from the psychological distress of the people. The business model was also revived only because of technology. And the new ways and trends of digitality led everyone to solace in that crucial time. We can say only digital technology made life a little easier and life in quarantine more livable. As these technological innovations like virtual reality practices accelerate, the lifestyle and the routines of people also change according to it. This study is about the same and based on primary data.

Keywords: Corona, pandemic, digital technology, virtual reality

Introduction

Most of the times life is uncertain, we cannot pretend it ourselves. We were already in a time where all are opened to digital communications and devoted their emotions to emoticons. And now life is becoming more and more digitized, but it is inevitable, rather than our choice that because of the threat of century – COVID-19 contagious. The angst raised worldwide due to corona virus is lifelong angst of three- four generations. The world had to face the cumulative effects of biological, social, economic and psychological fears that have never been experienced before. As the corona virus was found in November 2019 but was highly spread and highly publicized in 2020 followed by the various new names which are now continuing to 2023… the initial decades of the 21st century became a severe curse.

In such a case, when the whole country is inside the shut door… Technologies, media and mainly new media played a vital role in keeping contact with one-to-one or with the world continuously... It's been an age that the internet media ties all of us into an invisible network. At first, such a concept of interconnecting multiple networks emerged in the mid-1980s. The internet concept is not immediately born out, but that technology is constantly evolving, growing, and opening up to new possibilities over a long period. The number of people caught up in the charm of the internet is huge nowadays. According to a www.statistica.com survey, India has grown to more than 564.5 million years on year.

In the COVID pandemic, the use of the Internet has spawned a new generation of users, and the Internet has become an alternative to standards of normal living style. In the crucial time of not being able to step out of the house… relatives, friends, school, college, and the hospital even God have begun to give Darshana through the Internet, mobile, and computer technology as a miracle. Many things which were cannot be seen, touched and experienced physically or in reality, Now became realistically possible as we can be seen, stand over, and experience everything by the grace of Virtual Reality (VR). And the credit for the fame, usage and spread of this new technology phenomenon surely goes to the COVID pandemic.

Virtual reality users who got experience of things in a nonfactual but real way were first got through by the videogames of children in the 1990s. Although the Next Generation's handsets in 2010 have further strengthened Virtual Reality, still it has not been known to the much larger communities until recently.

Correspondence Author;
Bhavya HC
Research Scholar, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Devanagari University, Karnataka, India

This research writing has helped to define the notion of Virtual Reality easily in the pandemic time and it made it easier to understand it and its possibilities, advantages, and usages which are increased significantly over the years.

Statement of Problem

As the world was attacked by the new social scourge called 'COVID – The Corona Contagious' the related works are also new and limited, so this research is being carried out. "Effectiveness of Virtual possibilities during COVID-19: A study" this research writing is based on secondary and primary information. Primary data is collected through questionnaires from various internet users. The main purpose of the article is to analyze the impacts of virtual reality, which are on the rise during the Corona period, and can it be a direct substitute for real life?

Objective of the study

1. To Study the effectiveness of VR before and after COVID 19 pandemic.

Methodology

This work deals with the descriptive and statistical analysis of primary data collected with regard to the Effectiveness of Virtual Reality possibilities during COVID-19: A Study. The primary data is collected using questionnaire method.

Virtual Reality

Virtual Reality is very useful for the practical experience of places we cannot be and reach. Virtual Reality is a technology-based process that creates the closest environment to a real environment. We've seen, or at least heard of, many of the games which give experience playing on the field just by holding a remote of videogame in a hand at home, in gaming zones of malls, and in cyber cafes. This technology is designed to facilitate learning beyond the game and is also used to train medical students to gain experience with surgery, pilot training by creating aircraft cockpits, and so on. A virtual tour through the two small TVs set to the eyes is set to give realization experience of the places and phenomena we wanted to go through in where is-as is condition.

In a state of dysfunction, sitting in closed walls during pandemic, this virtual reality has become a medium for learning, a bridge between people through the technology devices, computers, mobiles, tabs. As we know technology has been blamed and criticized for overusing. Still, we are dependent on VR. And it is challenging to understand how it is correct and effective.

Internet Users in India

India is a country of villages. The roots of many achievements of the developing India's come from many villages. It cannot be denied that the definition of economy and sociality of the country depends on both literacy and technology literacy. According to the Registrar General of India and Census Commissioner's report 68.84% of the population living in rural areas. As the large proportion of the country's population are rural, their Literacy and Digital Literacy also plays a vital role in development. According to a survey by the Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) in November 2019, more than 227 million rural users use the Internet, compared to 205 million in urban

areas. Rural area dominates here. Between March 2019 and November 2019, before the onset of the corona outbreak, rural Internet users had seen a 30 percent rise which is a sign of the country's positive growth.

According to the Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), November 2019 – India having 504 million internet users, 70 per cent of them are active users who are using the Internet daily, while 30 per cent use the Internet at least once a month. But the present survey has found that the COVID 2019 pandemic has significantly increased the number of Internet users and has made users more active on the Internet.

