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Title: A study of the Malayalee- Qatar Diaspora: Cultural Identity and media consumption

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Abstract

Media plays an important role in the reconstruction of cultural identities of the diaspora and helps negotiate a borderline existence between the home country and the host country. The diasporic identity is constructed through the use of media and the identity that they carried with them to the new host country. The polarities of the physical connection to the place that they currently stay in and the cultural bond that they share with their native nation constantly tug at them. Media helps in maintaining the constancy in the diasporic identity. Accessibility of ethnic media is a way of maintaining the traditional links with their homeland as it serves as a symbolic bond connecting their cultures to their places of origin which is partly imagined and partly experienced. They form communities to revive memories of the past and strive to achieve a closure to their floating lives through their media practices (Shi, 2005).

Media's influence on cultural identity has been studied in various diaspora settings, but, very few pieces of research have focused on the Indian diaspora in other countries, particularly the Malayalees settled in the Gulf countries. This paper aims to examine the media consumption pattern of the Malayalee Diaspora in Qatar, its relation to the cultural identities of the diaspora and the influence of the changing media environment. The study will use a mixed method approach, adopting both survey and in-depth interview for a deeper understanding of the pattern of responses.

Keywords: Diaspora, Malayalee, Cultural Identity, Qatar, media, Kerala, Malayalam, Gulf

Introduction

In recent years, the advancement of communication technology and transportation had led to the international flow of people, information, goods and services, cultures and ideology. This rapid development is a part of the process of globalization (Wolf, 2014). The migration of people in search of better economic prospects has become a global trend. These shifting cultural worlds have put the migrants at the intersection of multiple and conflicting identities. Here, media plays a major role in the reinforcement of their cultural identity. The transnational media have become an integral part of the immigrant population. The rise of the internet and satellite television has enabled cultural flows from periphery countries and made the ethnic media content highly accessible for the diaspora. Transnational movement and new media have broken the control of the state over cultural identity production, challenging the narratives of identity formation (Shi, 2005). These ethnic media contents serve as a symbolic link that connects the diaspora to their homeland. However, the availability of media content differs in different countries based on streaming rights, digital ownership and geo-blocking.

At present, freedom of the press is one of the major issues plaguing many nations across the world. The situation is quite paradoxical even in the most developed of the

countries. Qatar, a country with a high power economy, is no different as its media houses are mostly owned by the ruling family. The media houses practice self-censorship, as they cannot afford to antagonize the ruling class. Qatar also hosts a number of migrants from different countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh as well as from nations belonging to the African and European continents. The media usage of the diaspora varies greatly from that of the Qatari nationalists as aspects like ethnicity, culture, and language has a major role to play in their consumption. As Qatar stands at the 123rd position in the index of freedom of the press (according to Reporters without Borders 2017), it becomes important to analyze and understand the media usage of the diasporic community to connect with their roots back in the home country.

Within the Qatar diaspora community, Indian diaspora constitutes a majority (25%), and Kerala is among the few main states sending migrants to Qatar (Snoy, 2017). According to Kerala migration survey 2011, 90% of Kerala's emigrants are in the Gulf regions (Zachariah & Rajan, 2012), which makes Middle East a hub to the large number of Kerala migrants. Hence, this study examines the media consumption among the diaspora, focusing particularly on the Malayalee diaspora in Qatar as there are extensive and overwhelming amount of studies done on the topic of media consumption and the diaspora. But there are less studies pertaining to Qatar. Also, the Gulf diaspora from the tiny state of Kerala is not keenly analyzed on their media usage. Therefore, this study makes an attempt to understand the use of media among the Malayalee diaspora in Qatar to negotiate their cultural identity in the changing media landscape.

In earlier days, the concept of Diaspora was used in references to the Jewish, Greek and African migrants who were exiled from their homeland (Tsagarousianou, 2004).

