CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The advent of new information and communication technologies has translated the dream of ‘global village’ into a reality. The new communication and information technologies have brought about the death of distance and facilitated meaningful interactive cum participatory communication all over the world. The emergence of Internet replaced the one to many model of traditional mass communication with the possibility of many to many web of communication. Internet is also one of the major tools of interactive communication in modern society. Interactivity has become a key term for number of new media use options evolving from the rapid dissemination of Internet access point, the digitalization of the media and media convergence. Many researchers have studied the role of Internet in modern society which has brought about connectedness. The present study evaluates the uses and gratification of Internet among the college students with special reference to Karnataka State. The salient features of the study namely - evolution of Internet, utility of Internet in modern society, uses and gratification framework and approach, three ages of Internet research, social significance of the study, statement of the problem and objectives of the study are furnished in this chapter.

1.2 Evolution of Internet

The Internet is a massive network of communication which has changed the way citizens around the world live, learn work and communicate. The Internet is also known as the ‘NET’ which is a network of networks of computer databases and information services. Internet is also known as the world without bars-neither of time, space nor language. The worldwide reach and connection of Internet to any type of computer have broken the boundaries of communication.

An online popular encyclopedia from the Internet, Wikipedia explains: “The Internet is a worldwide, publicly accessible series of interconnected computer networks that transmit data by packet switching using the standard Internet Protocol (IP). It is a ‘network of networks’ that consists of millions of smaller domestic, academic, business, and government networks, which together carry various
information and services, such as electronic mail, online chat, file transfer, and the interlinked web pages and other resources of the *World Wide Web (WWW)*”.

According to DiMaggio, Hargittain, Neuman, and Robinson (2001:71) the Internet is defined as the ‘electronic network of networks’ that links people and information through computers and other digital devices allowing person-to-person communication and information retrieval.’ The advent of the computer and the Internet has brought a whole new world in terms of gathering, disseminating, creating, and criticizing information and communicating with people. The multimedia available over the Internet is surprisingly varied. The Internet is the latest revolution in communication technology.

In the present times, Internet access is on the rise all over the world. Internet brings a large quantity of comprehensive information to public domain. Academic life involves using computers with Internet. Students use Internet to gain more comprehensive information. It is the vital link for quick reference for researchers as well as for all. Internet’s use could be optimized to get the best for students. Internet basically utilizes the convergence of computers and communication technologies. Both these technologies are making strides since 1970’s in an unprecedented way.

The World Wide Web being part of Internet was a project conceived in 1989 at the CERN high-energy laboratory in Europe. In 1991 the Internet was released to public. The formal birth of Internet was registered, when Internet society was chartered in 1992. The goal was to allow scientists and employees around the world to conveniently share research and ideas. Of course the World Wide Web has evolved into something much more than a research tool. With the introduction of graphical web browsers, it has become a communication medium for much wider, global audience. Undoubtedly, it is one of the most important developments in the history of the human communication, as important as the invention of Gutenberg’s Printing Press.

The Internet became popular in the early 1990s. The United States is the motherland of Internet revolution. The Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) played a major role in the creation of Information Processing Technology Office (IPTO) which had networked country-wide radar systems together for the first time. Leonard Kleinrock, Licklider and other scientists conducted monumental research in the field of Internet.
The CERN, a pan European organization for particle research publicized the World Wide Web project in 1991. It was invented by English scientist Tim Bernes Lee in 1989. It was eventually replaced in popularity by the Mosaic web browser. In about one decade, the Internet successfully accommodated the majority of previously existing public computer networks. During the 1990s, Internet grew by 100 percent. The information and computer scientists described the Internet as a ‘prime example of a large-scale, highly engineered, yet highly complex system, according to Wikipedia (2011:304).

India has emerged as an information super power in the world. It continues to be one of the fastest growing major telecom markets in the world. The Government of India have brought about sweeping reforms over the last two decades. The state-owned Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) launched Internet services in India in 1995. In November 1998, the Government ended VSNL’s monopoly and privitised the Internet services in India. There are about 200 operational ISPs in the country according to the latest statistics. According to the Internet and Mobile Association of India, the low cost of broadband has facilitated the increased Internet use in the country.