Table 1: Internet Users profile

Active user internet usage profile before COVID-19	
Several times a day	92.2
Once in a day	7.8
Once in a week	-
Once in a month	-
Active user internet usage profile After COVID-19	
Several times a day	96.8
Once in a day	3.2
Once in a week	-
Once in a month	-

Table 1 shows, that the number of Internet users before the onset of the corona virus outbreak was considerable and the number of users using the Internet 'several times a day' was 92.2%. 7.8 percent said they use the Internet only once a day. And no one is opted 'once in a week' or 'once in a month.'

The number of Internet users during Corona virus epidemic is rise to 96.8, and the 3.2% of Internet users opted 'once in a day'. 'Once in a week' or 'once in a month' remained untouched. Before COVID figures, there is an apparent change in the number of people who use the Internet for 'several times in a day'

Table 2: Internet Users profile (in hours)

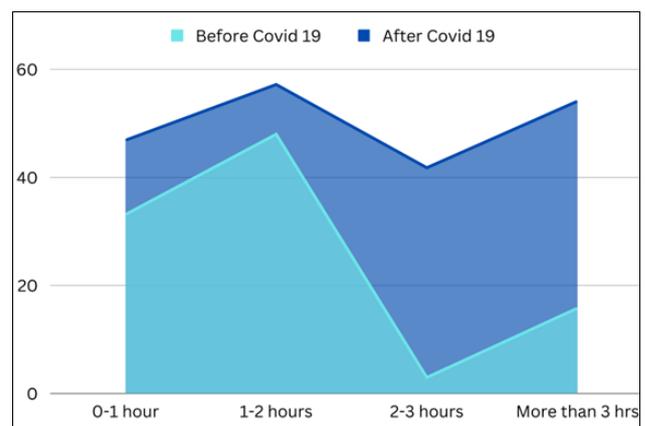| Active user internet usage profile before COVID-19	
0-1 hour	33.3
1-2 hours	48
2-3 hours	3
More than 3 hrs	15.7
Active user internet usage profile After COVID-19	
0-1 hour	13.7
1-2 hours	9.2
2-3 hours	38.8
More than 3 hrs	38.3

Table 2 and Graph shows that the number of hours spent on Internet, before the onset of the corona virus outbreak is, 33.3 percent internet user spent 0-1 hour, 48 percent of the users spent 1-2 hours, 3% 2-3 hours and 15.7 percent of the users spent more than 3 hours before COVID-19.

After COVID-19 the hourly usage of internet got increased. And 0-1 hour decreased to 13.7 percent from 33.3, '1-2 hours' falls to 9.2%, '2-3 hours' used by 38.8 percent and usage of 'more than 3 hours' got significantly increased to 38.3 percent from 15.7 percent.

Most of them are school and college students and rely heavily on the internet for educational reasons. The latter relies heavily on the internet at COVID for social networking and entertainment preference.

Table 3: Acceptability of Virtual Experiences

Virtual Experiences	Online Shopping	Commercial Meeting/ Business Meeting	Formal Education	Family consultation	Health consultation	Online Pooja/ Darshana
Always acceptable	76	92.2	28.2	48	-	-
Occasionally	18	7.8	39	12	14.8	-
Rarely	6	-	8	-	72.3	6.8
Never	-	-	24.8	40	12.9	93.2
	100	100	100	100	100	100

According to the Table 3, Virtual experiences are new and open to new possibilities. Considering VR for Health consultations, they are used only as an option in times of health emergencies as no one is opted for 'Always acceptable' and 14.8 and 72.3 percent respondents said Occasionally and rarely consecutively, and 12.9 percent have said 'never'. 76 percent said e-commerce online shopping was 'Always acceptable', while 18 percent said occasionally, and 6 percent rarely. At a high acceptability, the Business Meeting relationship was found to be Always acceptable to 92.2% of the respondents, while 7.8% said it was acceptable occasionally.

More importantly, in the academic dimension of the debate, 'formal education' is always acceptable to 28.2 percent, 39 percent is occasionally, and 8 percent is rarely acceptable, And 24.8 percent said that it is never acceptable. We here questioned focusing only on 'formal education'. No doubt, informal education is regularly offered by the internet as a way of supporting continuous learning.

India is the land of culture and value systems that are constantly built and continuously passed on by the Family. In the family system presence of everyone matters and they have believed in it. In present study 48% of respondents said that online family consultation is acceptable, while 40% said it is never acceptable, it's a mixed response. While only 12% said it was occasionally acceptable. Here we can say that the thought of being together and the way of having a connection with each other is depending on the thinking process of different generations involved in the family.

Further Regarding to God and religious practices, popular temples such as Mantralaya, Subrahmanyam and Shirdi were offered to offer online Darshana to devotees during COVID which was the need of that crucial hour. When respondent asked the same, 93.2% of people who totally reject spirituality in technology saying they'll never accept it, and 6.8% said they can rarely accept it.