But, as time passed by the notion of diaspora incorporated various meanings with the changing nature of migration. According to William Safran (1991), the characteristics of a Diaspora that differentiate themselves from a migrant are, first, they are scattered voluntarily or involuntarily from their homeland, but then they are always connected to their place of origin through memories and imagination. Secondly, they are well aware that they will not be acknowledged by the host society and hence maintain their own identity in the host country. Thirdly, they will return back to their homeland once the atmosphere turns favorable. Fourthly, they also maintain a connection with their country of origin and their ethnic communities living at homeland or in other countries. But, a definition to describe an 'ideal' diaspora will be incomplete as diasporic characteristics are fluid and dynamic (Tsagarousianou, 2004). Hence, the term diaspora coins multitudinous meanings and has been widely used in the context referring to migrants who are living or settled in other countries. Also, by reason of sharing a common ancestry or identities does not qualify diaspora's relation to their homeland. Instead, it becomes necessary for the diaspora to maintain connection with their homeland on their own willingness (Ibid.). As diaspora are dispersed from their natural setting, they are always in constant search of their belonging. They try to build home like experience in the countries they migrate to and live in the memories of the past. There is always a constant struggle of the feeling of inclusion and exclusion in the homeland as well as in the host country.

With the dislocation of people from one place to another the notion of identity comes into question. Identity is a complex term that is still underdeveloped and cannot be defined by a set of rules or characteristics. Identity takes into picture various elements like nationality, language, class, gender, ethnicity, and tradition. According to Hall (1990), in postmodern subjects, the notion of identity is not fixed and is contradictory

in nature. Hence, to maintain a unified identity throughout one's existence becomes just a fantasy, as everyone creates a reassuring story for themselves that suits them the best. This character of change among postmodern subject can be linked to the late modernity phase also known as globalization, which started around the second half of the twentieth century. The globalization process surpasses national boundaries and creates a new space–time compression, where the place cannot be crossed over, but the space can be negotiated through new communication technologies that have dislocated the center of the modern identity (Robins, 1991).

Media play an important role in the reconstruction of cultural identities in the post-modern diaspora and helps to balance their dual identities. Media helps create an identity of who we are and who we are not (Castle, 2000). For the diaspora accessibility of ethnic media serves as a means of preserving the ties with their homeland through stories and images portrayed in the media (Shi, 2005). This was evident from the previous studies on the diaspora's media consumption pattern in various diasporic settings such as Korean migrants in China (Lee, 2004), Chinese migrants in the United States (Shi, 2005), Tamil migrants in Malaysia (Yesudhasan, Prasad & Balraj, 2007), and African migrants living in Antwerp and Ghent (Dekie, Meers, Winkel, Bauwe & Smets, 2015) among others. Immigrants tend to rely more on the ethnic media for their information and entertainment purpose due to language and cultural proximity, which has led to the reinforcement of their cultural identity. Ethnic media also help them to satisfy an 'epistephilic desire' (Naficy, 1993), which is the desire to keep updated about current events, issues, and the mentality of people back home. It provides common reference points to be able to use while socializing with people back home, or with their ethnic community members in the residing country where identities are negotiated, reinforced, or reconstructed.

Drawing from these literatures, this paper tries to examine the media consumption of the Malayalee Diaspora in Qatar that takes into consideration all kinds of media that includes traditional media and new media and its influence on the chosen diaspora as well as an attempt to examine how this diaspora has used the media to maintain a connection with the home country and their cultural identity in the changing media environment. This study also takes into account the gender differences in the media practices of the Malayalee Qatar diaspora.

The Qatar community

Qatar is a small country located in Western Asia, sharing borders with Saudi Arabia. The official language is Arabic and English is considered as the second language due to the large number of the expatriate population. According to the population statistics of 2016 released by the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics Data, the total population of Qatar is 2.6 million, of which 12 percent represents the locals and the rest constitute the expatriates. The sudden flow of migrants was due to the oil related development in the Gulf regions in the mid 1970's that created large employment opportunities for the foreigners. Indian diaspora rank the highest population of expatriate population in Qatar with 25 percent, which is approximately 6 lakhs. There was a massive growth of Indians in Qatar from 28,000 in 1975 to 500,000 in 2012 and finally to 6, 50, 00 in 2016 (Snoy, 2017).

According to Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, the state of Kerala is one among the few states that sends the most people to the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council)

countries. The phenomenon of mass migration of people from Kerala to the GCC countries during 1972 to 1983 is referred to as Gulf boom. The GCC countries became the preferred destination for Keralites due to better economic prospects, geographical proximity, historical ties, and religious identity for Kerala Muslims and lenient selection criteria (Shamnad, 2010). Increased immigration from Kerala is a result of high population density, increased literacy rate, media consumption and constant contact with foreign lands (Koshy, 2012). This has also led to the establishment of a separate department by the Kerala government called The Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA), which looks after the needs of the Kerala migrants. There are about ninety five Indian community organizations affiliated with the Indian Cultural center (ICC) under the backing of Embassy of India in Qatar.