Despite the large number of providers, 10% of the ISPs have 90% of the subscribers. The state owned BSNL and MTNL have grown rapidly to hold first and second place in terms of subscribers. The remarkable expansion of cyber cafes has played a crucial role in fuelling Internet revolution in India. There are about 60% of users who regularly access the Internet via the country’s more than 10,000 cyber cafes. The number of broadband subscribers is also remarkably increasing in the country according to Broadband Market Services (2011:35).

1.3 Utility of Internet in Modern Society

As of now, many people log on the web and search for information instead of going to the newspaper or television to get information. As the number of people who use the Internet is growing, most people now accept that Internet as a revolutionary new medium that has changed the life styles remarkably. The Internet has several distinctive features. First, the Internet is an active and interactive medium. In other words, the Internet is a two way medium. The person who uses the Internet is called as the ‘user’, not a viewer or listener. ‘User’ suggests activeness and controllability. Internet users can create information by themselves or actively search and reach the
information on the web. Further, people evaluate the given information and set forth their view so that other people can see them.

Interaction with other users is another feature of the Internet. Opinions and views flow freely on the web. Even though television viewers can watch television actively by means of choosing a channel, television watching is still a passive activity when compared to Internet use. Internet has proved to be one of the most innovative inventions for the mankind. It has made its presence felt in every sphere of human life, be it economy, society, health care, spirituality, etc. Prominent among its benefits is the impact it has had on the education sector. Students can now gain access to innumerable research papers, apart from getting latest updates in various fields of interest.

Internet has created new challenges for the society and most threatening among these is the impact it has had on the young generation of users including the children, adolescents and youth. Internet addiction has been recognized as a disorder in many countries, and rehabilitation centers have been created to help people to get over it. According to the empirical evidence, a large proportion of Internet addicts are youngsters, who are extremely vulnerable to its ill-effects. There are several advantages and disadvantages of Internet.

In reality, the Internet exists within a natural world where everything is transparent. Researchers have considered Internet as a sprawling global city that never sleeps. The Internet allows greater flexibility in working hours and location, especially with the spread unmetered high-speed connections and web applications. The Internet can now be accessed almost anywhere by numerous means, especially through mobile Internet devices. The Internet is the fastest way to spread information to a vast number of people simultaneously across the globe. The low cost and nearly instantaneous sharing of ideas, knowledge and skills has made collaborative work dramatically easier, with the help of collaborative software. Mobile phones, data cards, handheld game consoles and cellular routers allow users to connect to the Internet from anywhere.

The Internet allows the computer users to remotely access other computers and information stores easily, wherever they may be across the world. There are innovative ways and means of Internet browsing. E-mail is an important communications service available on the Internet. The Internet e-mail can be sent or
received irrespective of the space and time by the modern Internet users. The Internet telephony is another common communications service made possible by the creation of the Internet. The Voice-over-Internet Protocol is free of cost especially over long distances. File sharing is an example of transferring large amounts of data across the Internet. A computer file can be uploaded to the website and downloaded by the users.

The webcams are viewed as even lower-budget extension of video phenomenon. Video chat rooms and video conferencing are also popular with many users being found for personal webcams. “There are no official censors, no bosses, no board of directors, no stock holders and other constraints of Internet browsing”, according to Leon and Leon (2005:167). The rise of new media including the Internet has increased the communication between people all over the world. The Internet has enabled the people to express themselves through blogs, websites, pictures and other user-generated media. The evolution of Internet has brought about the globalization of education, business, management, development and other processes. The Internet culture has explored unknown paths and has led to overall development of the mankind. The Internet technology has also enhanced the information access and utility to various sections of the society.

Kubey (2000:155) observes: “The Internet as new media technology may enhance and help our lives or do harmful things to people. The Internet now is becoming an important research topic in various fields, including communication, sociology, psychology, public health, political science, education, computer science and so on. Studies about the Internet started from investigating who had Internet access. Researchers then moved to investigate actual Internet use, including how much time people spend on the Internet and what they are doing. The Internet is a global, liberally available series of interconnected information sources with the aid of computer networks that transmit data in the form of video, audio, images, text, computer program files, or in other formats”.

