Public Librarian's Attitude Towards the Use of Mobile Phone Technology in the Hilly Areas of Darjeeling District, West Bengal: A Study

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**ABSTRACT**

The rapid development in the usage of mobile phones and other mobile devices by library professionals has created an ample opportunity for information and knowledge sharing among them. This paper is an attempt to examine the attitude of librarians and library in-charges of government and government sponsored public libraries towards the use of mobile phone technologies in the hilly areas of Darjeeling with respect to their demographic profile, their mobile phone brands, SIM system and mobile phone network, mobile phone functions and their phone usage attitudes. The analysis showed that there are positive attitudes of public librarians towards cellular technologies across this hilly region.

**Key Terms:** Wireless Technology, Mobile Technology, Public Library Services, Darjeeling Hill, Public Librarian's Attitude.

**INTRODUCTION**

The recent advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has revolutionized the way of information sharing among the people. Mobile phone a wireless technology is the product of such development. It provides an opportunity to everyone for better communication and sharing of information bridging the geographical gap and time. It helps people to be reached in any place at any time. There are many different types, styles, and models of mobile phones available on the market today. They range from smart phones to camera phones and multimedia phones to touch screens. Mobile phone manufacturers strive to offer consumers a range of devices and are in a constant competition to compete one another. There are lots of application and features available with this handheld devices and user also can download required application from the internet. There are many advantage of using these cell phone devices. The usage of cell phone has been manifolds day by day. People use this cell phone for various purposes. Younger generation are found more fascinating towards its usage. Today libraries are getting benefitted from the usage of mobile phone technologies. Short Text Messages (SMS), Instant Messages (IMs), transferring other files, photos and library service related data, uploading and downloading library’s information, sending and receiving e-mails and other has become the frequent activities of libraries. Librarians are taking advantage of this handheld technology for collecting and sharing information among their peers and with user community.

**Darjeeling Hills at a Glance**

Darjeeling fondly called “Queen of the Hills” has its own glory as a very beautiful hill station in India having rich biodiversity of international importance. The district consists of a portion of outlying hills of the lower Himalayas and a stretch of territory lying along the base of the hills known as Terai. The altitude ranges from 300 feet (Terai) to 12,000 feet in the hills.

The district of Darjeeling has got a mixed population of Nepalese, Lepchas Bhutias, Bengalese, Marwaris, Biharis and others. The total population of the district according to 2011 census is 18,42,034 of which 9,34,796 are males and 9,07,238 are females. The total literacy of the district is 13,28,218 (Provisional Census of India).

Beside very few evidence of the establishment of libraries like...
Gorkha Jana Pustakalaya at Kurseong in 1913 and Bloomfield Library in Darjeeling Hill in 1944, the modern concept of public library in Darjeeling Hill has its origin during the post independence period along with the growth in education, literacy and publications. At present in Darjeeling Hill areas, there exist three tier library systems, namely District Library, Town/ Sub-divisional Library, and Rural/ Area/ Primary Unit Library. Another one government central library in the district is situated at Kalimpong, which was established in 1961. Now there are altogether 2 government public libraries and 99 government sponsored public libraries functioning in the region. It is seen that more than 57 posts of librarians, assistant librarians, junior library attendant and other posts are lying vacant across the libraries in the hilly areas of Darjeeling since many years. The libraries which do not have any permanent librarian are running the library with contractual untrained staff. So shortage of trained staff has been a vital factor to libraries for providing effective library services to the people of the hill community.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are voluminous literatures on application of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) tools and techniques in libraries and by librarians around the world. On application of mobile technology in library services Bala stress on required infrastructure to provide such services and identify the pros and cons of using this technologies in libraries1. Likewise, Viswakarma et al undertook their study on use of mobile and wireless technology in Indian libraries showed similar type of findings and also explores the real life examples of the libraries that are currently providing high level services by using mobile technology to satisfy the information needs of the people2. They also indicate the importance of mobile learning (m-learning) as a next big wave in education in India. Moreover the literature on public librarian’s attitudes towards the use of mobile technology especially in hilly areas is almost scarce.

**OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of the present study is to assess the general attitudes towards the use of mobile phone technologies by the librarians and library in-charge of government and government sponsored public libraries in the hilly areas of Darjeeling.