Methodology

This study utilizes the triangulation method that integrates both quantitative (validation) and qualitative (inquiry) data to fully understand the nature of the research problem. It gives more validity and reliability as multiple sources are considered and hence gives a full view of the topic (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). For quantitative research, survey questionnaires were administered to 150 respondents out of which 84 respondents were females and 66 were males.

For qualitative research, open ended in-depth interviews were conducted among 15 participants out of which nine were males and six were females. Each interview lasted for 30-45 minutes and the entire interview were audio recorded using a mobile phone for which the consent of the participant was obtained. The interview was conducted using an interview guide focusing not just on media usage patterns, but also their narratives on their migration experiences, personal and cultural identities. The sample

population consisted of Malayalee diaspora living in Qatar aged 15 and above and who have spent at least one year in Qatar. The respondents from various cities across Qatar were included for collecting data for both quantitative and qualitative research. The respondents belonged to a wide range of occupation, which includes professionals, students, service and sales, clerical, business man, homemakers, drivers, laborers and artists.

Table 1: Interviewee profile

Respondents	Gender	Age	Occupation	Years in Qatar	Immigrant Generation
Ms. A	Female	15	Student	15	2
Mr. B	Male	15	Student	14	2
Ms. C	Female	17	Student	17	2
Ms. D	Female	22	Graduate student	22	2
Mr. E	Male	23	Graduate student	23	2
Ms. F	Female	26	Accountant	16	2
Ms. G	Female	56	Nurse	24	1
Mr. H	Male	62	Homemaker	32	1
Mr. I	Male	45	Engineer	15	1
Mr. J	Male	47	Clerical	20	1
Ms. K	Female	40	Homemaker	17	1
Mr. L	Male	30	Marketing	1	1
Mr. M	Male	25	Technician	1	1
Mr. N	Male	55	Pharmacist	26	1
Mr. P	Male	46	Technician	25	1

Findings

Survey

In the survey, it was revealed that social media was consumed the highest among all the respondents (26%). Followed by consumers of online media (21.26%), television (19.63%), radio (16.04%) and newspaper (15.85%). The least number of users was recorded for magazine consumption (0.9%). The popular social media sites among the respondents were Whataspp (34.9%), Facebook (32.2%) Skype (16.6%), Instagram (8.4%), Twitter (4.9%), Snapchat (2.2%) and IMO (0.5%).

Gender was another factor that influenced the media usage of the respondents. The choice over the media content differed among the males and female respondents. Social media was the most consumed media among males and females and there was no noticeable difference in the usage between females (98%) and males (97%). Similarly, television consumption saw more or less the same result among females (73.8%) and males (71.2%), with females slightly greater than that of males. On the other hand, males overtook females in the consumption of online media (M=81.8%, F=76.2%), radio (M=74.2%, F=47.6%) and newspaper (M=63.6%, F=54.7%). The most striking feature is that females were the only users of magazine (5.95%). While, in terms of media content it was observed that men watched the news (M=98.4%, F=84.5%) and sports (M=66.7%, F=41.7%) related content while, women preferred films & dramas (F=88.1%, M=75.6%), music (F=85.7%, M=77.3%) and comedy (F=75%, M=66.7%)

Eminently, more than half of the sample population (64%) knew three languages which include Malayalam, English and Hindi. Only 2% of them knew just one language, Malayalam. While, 15% of them knew both Malayalam and English, and

18.7% of them knew Arabic in addition to all of the above languages. This is reflected in their preference of media usage as well. The language preferred by most of the respondents for media usage was Malayalam (18.7%). Followed by, English (11.3%) and Hindi (0.7%). Arabic was the least used language for media consumption (0.7%). Table 2, 3, 4 and 5 reveals the availability and the consumption of a vast variety of Malayalam and other language media by the Malayalee diaspora in Qatar.