It is amusing to use Internet for trade, education, communication, advertising and entertainment. Services like electronic mail, online chat, forums, blogs, transfer of content (data or programs), and the interlinked web pages between millions of smaller domestic, professional, academic, religious, entertainment, business, medical, political and government servers benefits the user. Internet opens new opportunities for users by bringing down the barriers of distance, time and cost. It is one medium where one
can stay anonymous, or be faceless, voiceless, and still communicate with text or graphic representation. One can have control over how much or how little one would reveal about themselves as communicators through the Internet.

1.4 Uses and gratification Framework and Approach

The role of various communications media has been widely discussed and debated all over the globe by several communication researchers and scientists. Researchers conducted the uses and gratification research in the field of mass communication and journalism in 1940s. They perceived that it is basically an audience-centric multi-dimensional concept. They have developed all-inclusive typological constructs to assess the gratification users seek and obtain from various communications media, their contents and their services. The relationship between media gratification and the socio-psychological variables of media users were investigated in several studies by the past generation of researchers. The uses and gratification research primarily dealt with modern media of communication namely print, film, radio and television. The researchers also included the new media access, services and advantages for their scientific evaluation of uses and gratification of the communications media including the Internet.

Elihu Katz (1959:137) conducted the scientific evaluation of media effects and developed a new theory on the uses and gratification which explains the various psychological and social needs that define the way audience use the media and the gratification they derive. In contrast to traditional media effect’s theories which assumed audiences as homogeneous and focused on ‘what media do to the people’, the uses and gratification approach is primarily concerned with ‘what people do with media’. According to Katz (1959:137), the uses and gratification approach is a theoretical tradition that spans over seventy years. It places emphasis on audience decision making and fits into the category of limited effects theories. This theory has been considered as a welcome addition to the earlier direct effects models by examining what people do with the media rather than what the media do to people.

This was popularly known as the ‘Uses and Gratification Approach’ when the researcher came up with the notion that people use the media to their benefit. The perspective emerged in the early 1970’s as Katz and his two colleagues Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch continued to expand the idea. This theory was branded as the contemporary theory on uses and gratification of media since it contradicted older
views which revealed that the audiences constituted a passive group. The uses and gratification approach views the audiences as active seekers of information, education and entertainment from the media.

Uses and gratification Theory is a popular approach to understanding the process, utility and effects of mass communication. The uses and gratification theory follows a basic model which is based on the audience-centered approach. It states that the audiences actively seek certain services from the media in order to gratify their specific needs which are related to their life and mission. Social situations and psychological characteristics motivate the need for media access and utility. This expectation leads one to be exposed to media that would seemingly fit into the expectations, leading to an ultimate gratification. The uses and gratification research is based on the assumption that individual needs are satisfied by audience members actively seeking out from the mass media.

The researchers in this field of communication find problems with the scope of the research and call uses and gratification an umbrella concept in which several theories reside. They have also argued that researchers have tried to do too much and should limit the scope and take a cultural-empirical approach to how people choose from the abundance of cultural products available. The theory pays too much attention to the individual and does not look at the social context and the role the media plays in that social context. The audience research based on uses and gratification research has been too compartmentalized within certain cultures and demographic groups.

The uses and gratification theory is a basic extension of the definition of an attitude, which is a non-linear cluster of beliefs, evaluations, and perceptions. These beliefs, evaluations, and perceptions give individuals latitude over how they employ media in their lives; in other words, how individuals filter, interpret, and convey to others the information received from a medium. The efforts in seeking answers to this question came to be known as the functionalistic approach to uses and gratification with reference to media of communication. The researchers have also identified three phases in the evolution of uses and gratification approach in the field of communication. The first phase spanning through 1940s focused primarily on descriptions of audience’s uses and purposes for choosing the media. The researchers also made assumptions of how audiences used the medium to gratify their needs on the basis of media exposure, access and choice. Herta Herzog (1940:115) used the
term ‘gratification’ for the first time which is described as the functionalist perspective. It also focused on the question of the satisfactions people say they derived from using a particular medium of communication.

Early research was concerned with topics such as children's use of comics and the absence of newspapers during a newspaper strike. In 1974, Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch realized that most uses and gratification studies were mainly concerned with certain social and psychological origins, needs and expectations of the users, mass media or other sources, patterns of media exposure, need gratification and other consequences. Research concerning the media has focused on direct effects such as exposure to violent media leading to increases in aggressive behavior. However, there are many factors that might intervene in this direct process, and one such factor involves characteristics of the audience. The consumer of media is an active participant in the process; he or she chooses the media to which he or she is exposed and chooses the level of attention in a direction which suits the individual convenience. This focus on the audience was a driving force in the development of ‘uses and gratification’ theory over the past several decades.