**SCOPE**

The study is mainly restricted geographically and focuses on the general attitudes towards the use of mobile phone technologies by the librarians and library in-charge of government and government sponsored public libraries in the hilly areas of Darjeeling District of West Bengal. It covers issues like librarians and library in-charge's demographic profile, their preferred mobile phone functions and their usage behaviours which affect their daily professional lives.

**METHODOLOGY**

Survey method of research has been adopted. First the contact number of most of the librarians and library in-charge were collected. Second a structured questionnaire was prepared which was to be used to collect required data. Then based on the questionnaire ‘question a phone’ program was arranged at suitable time to each and every librarians and library in-charges of government and government sponsored public libraries in the hilly areas of Darjeeling. In addition Short Text Message (SMS) system was also used to gather required information from the respondent. A total of 80 librarians and library in-charges were contacted. Majority of them 64(80%) showed much interest and responded the question asked. Some of them found hesitated which indicates their lower interests about usage of technologies which affect their daily lives though they are using the devices.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

- **Sex wise Distribution of Respondents**

  Table 1: Sex wise Distribution of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>64.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 1 indicates that majority of participant librarians and library in-charge are male member 41(64.06%) followed by 23(35.94%) female members.

- **Age wise Distribution of Respondents**

  Table 2: Age wise Distribution of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 – 25 yrs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 35 yrs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 – 45 yrs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 and above</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table 2 reveals that 11(17.19%) respondents age is between 18-25 yrs, 25(39.06%) are between 26-35 yrs, 16(25%) are between 36-45 yrs and 12(18.75%) respondents are above 46 yrs.

- **Qualification of Respondents**

  Table 3: Qualification of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class X Passed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class XII Passed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Lib Sc</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Lib Sc</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLSc</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLSc</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Professional Qual.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asking about the academic qualification, the table 3 reveals that 10(15.63%) respondents are having class X passed, 8(12.5%) are XII passed, 31(48.43%) are graduate and 9(14.06%) are having post graduate degree. Similarly regarding professional qualification of candidates 16(25%) have Certificate Course in Library Science, 5(7.81%) have Diploma in Library Science, 17(26.56%) have Bachelor Degree in Library & Information Science and 7(10.94%) have Master Degree in Library & Information Science.

- **Brand, SIM System and Networks of Mobile**

The respondents were asked about their usage of some major mobile phone brands, sim system and mobile network operators. The results are shown in table 4. According to it 18(28.13%) respondents claims that they are using Nokia mobile, 15(23.44%) Samsung, 9(14.06%) Micromax, 8(12.5%) Sony, 5(7.81%) Karbon, and 9(14.06%) uses cell phone of other brands. Majority of respondents 36(56.25%) says that their mobile phones have dual sim system, where 28(43.75%) have single sim in their cell.
The respondents were asked to assess their opinions and attitudes towards using mobile phone technology. In the table 6, majority of the respondents 62(96.87%) opined that mobile phone technology is beneficial to the world today. 59(92.18%) respondents indicate their opinion that mobile phone technology is handy and affordable than a landline phone service, 64(100%) of the respondents were strongly agreeing that mobile phone technology increases communication with their family members, relatives and friends, 58(90.62%) says that mobile phone technology increases their official communication with higher authorities, where 54(84.37%) reported that mobile phone technology increases their communication with library users and colleagues. When the respondents were asked to indicate that mobile phone technology increases their personal innovativeness and motivation towards their work, 43(67.18%) of the respondents were strongly agreed to this attitude.

**CONCLUSION**

New technologies has become boon to every aspects of human life. People are getting benefitted with various technological developments. Mobile phone technology have given an opportunity to provide a new generation of people with means of communication and activities without taking into account the place. As cell phone usage grows, the reliance on the technology also increases. Librarians being information professional are using wireless mobile technology as a tool for speedy information communication. Owing to uneven land structure of hilly areas the operation of mobile phone networks also varies. Even a single mobile network does not work everywhere in the hilly areas. Overall, the findings pointed out that there is a highly positive attitude of librarians and library in-charges towards the use of mobile phone technology across this hilly region.

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