Table 2: Frequently read Newspapers

Newspapers	Percentage
Gulf Times	41.8
Malayalam Manorama	32.7
The Peninsula	10.65
Mathrubhumi	5
Madhyamam	2.45
Qatar Tribune	2.45
Others	4.95

Table 3: Frequently tuned radio stations

Radio stations	Percentage
Asianet radio 657AM	48.5
Pravasi Bharati 810 AM	21.2
Qatar Broadcasting Service 97.5FM	14.4
Voice of Kerala 1152AM	6.1
Gold FM 101.3FM	3.8
Radio Asia 1269 AM	3
Others	3

Table 4: Frequently watched Television channels

TV channels	Percentage
Asianet Middle East	25.3
Asianet News	16.6
Manorama news	11.2
Kairali	9.29
Mazhavil Manorama	9
Starplus	6.4
Others	22.21

Table 5: Frequently visited websites

Websites	Percentage
YouTube	40.3
Manoramaonline	13.4
Hotstar	10.2
Mathrubhumi	3
Doha News	3
Espncricinfo	2
Others	28.1

News (90.6%) was the most sought-after media content among the respondents. They were keen to be updated about the events and issues around them. Apart from news, films & dramas (83%) and music (82%) content were preferred the most. Followed by, comedy (71.3%) and sports (52.6%) content.

With the dominance of ethnic media in the daily lives of our respondents, there is a need to identify the influence of the media on their cultural identity. By measuring the reaction of the survey respondents on their perception of the influence of ethnic media on their cultural identity it was found that, three fourth (75.4%) of the total

respondents agreed to the fact that the ethnic media helped them in knowing their cultural identity. While, the remaining, 19.3% respondents gave a neutral response and 5% of respondents disagreed with it.

Through the survey, it was found that the diaspora members stayed connected with their homeland through interpersonal communication. A constant connectivity is maintained through phone calls to their family and friends in India. It was found that the majority of the respondents called their friends and family on a daily (71.3%) or weekly basis (23.3%). This portrays their desire to maintain ties with their homeland. It was revealed that 62% of the respondents were part of their virtual family group on social media. Apart from it, 44.7% of the respondents were part of the various Indian community organizations in Qatar which include college alumni groups, professional groups, religious groups and cultural centers. Also, the majority of their friends in Qatar were Indians (54.7%). Only a few had friends who were foreigners (10%) and locals (1.3%) as their major contacts.

When asked if the respondents wanted to keep in touch with their homeland, the majority of the respondents agreed (95.3%), while, 4.7 % disagreed with it. Among the ones who agreed, the main reason was to stay connected with their families and friends back home. The second important reason was that they were born and raised in India. Other reasons included, to keep up the memory of their homeland and to keep in touch with their country of origin. Whereas, among the ones who disagreed, lack of interest and time were the key reasons to stay disconnected from their homeland.

From the survey, it was revealed that Malayalee diaspora used multiple media in their daily lives. They used phone calls and social media platforms to stay connected with

their families and friends back at home. They also accessed a wide variety of Malayalam media content on a daily basis and were part of various Indian community organizations. Moreover, the respondents expressed their desire to maintain a connection with their homeland and agreed to the fact that ethnic media influenced their cultural identity

In-depth interview

New media like online and social media were majorly consumed by the respondents, while social media saw the highest number of users. The heavy use of social and online media by respondents could be explained by,

“As my job involves a lot of travelling, I do not get much time to sit and read a physical newspaper. So, I prefer mobile apps like Daily Hunt for reading the news, which categorizes news, according to my taste and preference based on region, content and language.” (Respondent L)

“Checking Facebook and Whatsapp have become my daily routine. As soon as I wake up in the morning the first thing I do is check my phone for messages on Whatsapp and scroll through the news feeds on Facebook for the latest update. Through social media I keep update on the latest trends and happenings in the world around.” (Respondent M)

The ease of accessibility (on various devices, infrastructure) and convenience (time, space, freedom of choice) of using new media made new media popular among the respondents. Anonymity and privacy feature of the new media platforms was another factor pointed out by the respondents as a reason for their usage of this medium.

It was found that younger people spend more time on social media compared to the older generation. The popularity of social media among youth explains the difference

between generational uses, since older generation is less likely to be using social media compared to the younger generations. Youth tend to be more tech savvy and are exposed to new media platforms from a young age. Peer group influence was another major attracting factor for youth to engage in social media, and also texting have become a means of communication for the Millennials. In spite of the popularity of social media among the respondents, there was one respondent (C) who expressed her disinterest in being on social media because she considers it as a waste of time. The transition of newspaper, magazine, television, radio to online media has made consumers shift to the online platform for reading newspaper or watching television shows as it is more convenient and cost efficient. But, persistence of traditional media usage habits was still evident among the respondents due to the unique nature of the particular media, habitual practice and familiarity with using those media. The increase in media options has led the respondents to multitask between different media in their daily lives.