Paul Lazarsfeld practically supervised the scientific evaluation carried out by Herzog (1940:115) which was titled ‘Professor Quiz: A Gratification Study’ which identified four gratification namely – a) competitive self-esteem, b) diversified information/education, c) self-rating and d) sporting appeal. In respect of the daytime radio serials, Herzog identified three gratification such as emotional release, wishful thinking and advice.

Bernard Berelson (1949:26) noted several uses of the newspaper – for information and interpretation of public affairs, as a tool for daily living, for respite, for social prestige and for social contact. Mendelsohn (1964:191) also identified several generalized functions of radio listening-companionship, bracketing the day, changing mood, counteracting loneliness or boredom, providing useful news and information, allowing vicarious participation in events and aiding social interaction. In reality, the gratification research did not produce any formal theory at that point of time. The researchers primarily depended on descriptive studies and analytical procedures as methodological approaches.

The second phase of gratification research occurred during the late 1950s and continued upto the 1960s. The researchers conducted studies to develop media use
typologies and operationalize the many social and psychological variables that were presumed to be the antecedents of different patterns of media consumption and gratification. Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961:259) sought to find an answer to what children do with television and identified three gratification such as information, entertainment and social utility. During this phase, researchers did not concentrate their attention on correlations between gratification and the relationship between gratification sought and obtained.

The third phase of gratification research took place in 1970s when uses and gratification research was formalized as a systematic approach in the field of mass communication. Katz et.al. (1974:136) provided an ideological foundation for gratification research on certain broad assumptions of the uses and gratification approach. The researchers sought to understand certain basic premises which include – a) the social and psychological origins of b) needs, which generate, c) expectations of, d) the mass media or other sources which lead to, f) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities) resulting in g) need gratification and h) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones.

Melvin DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach first described the Dependency Theory in 1976 which states that the more dependent an individual is on the media to fulfill certain needs, the more significant the media becomes to that person in a given context. The theory illustrates dependency as the relationship between media content, the nature of society and the behavior of audiences. Researchers also explained that people would become more dependent on media that meet a number of their needs than on media that touch only a few ones. The Dependency Theory was in a sense an extension or addition to the uses and gratification approach brought about a few years earlier.

The dependency theory brings forth many unique propositions and functions. According to Sandra Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur, “The basic propositions of The Dependency Theory can be brought together and summarized as follows: The potential for mass media messages to achieve a broad range of cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects will be increased when media systems serve many unique, and central information functions.” The scholars have examined certain criteria that seemed to be appropriate for the uses and gratification approach
and the Dependency Theory seemed to be logic, consistency, testability, and simplicity.

Eastman (1979:79) conducted a multivariate analyses of interactions among television viewing functions and lifestyle attributes of people. Palmgreen et.al. (1980:220) noted the presence of distinction between gratification sought and gratification obtained. Rubin (1981:253) examined the validity of viewing motivations scale validity and the comparability of research results concerning gratification. Wenner (1982:303) found evidence of relationship between the gratification sought and gratification obtained by the users of media. Another researcher made an empirical comparison of alternative gratification models. During this phase, the researchers had affirmed the validity of media uses and gratification typologies in respect of various communications media.

Since 1980s, a good deal of research has been carried out by the researchers in communication field concerning the media uses and gratification across the globe. The basic tenets of the uses and gratification theory are that a) media users are active and goal-directed, b) users have different needs which prompt them to choose different media and contents; and c) even those exposed to the same media content will respond to it differently based on the socio-graphics, demographics and psychographics. Swanson (1992:277) noted that most early studies were a compass for qualitative explorations of audience members’ perceptions of their experiences, motivations and connections with various types of media content.

The Hypodermic Needle Model claims that consumers are strongly affected by media and have no say in how the media influence them. The main idea of the uses and gratification model is that people are not helpless victims of all-powerful media, but use media to fulfill their various needs which serve as motivations for using media. The utility of mass communication is reflected by the advantages gained by the users. The intentionality of media utility is directed by prior motivation but selectivity of media behavior reflects prior interests and preferences of the audience.