**Table 4:** Effectiveness of Virtual Experiences

Virtual Experiences	Online Shopping	Commercial Meeting/ Business Meeting	Formal Education	Family consultation	Health consultation	Online Pooja/ Darshana
Effective	50	52	-	12	16.1	-
More Effective	16.66	34.64	33.33	33.33	-	-
Less Effective	33.33	13.36	54.22	16.32	68.3	18.2
Not Effective	-	-	12.45	38.35	15.6	81.8
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Online shopping got 50 percent vote as "Effective", 16.66 percent said that its more effective, 33.33 percent opted 'less effective' and obviously no one said that the online shopping is not effective. And so far, online shopping has been cumulatively found to be "Effective" in the effectiveness of virtual experiences.

As per the study, Commercial meetings are 52 percent effective, 34.64 said it is more effective, and 13.36 percent users said it is less effective and no one said 'Not effective'. With regard to formal education 33.33 percent said more effective, 54.22 percent said they were less effective and 12.45% were ineffective.

For family online consultation, the 12 percent user opted 'Effective', more effective is opted by 33.33 percent, 16.32% said 'Less effective' and 38.35% are said to be 'Not effective'. And regarding Health consultation, 16.1% said it

is effective, 68.3 percent said, 'Less effective' and remaining 15.6% respondents said 'Not effective'. With regard to online pooja, Saying 18.2% to 'less effective', and saying 81.8% to 'not effective' respondents partially rejected online worship.

Table 5: Is `COVID-19's virtual possibilities' are acceptable as alternative for the reality.

Options	Percentages
Always acceptable	37.8
Once in a while	16.7
Most of the time	-
Only during emergency	33.3
Never	22.2
Total	100
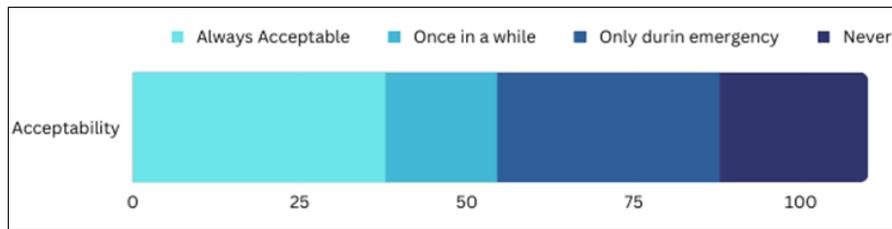
One end COVID pandemic made everyone sitting tied inevitably due to corona and at the other end technology helped to connect one to one as never ever before. Technology being blamed for breaking emotional connection between people only helped to keep connection in the very crucial time, isn't it a irony? The use of any technology is not inevitable unless it is an option for needy reasons. Thus, 37.8 percent think that virtual possibilities can substitute for real life, while only 16.7 percent say that in 'once in a while', 33.3 percent opted 'only during emergencies' and only 22.2 percent believe that virtual possibilities are never an alternative to real life practices.

Conclusion

Technology, or science, is developed only to complement man's growth. We should be wise enough to accept and control over them with an open thoughtful mind. To what extent can advance technology make us happy for beautifying our own face to be a good-looking stranger? The face in the pictures doesn't change in the mirror! Right. Similarly, it is necessary to show intelligence, where and how we are using all the technical possibilities for our own benefit. It is also worth noting that one can enjoy the positive energy in a positive environment only, if one is happy to see the worship of God without the effort by bump in to the mobile screen, then what is the point of gaining positivity? We should understand that it is not about watching, it's about experiencing.

While the fingers of the technology can make us see mother by eye-popping VR, but they didn't give comfort of motherly touch. Even, a lot of tasty food in kitchen doesn't comfort our hungry stomach until we get to eat it. Though it is difficult, however Virtual possibilities can be alternative to real life. But there is the fear of possibility of losing the emotional sensitivities of man. And from the research, we realize that such a fear and concern is most of the internet users concern.

References

1. https://www.marxentlabs.com/what-is-virtual-reality/
2. http://web.tecnico.ulisboa.pt/ist188480/cmul/introduction.html
3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_reality
4. https://www.statista.com/statistics/255146/number-of-internet-users-in-india/
5. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/for-the-first-time-india-has-more-rural-net-users-than-urban/articleshow/75566025.cms
6. https://www.troy.edu/academics/academic-programs/surveying-geomatics-sciences-program.html
7. https://www.troy.edu/about-us/offices-departments/institutional-research-planning-effectiveness/effectiveness/survey-reports.html
8. https://www.iamai.in/KnowledgeCentre
9. http://www.retail4growth.com/viewpoints/post-COVID-19-retail-spaces-poised-to-go-all-in-on-digital-arti-singh-782
10. https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/COVID-19-distancing-gives-real-boom-to-virtual-reality/1965637/
11. https://www.forbes.com/sites/columbiabusinessschool/2020/05/21/how-coronavirus-crisis-will-shape-future-of-virtual-reality/#7422ad155b3f