The difference in the language preference was noted among the old and young generation respondents from the interview. English and Malayalam media were simultaneously consumed by the members of the younger generation. Whereas, the older generation preferred watching Malayalam media compared to other language media. The older generation used English media, mainly at the professional front and for online surfing as there is less availability of Malayalam language websites online. The majority of the respondents mentioned that they consumed more of Malayalam media than other media when it comes to entertainment purpose. Only one young respondent (E) expressed his lack of interest in consuming Malayalam media due to his lack of verbal fluency in Malayalam and its non-purposive usage.

Respondents G and H on their media preference,

“I usually watch Malayalam media because it is in my mother tongue, and I find it easy to understand and relate to, which helps me relax while watching the program.”

(Respondent G)

“I generally watch or listen to news on Malayalam television channels or radio as it keeps me informed with the current happenings in Kerala, India, Qatar and worldwide. These channels also have a special bulletin dedicated exclusively to Gulf news in the evening. Hence, I do not find the need to depend on other media for news. I like to keep abreast of things happening in my native because it keeps me connected with my parents, friends and the place I grew up. ” (Respondent H)

“I consume both Malayalam and English media, sometimes even Hindi. I choose the language based on the content.” (Respondent B)

For the respondents, familiarity with the language, cultural proximity, program quality and content are the driving force for choosing the media. The need for ethnic media was also mentioned by the respondents as to keep up to date on the daily happenings in their homeland and to connect with their families and friends back home. Ethnic media served as a tool to initiate or engage in a conversation among their ethnic community members in Qatar and at homeland. The respondents also pointed out that the ethnic media covered issues and news concerning the Gulf diaspora, as various ethnic media vehicles carried specially designed content exclusively for the Gulf audience. Respondents were also found to be diverse in their language choice for media usage, which portrays the multi-linguistic characteristic of the Malayalee diaspora.

The lack of proficiency in Arabic is another factor that is evident from the interviews which is reflected in the respondent’s media choice. Hence, this aspect may pose a

hindrance to the Malayalee diaspora in engaging with the local community or for consuming the local media of the host country which eventually can lead to a lack of social integration with the host society. But then, Qatar being a multicultural society with the migrant population dominating the locals, English has become a second language which seems sufficient to excel at work front. From the interview, it was evident that the majority of them expressed their disinterest towards learning Arabic and also felt that Arabic would not make any difference in their socialization practices or in their media usage.

“I know some spoken Arabic, which helps me in my job front. But, I don't think Arabic will help me interact more with the locals or form a cultural bond with them because there is no platform to interact with them. May be it might help me to mingle with Arabs from other countries. Now, as the young Qataris know English, you can speak to them in English.” (Respondent N)

The lack of opportunity for interaction between the locals and the expatriates raises the issue of disparity existing in the Qatar society. According to the respondents, discrimination on the grounds of skin colour, wage disparity and country of origin (favoritism of locals towards Western expats than Asians) was quite evident in the Qatar society. However, inspite of wage disparity or racial discrimination, all the respondents were largely happy with their stay in Qatar because they could earn better wages and had a better standard of living and comfort than back home.

We find that there is a perceptual difference between the first and the second generation migrants on their cultural identity. As for the first generation migrants, cultural identity had become a part of their lifestyle because they spent their growing years in India and was exposed constantly to their ethnic culture. Whereas, for the

second generation migrants cultural identity was largely influenced by their parents. But, both of them agreed to the fact that the media does reinforce the cultural identity in them either through getting to know about the people and cultures ,being in touch with their dear ones back home, reliving their past or keeping updated on current events at their native. Hence, ethnic media act like a symbolic representation of a cultural product that reinforces ones cultural identity. From the narratives of the respondents F and K,

“Through Malayalam shows and programs I got to know about my native especially the way people speak, dress, the food they eat, customs and rituals. This has helped me to feel less like a stranger whenever I visit my native. But, more than the media, it is my parents who instilled the values of my cultural identity. Moreover, I studied in an Indian school where I learned Indian history, politics, and geography. Also, I took Malayalam as my second language at school, because my parents were strict about me learning my mother tongue.” (Respondent F)

“Ethnic media did not help me to know about my cultural identity because I was already exposed to my culture as I grew up in Kerala. But, ethnic media did help me to stay informed about what is happening in my native which gives me a kind of reassurance that I am still connected with that place. Sometimes some things that come up in the media remind me of my past. It also helps me stay in touch with my family and friends back home.” (Respondent K)

The constant interaction with ethnic community members and participation in cultural activities has fostered the cultural identity of the respondents. Socialization agents like being part of the community forums, studying in Indian educational institutes,

visiting homeland, celebrating ethnic festivals enabled them to be in constant touch with their cultural identity.