Communication researchers have critically analysed the uses and gratification theory of communication. They have criticized this theory as they believe the public has no control over the media and contents. According to them, the nature of the theory underlying uses and gratification research is not totally clear since the line between gratification and satisfaction is thinner practically and otherwise. The
Researchers have also pointed out that the theory is not very clear about the use of media services since it is only a data-collecting strategy.

Researchers have argued that this sociological theory has little to no link to the benefit of psychology due to its weakness in operational definitions and weak analytical mode. Due to the individualistic nature of uses and gratification theory, it is difficult to take the information that is collected in studies. Most research relies on pure recollection of memory rather than data. Expectancy-value theory is an extended version of the uses and gratification research which is coined by the information-integration theorist Martin Fishbein. The researcher observed there are two kinds of belief namely, belief in something and belief about something. In Fishbein’s theory development, attitudes are different from beliefs since they are evaluative and are correlated with beliefs and predispose a person to behave a certain way toward the attitude object.

Philip Palmgreen, an early uses and gratification researcher also claims that gratification are sought in terms of a person’s beliefs about what a medium can provide and that person’s evaluation of the medium’s content. Studies have shown that audience gratification can be derived from at least three distinct sources namely, media content, exposure to the media per se, and social context that typifies the situation of exposure to different media. It is clear that audiences spend time using the media in various ways. The uses and gratification approach has basic assumptions, namely, the audience is conceived as active, the viewers are goal oriented and the audiences make attempts to achieve their goals through the media sources and services.

According to Ronald Rice, larger social purposes and effects are the primary factors which motivate the users of media services regardless of space and time. Mass Communication has come a long way over the last three centuries. Many different perspectives have been brought forth and analyzed in terms of effectiveness. The Uses and gratification Approach and The Dependency Theory were two theories that brought forth a new genre of ideas and aspects of cognition to mass communication in 20th century. The theory is ultimately based on the idea that each individual has several needs. In response to this, they have created a wide range of choices that will meet these needs. These theories have great relevance even in this age of media revolution. The media institutions cannot take the people for granted in
this age of competitiveness. The media which are responsive to the needs of the users can survive the test of the time.

1.5 Three Ages of Internet Research

Internet emerged as a prominent medium of communication during the last decade of 20th century. It brought about a new age of globalization of communication and generated lot of interest among the researchers. The Internet research has assumed significance since researchers sought to fathom the multi dimensional parameters of Internet as an influential medium of communication. The focus of Internet research has changed over a period of time. Wellman (2004:298) identifies the three ages of Internet research namely ten, five and zero years ago. According to him, the first age of Internet studies saw Internet as a bright light shining above everyday concerns of people.

The researchers considered the emergence of Internet as a technological marvel of the 20th century which surpassed all communication related innovations. But the researchers succumbed to certain presenticism and parochialism since they wrongly perceived that the world has started anew with the Internet. They also looked at the online phenomenon in isolation. The analyses were also often utopian, extolling the Internet as egalitarian and globe-spanning and ignoring how differences in power and status might affect interactions on and offline. The social and demographic variables were not systematically analyzed by them.

The second age of systematic documentation of the uses and gratification of Internet began around 1998 when the realization dawned about the need for systematic accounts of the Internet which was based on objective description of the characteristics, capabilities and limitations. The documentation of the proliferation of Internet users and uses was based primarily on large-scale surveys, initially done by marketing firms (and with some bias towards hyping use) and later by governments, academics, and long-term enterprises such as the Pew Internet and American Life Study. Chen and Wellman (2003:47) consider that these studies were basically quantitative since the researchers compared demographic differences and learned certain basic advantages people derived from the use of Internet.

The third age of Internet research reflected the transition from documentation to analysis of the uses and gratification of Internet. The third stage of Internet research was carried out in the new millennium which demonstrated the more focused,
theoretically driven and operationally relevant in letter and spirit. In a developing country like India, Internet research is in its infancy. There is a great need to examine the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats of Internet with due respect to the ground realities. The uses and gratification of Internet research need to be documented and analyzed on the basis of well defined parameters and tested techniques of scientific communication evaluation.