“We celebrate Onam in Qatar similar to that of Kerala. We prepare a variety of Onam dishes, wear traditional saree, put pookalam (flower carpet) and perform traditional dances. The celebrations happen at home and also in Malayalee forums. These celebrations are fun and it gives you a feeling of being a Keralite and living the experience like old times.” (Respondent I)

Majority of the respondents expressed their eagerness to maintain contact with their homeland, because their families and friends were back at homeland and to keep alive the memories of the place they grew up. They also expressed strong consciousness of patriotism and raised the concern of their temporary residential status in Qatar that creates insecurity in their stay.

“Where ever I am be it any part of the world, I always want to keep in touch with my native because it is the place I grew up and I have a special feeling towards it. Also, my parents, relatives and friends stay there which keeps me more connected to my native.” (Respondent N)

“As a kid, I grew up as an Indian and I know India is my homeland. It is the place I belong because my stay in Qatar is always temporary. Also, once my parents retire from their job we will settle in India.” (Respondent A)

Among them, one of them disagreed with the notion of keeping in touch with his homeland and the influence of media on his cultural identity. According to him,

“I don’t feel connected to my homeland because I grew up in Qatar and spent my twenty three years here. Also, I am not very fond of keeping in touch with my cousins

or relatives there. But, cultural identity is something that is ingrained in me because of the influence of my parents and media has not aided this in anyway.” (Respondent E)

It shows that media use has little to do with their identity as a Malayalee. On the other hand, respondent (D) argued that preserving one’s cultural roots are necessary to create an identity marker for oneself in the global world.

“I think one should preserve one’s roots and cultural identity because it gives us an identity. Wherever you go, people recognize you with your cultural identity, in spite of you being a global citizen or not. I do not want to look like a lost person; instead I like to belong somewhere. Hence, being an Indian gives me an identity among other nationalities.” (Respondent D)

Therefore, from the in-depth interview it was revealed that Malayalee diaspora used the media to keep in touch with their family and friends back home and with the daily happenings at their native which helped them to feel more connected to their homeland and to revive the memories of the past (Shi, 2005; Lee, K & Lee, J., 2014). For the second generation diaspora, the ethnic media gave them an exposure to their homeland and its culture through stories and images. It taught them their language, traditions, customs, rituals, history, politics and landscape of their homeland. Further, the cultural identity of the diaspora was nurtured through their interaction with their ethnic community members in Qatar through various socialization agents like community forums, religious groups or educational institutes.

Discussion

The stay of the Malayalee Diaspora in Qatar is temporary due to the non-naturalization policy of migrants or their offspring’s born in Qatar. This uncertainty in their duration of stay can cause a lot of anxiety in them of their future. They are

people who are uprooted from their homeland to a foreign nation in search of a better livelihood. The displacement from one place to another can create instability in their life, which makes them long for an ideal home where they could finally settle down to bring a closure to their floating lives (Shi, 2005). In their search for a stable identity or meaning to their selves, comes the role of media that helps them to create a sense of belonging (Hall, 1990). Media helps them to sustain a change in their drifting selves, as it creates a point of reference. It acts as a source of reassurance by reproducing the familiar images that create a sense of belonging to their homeland. The transnationality of Malayalee diaspora's everyday existence is reflected in the extravagant media utilization of the respondents. The rise of the internet has changed the way in which the media is used and experienced. According to Zhu (2001), sooner all the households will adopt the Internet as it is capable of replacing other media technologies. This shift in the usage of media can be attributed to the digital convergence of technology, which fused telephone, radio, print into a single platform. 'Platform mobility' of the digital technology gives the user the liberty to choose to watch the media at their convenience (Holt and Sanson, 2014). The ease in the use of online media made the Malayalee diaspora adopt online media for their daily media purpose. This was evident through their consumption of reading online newspaper and watching television shows on the digital platform. With smartphones and computers, media has encroached into one's personal space and has led to a personalized media environment. It was found that social media had the highest number of users among our respondents. Among which, the respondents of the younger generation were found to be more on social media than the older generation as they are more tech savvy and are drawn towards it through peer pressure. With social media, the Malayalee diaspora are part of various virtual family groups which

have increased the connectivity of the Malayalee diaspora with their homeland. Furthermore, Qatar has 93% of internet penetration among its population and 77% of mobile broadband subscription, which is a clear indication that people in Qatar have access to Internet facilities which aids in the greater usage of new media platforms (Middle East Report, 2016). While, traditional media like newspaper, magazine and television still had a significant number of users among the Malayalee diaspora. The presence of seven Malayalam newspaper houses and the availability of several Malayalam radio stations in Qatar signifies the popularity of these media among the Malayalee diaspora in Qatar.

It was found that there was a modest difference in the media content preference among the male and female respondents. It showed that male's preferred more of news and sports related content, whereas the females preferred films & dramas, music and comedy. The similar difference in media content usage was also visible in the study among the Korean-Chinese diaspora (Lee, K. & Lee, J, 2014) and Chinese-American diaspora (Shi, 2005). It also revealed that males overtook females in the consumption of online media, radio, and newspaper. Whereas, social media and television portrayed a similar usage pattern among the both the genders. Notably, females were the only users of the magazine.

The usage of Malayalam media was found to be higher among the Malayalee diaspora. English was the second most consumed media followed by Hindi media. The younger generation used both Malayalam and English media to balance their identity and felt the need to negotiate their identity to succeed in both environments. Whereas, the older generation preferred Malayalam media due to the language familiarity and cultural proximity. It also helped them to stay more connected with

their homeland. The usage of multiple language media in their daily lives signifies the multi-linguistic characteristic of the Malayalee diaspora.

The large consumption of ethnic media by the diaspora was found across various diasporic settings (Lee, K. & Lee, J, 2014; Shi, 2005 & Georgiou, 2013) which convey that ethnic media helped the diaspora to negotiate their cultural identity in a foreign soil. Ethnic media was used as a tool to address the issues that concern them, develop a strong sense of identity and community cohesion among its members (Shi, 2005). With the wide access of Malayalam media in Qatar, it shows the significance of the Malayalee diaspora in Qatar society. Malayalam media serve as a cultural product that form a symbolic representation of their culture through which Malayalee diaspora are exposed to their cultural identity. Cultural identity in the media is portrayed through the means of language, landscape, customs and rituals, traditions, dressing and food. News was the most preferred content among the respondents. They expressed their desire to stay updated about daily events that happens in their homeland, in Qatar and worldwide. The multi directional gazes of media consumption can be related to what Sreberny (2002) said, where a person looks inward into one's local context, backward into one's homeland and an all-round examination in a global context, where each of these processes are interwoven with each other and helps negotiate their cultural identity. Consuming news and staying updated with the happenings at homeland made them feel more connected and closer to home. It also provided a reference for socialization purpose with their ethnic community members back home and in Qatar society. Apart from news content, films and music were also favored by the Malayalee diaspora.

Through socialization rituals an individual interacts with other members of their ethnic group that led them to internalize the values, beliefs and traditions of one's

culture (Berger, 2007). For example, socializing rituals like a national day parade, school pledge, and national anthem gives a sense of unity among its members. Among Malayalee diaspora in Qatar, socialization rituals involved being part of the community organizations and religious groups which helped them to be in touch with their ethnic community members. They also kept a strong interpersonal relation with their family and friends at home as they contacted them on a daily or weekly basis through phone calls. For the second generation migrants besides socialization, parent's played a key role in influencing their identity. Through positive parental mediation children learned about their culture by speaking Malayalam at home, studying in Indian educational institutes, visiting their native during holidays, celebrating ethnic festivals and also through parent's media viewing habits. It was found that if the first generation migrants preserve the cultural identity, their offspring's may follow it (Ari, 2012).