1.6. Social Significance of the Study

The Internet is a new and innovative medium that can completely change the lives of people much as television did in the 1950s and 1960s. The Internet changes people’s lives in terms of reaching, disseminating, creating, and evaluating a huge amount of information easily and quickly, communicating with many different kinds of people separated by space and time, and reallocating time for their daily activities. Through various types of Internet uses, such as, e-mail, newsgroups, and chatting, the way people communicate is changed. Since the Internet has changed the lives of the people in a revolutionary way, researchers have made attempts to evaluate the influence of Internet on the lives of the people all over the world.

Many researchers in various fields, such as education, psychology and sociology, have studied the impact of the Internet on people and society and reported the advantages and disadvantages of using the Internet. The children, adolescents, women and other sections of the society are affected by the Internet both positively and negatively in modern society.

According to the latest Internet survey, about 900 million people worldwide were online. The studies have also revealed that all educational institutions in the world have Internet access regardless of level, region, or poverty concentration. As Internet use among the users is dramatically rising, the researchers need to know what impact the Internet has on the community of users in modern society.

Students’ access to Internet is encouraged by schools and teachers. One may even wonder, looking at the varied nature of the content, whether it is right to encourage students to spend more time on Internet. Nevertheless it is on the rise. For effective learning, Internet browsing needs to be guided in the right manner. Internet could be misused dangerously if its power is manipulated otherwise. Internet is a live medium. The power of convergence of various information technologies is realized
through Internet. More research is needed in this field to get positive impact of this powerful tool in the hands of students.

The past studies have reported both positive and negative impact of the Internet on the daily lives of users in modern society. There have been some concerns about the negative impact of the Internet on students concerning violent and sexual content and a displacement effect in such areas as social relationships, including interaction with family and friends, physical activity and other leisure-time activities, such as reading and playing.

During the last one decade, quite a few conferences have been organized on Internet exposure among various users in modern society. Researcherly journals have also focused the attention of the global community on the impact of Internet in the daily lives of the people. The attitude of people towards Internet, the access to Internet, the influence of Internet and other aspects are also examined by the researchers. Research articles are published on Internet exposure in Indian and foreign journals. There is a widespread interest about the impact of Internet on people including the college students.

The crucial importance of information access and acquisition among the college students and other users becomes highly relevant in the present times since the world moves towards the knowledge-based society. In developing countries, the emphasis is on inclusive development through active participation of all sections of society in the mainstream of development. There is growing recognition in educational institutions, training centres, research organizations and development institutions of Karnataka on the crucial role of Internet which is required to provide a solid basis for education and to enhance quality of life of the students in schools, colleges and universities by providing information resources via ICT based tools.

The past studies have not identified the ways and means of preventing unhealthy Internet exposure among college students with respect to Indian society. Hence, it is essential to know how Internet use will influence the college students in terms of physical, educational, social and psychological development to confirm or reconsider the results from the previous studies. As the numbers of college students who use the Internet grow, the impact of the Internet on students’ daily lives as well as how and why students use the Internet should be examined.
A perusal of available literature on the impact of Internet on users clearly reveals that not even a single investigation is conducted on the access and utility of Internet among the college students in Karnataka state. Hence the problem “Uses and gratification of Internet among College Students: A Study in Karnataka State” was chosen for the present study. The researchers are required to examine the displacement effect of the Internet for college students. Particularly, research showing the relationship between Internet use and displacement effect for various daily activities including physical activity and social involvement is still a debatable issue.

The present study was carried out with a view to understand the perception of college students and their parents about the role of Internet in their lives. The study also intended to investigate the relationship between Internet use by college students and the level of academic activities, physical activities, social relations, and psychological well-being. In sum, the present study was carried out to examine the Internet use behavior, uses and gratifications among the college students with special reference to Karnataka State. This research therefore allows current generation of policy makers, educationists, parents, service providers, scientists and other stakeholders to understand their obligation towards the college students at various levels and develop an appropriate operational model of Internet management that is useful to the community of college students.

1.7. Statement of the Problem

The Internet provided all time and all round access to information resources and services to the mankind regardless of space and time. Researchers have emphasized the true nature of Internet as means of information sharing in the electronic form, with an electronic Internet network which provided access to, and delivery from, external worldwide information and knowledge sources. Karnataka State has achieved remarkable progress in the field of information management in the present times.