As some researchers urge that the world may become one through cultural homogenization of mass media, but this research shows a lot of cultural pluralism among people in spite of the growth of the media. In fact, each ethnic group retains their individual identity, while being a part of something bigger than itself (Berger, 2007). Cultural identity is a nationally shared concept which exists in spite of the cultural homogenization of the mass media. For third world countries, it is a struggle to retain their cultural identity against the homogenizing effect of the western media. This study also reflects the shift in power relations as third world countries play an increasing part in share of control over global communication, which is evident through the availability of the vast variety of Malayalam media in Qatar and the usage of Malayalam media among the Malayalee diaspora. This inturn will ensure that

distinctive feature of the third world will be retained despite the homogenizing of cultural identity.

In the modern world, cultural identities are linked to the national cultures into which one is born. Though, he or she may not carry those genes, we are made to believe it is a part of our essential being. A man without a nationality cannot be imagined in the present time. It is a must that a person should belong to someplace (Gellner, 1983). Hence, identity is constructed along with national identity which we are supposed to be born with and it lingers as our source of representation to the other person. This aspect of nationality as a source of identity was evident among the respondents to gain a unique position in a diverse society.

Issues such as racial discrimination and wage disparity were prevalent in Qatar society. This subject of inequality was also raised by the Indian diaspora in Dubai (Vora, 2008). The lack of interaction with the host society by the Malayalee diaspora was evident from the study due to language barrier, differences in social status (created due to Kafala system, where the locals retain their superiority over the foreigners by imposing various restrictions through sponsorship) and the absence of common social sphere to interact. But, inspite of this Malayalee diaspora were happy with their stay in Qatar because they earn a better living and have a good standard of living.

Malayalee diaspora preserved their cultural identity through media practices that kept them in touch with the latest happenings in their homeland and with their families back home. They also engaged in social interactions with their ethnic community which helped them to maintain their cultural identity in a foreign country. Hence, it was concluded that the cultural identity of the Malayalee diaspora is negotiated

through their media practices and exposure to various cultural products and socialization agents.

Conclusion

The introduction of new media technology into the media landscape of the 21st century brought severe transformations into people's social life. Today, we consume a multitude of media every day. The internet has become an integral part of our lives and serves as a great tool for multifarious functions. The growth of the internet and satellite television has improved the connectivity of the Malayalee diaspora with their homeland. The ease in the access to Malayalam media in Qatar has made its consumption popular among the Malayalee diaspora. The study revealed that majority of the respondent's preferred watching Malayalam media due to language and cultural familiarity. Malayalam media was used as a means to stay updated on current events and issues back home that satisfied their 'epistemic desire' (Naficy, 1993). It helped them relive the memories of their past and served as a reference point for socialization with their ethnic community members back home and in Qatar. Apart from it, Malayalam media provided a platform for the ethnic community to express themselves and seek information. News was the most favored media content among the Malayalee diaspora. They watched news pertaining to their homeland, local context and global context to negotiate their multiple identities. Malayalee diaspora was found to be multi-linguistic in their media consumption as they consumed English and Hindi media apart from Malayalam media. Through their media practices the Malayalee diaspora tries to balance between the cultures of the country they came from and of the country they are staying at present. At the same time, socialization agents like community organizations, religious groups, and Indian educational institutions provided a space for the Malayalee diaspora in Qatar to interact with other

members of their ethnicity which aided in maintaining their cultural identity. The preservation of cultural identity was also a strategic identity formation as it gave them a unique position in a diverse country. Interestingly, inspite of the lack of press freedom and an authoritarian rule in Qatar, the Malayalee diaspora seems to fulfill their media requirements and preserve their cultural identity in a multicultural society. The gender difference in media content preference and media usage was also evident in the study. Males preferred news and sports content, while females preferred films & dramas, music and comedy. Whereas, in terms of media usage males overtook females in the consumption of online media, radio, and newspaper. While, social media and television portrayed a similar usage pattern among the both the genders. Also, females were the only consumers of magazine.

Hence, through the study it was revealed that ethnic media served as a symbolic tool that aided in the reinforcement of cultural identity among the Malayalee diaspora through stories and images. This reinforcement was further nurtured by socialization agents and positive parental meditation, especially for the second generation migrants who have no direct contact with their homeland. Media also facilitated in increased connectivity with the diaspora community's homeland. Future studies should further investigate the potential of Malayalam media consumption and political activism among the Malayalee diaspora in Qatar. The influence of religion on media usage and cultural identity of the Malayalee diaspora can be further probed More detailed study of the second generation of the Malayalee diasporas' media consumption may help with a deeper understanding of the impact of media use and formation of cultural identities in a diaspora populace who have no connect with their home country other than through the media.

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