There is growing recognition in the state about the crucial role of Internet in modern society. A synthesis of the available literature suggests that the impact of Internet on the lives of the people including the college students suffers from series of limitations. Therefore, the primary tasks of the present study were concerned with identifying reasonably representative sample of parents and college students who are directly associated with the Internet so as to assess their views on the uses and
gratification of Internet which assumes profound academic significance in the new millennium. This subject was chiefly evaluated because:

a. In this age of information explosion, new media of communication including the Internet have become informal universities to the mankind.
b. Command over information is an unmistakable index of power and development in the new millennium.
c. Information acquisition among the users becomes highly relevant since the world moves to worlds knowledge – based society.
d. The Internet occupies an enviable status in the processes of individual development and collective development in modern society.
e. The college students are becoming more connected to the virtual world through Internet in the study area.
f. The Internet exposure among the college students becomes higher and the students find limited face to face communication opportunities.
g. The increasing Internet exposure among the young generation of users including the college students has brought about series of positive and negative changes in the lives.
h. A constant and continued research on the uses and gratification of Internet with special reference to the college students in a model state like Karnataka is imperative.

1.8. Objectives of the Study

With uses and gratification of Internet among the college students of Karnataka state being the thrust area, the research proposes to:

1. To understand the attitude of parents towards Internet browsing among their children.
2. To assess the influence of Internet on parents.
3. To analyse the Internet browsing habits of college students.
4. To examine the Internet browsing priority of college students.
5. To evaluate the uses and gratification of Internet among college students; and
6. To explore the possibilities of safeguarding and promoting the personal and academic interests of the college students.

1.9 Nature and Scope of the Study
The research would generate tips and ideas for how to get the most value from the Internet as an information source. The study would help in maximizing the benefits of Internet and produce a whole new level of effectiveness for college students. The study would generate knowledge on the exposure, access, uses and gratification of Internet among college students of Karnataka State. The study would bring new ways of utilization of information services through Internet among the college students of Karnataka State.

The study would enable knowledge workers to classify the contents of Internet. The study would find newer ways to present Internet for students use. The study would find out how Internet could be better manipulated in favor of increasing the learning environment in schools. The study has the scope to form appropriate recommendations to bring the most advanced technology to support college level education considering the global phenomena as well as the local needs.

This study is propelled by the increased cyber activity among students. Most societies are affected by the effects of increased cyber activity. This study will benefit the educational administrators, teachers, parents, students and social scientists in particular and the society in general. The increased dependence on Internet among college students and educational workers is also considered as one of the factors for the need to do a study on this area.

1.10. Organization of the Thesis

The salient features of the study such as evolution of Internet, utility of Internet in modern society, uses and gratification framework and approach, three ages of Internet research, social significance of the study, statement of the problem and objectives of the study are furnished in the first chapter which deals with the introduction.

The second chapter, namely – review of literature deals with the review of the studies conducted by the past researchers which have a bearing on the present study under different headings namely - uses and gratification framework, uses and gratification methodologies, precursors to media uses and gratification typologies, Internet uses and gratification variables, Internet uses and gratification instruments, access to Internet services, uses and gratification of Internet and inferences of review of literature.

The third chapter namely – research method enumerates the research design,
hypotheses of the study, study variables, locale of the study, sampling procedures, tools of data collection, primary data collection, secondary data collection, pilot testing, reliability and validity of data, gratification scale, statistical analysis, and limitations of the study.

The fourth chapter presents the profile of the respondents, perception of parents about Internet, influence of Internet on parents, Internet browsing pattern of college students, uses of Internet among college students, Internet gratification of college students and impact of Internet on college students in Karnataka state.

The fifth chapter namely the conclusion presents the summary of the study, findings of the study, testing of hypotheses, implications of the study and suggestions for future research. The last section of the thesis indicates the bibliography, questionnaires and appendices.

1.11. Summary

The importance of information acquisition becomes highly relevant in the present times since the world moves towards the knowledge-based society. Internet provided all round and all time exposure to the people on all aspects of human life and culture. The Internet has changed the intellectual environment in general and the lives of the students and other young generation of users in particular. The Internet users are growing consistently in Karnataka state notably. The quest for ‘Internet’ in both development and information has become a mission for academics as well as practitioners. The present study evaluates the uses and gratification of Internet among the college students of Karnataka state. The Internet services have to be managed on the basis of constitutional norms, professional guidelines and ethical standards in order to protect the interest of the young generation of Internet users.