1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Internet and Higher Education

The arrival of Internet on the education sector has been able to jolt the system out of the languor it was blessed with, especially in the higher education sector in India. The advent of the new medium and inroads it has already made in the psyche of an average Indian student's life makes it abundantly clear that higher education is now virtually impossible to be transacted in the absence of Internet mediation even in the remotest parts of the country. While the Internet has been able to alter the pattern of consuming media texts by opting for digital platform through convergence, it has been able to change the practice of accessing superior knowledge sources for the students of higher education sector. Gone are the days of bookworm students, the digital text has virtually served a death blow to hard copy education, both in terms of books as well as academic journals. To quote Baudrillard (1988), "Now a pure screen, a switching centre for all networks of influences." While the hard copies of books and journals still vie for the attention of the students, it is unlikely that they would be allowed to languish in bookshelves in future replacing the all encapsulated habits of the students to suck their lifeblood from the digital platforms.

India, like other developing nations faces the spectre of a digital divide due to its different level of inadequacies. Illiteracy, gender disempowerment, financial incapability and inadequate distribution of material resources in different parts of the country are some of the factors responsible for keeping India in the throes of digital disempowerment. While some parts of nation have been able to galvanize their
material and non-material pursuits, a huge tract of the nation remains deeply embedded in the non-digital practice of their earthly chores. While the transaction of academics has become a completely digitally mediated practice for the students in some parts of the nation and thereby becoming digital natives, most of the students in the country are still very much digital immigrants and busy in overcoming the bottlenecks thrown in by the new digital culture. Education process in India has become a battleground for these two sets of students, students who happen to be early digital adopters and the students who are better understood as digital laggards.

1.1.2 Internet Culture and Digital Divide

Culture is a pendulum like topography because of the contentious dispute among scholars and other disciplines. Despite its entropic, chaotic and randomized cacophony, the term ‘culture’ is useful, valuable and intertwined with the study of new media. By default the study of new media integrates the dominant institutions of the society (Mark Poster, 2001). Slowly but steadily Internet is spreading its tentacles in higher education also more specifically among young students of colleges and universities. Youngsters have become more techno-savvy in the contemporary new media environment although the penetration is low due to low parental income and education. Illiteracy is one of the determining factors for this great digital divide, i.e., the gap between Internet haves and Internet have nots and what Margaret Morse (1998) lamented that Internet promotes patriarchy and capitalism and also is concerned with the fact that Internet erodes the ‘sociality’ of ‘a well functioning society’. There are different perspectives on access to Internet as it increases human capital by supplementing better access to education and training in comparison to those
who do not have access to Internet and are further excluded from social and human capital (Ronald E. Rice and Caroline Haythornthwaite, 2006). Many studies show that digital divide exists even in America also, especially among minorities like African-American and non-white Hispanics. They spend less time in accessing Internet whereas white men, higher income earners, highly educated and more efficient users spend more time online; 57 per cent of white men using Internet and 52 per cent white women using net is a clear example of digital gender divide although the gap is shrinking globally. Also many researches depict that lower education, female, higher age, lower income, non-US regions are slow in accessing Internet (Ibid). Another study by the Consumer Federation of America showed that lower income groups are much less connected and have less education compared to higher income groups. Hence it can be said that age, income and education are the strongest determinants in Internet accessibility.

From a study conducted in UK, it is found that it has manifested generation effects, i.e., the children are heavy users than their parents and the gender divide is modest, since boys use the Internet more than the girls (Piet Bakker and Charo Sadaba, 2008). Another study from Portugal too supports a strong association between age and Internet use, where vast majority are youngsters or below 34 years. Similar research was being conducted in Spain, and there boys and girls aged between 10 and 18 years prefer Internet more rather than television while 38 per cent prefer Internet and 30 per cent in favour of television (Piet Bakker and Charo Sadaba, 2008). Most importantly, education and wealth are still the strong determinants or independent variable for the widespread Internet usages. Higher education and
occupational status are highly correlated with higher Internet use according to a European Commission report (Ibid). The Internet penetration is low in rural and remote areas, as the research from Portugal stated (Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology, 2006).

Another study conducted in US where the rate of adoption is increasing day by day, 59 per cent of the population with access to Internet between December 2000 and April 2002, with 66 percent in 2003 to 75 per cent in 2004 and globally the top ten countries like Sweden, Hong Kong, US, Iceland, Netherlands, Australia, Canada, Switzerland, Denmark and South Korea show similar impulses with access to Internet ranging from 62 to 74 per cent of each country's population having access. When examined region wise, it was found that only 1.4 per cent of African people and 7 per cent of Asian having access to Internet (Ronald E. Rice and Caroline Haythornthwaite, 2006).

1.1.3 New Media and Different Pattern of Usage

At the very outset, it is undeniable fact that the clamor for new media technology and its dramatic changes in contemporary society have become the keystone in the architecture of new communication media. Starting from Gutenberg era to other electronic communication like radio and television broadcasting which were the earlier dominant forms of communication for centuries merged and became a new digital medium called computer through networking. This new medium along with its concomitant telecommunication and information technologies have witnessed a revolutionary progress in bringing a paradigm shift in techno-cultural discourse in
society. The convergence of various media into one medium ultimately creates new media environment when communication has become easier, faster, interactive and instantaneous for the millions of media users across the globe. It is expected that new media generates new gratifications or satisfaction and motivation on the part of new media users. Therefore, it is assumed that uses and gratifications (U&G) theory is a right and logical approach of interpreting the current research on the influence of new media in the area of higher education. Nevertheless, uses and gratification approach was originally launched to examine and explore the conventional media and now it is equally important to apply it in the field of new communication media. The current research undertakes Uses and Gratification approach to unveil various psychological variables which are actually very difficult to define and incorporate in social science research as all those are very much suited for experimental research or in controlled laboratory settings. Now confirming this Uses and Gratification theory in this area one has to examine why certain respondents use this new media, i.e., Internet and how people use a particular medium, what factors motivate them in using the new medium and whether it is enough to satisfy or gratify their various tastes and preferences.

Access to Internet among college students has of late become a necessity rather than a luxury. Internet usage pattern and behavior is a very complex phenomenon, i.e., why people choose and use a particular media especially the new media like Internet giving little preference or neglecting the conventional mass media. And what factors really motivate them to choose and access Internet and its other concomitant new media devices. There are other unanswered questions which need
to be solved like what gratification purposes media consumer are using Internet for, what satisfaction they really derive after using Internet, i.e., gratification dimension play a major role in Uses and Gratification (U&G) approach when a particular researcher studies consumer behavior. Nonetheless, gratification factor is a very complex psychological variable and very difficult to control and manipulate in real settings. Therefore, the researcher has rightly chosen Uses and Gratification theory as a strong theoretical foundation and logical way of explaining consumer gratification, motivation and new media behavior.

There may be a plenty of uses and gratification factors affecting access to Internet. But the researcher has selected some socio-psychological variables that are presumed to be the forerunner of different consumption pattern of gratifications. Hence, Ruggiero (2009) cited Schramm, Lyle and Parker and their conclusion that children's usage pattern of television was determined by relationship with their parents and peers. Similarly Katz and Blumler (1973) have been able to find out many widely used motives for using conventional media such as 'diversion' 'personal relationship' 'personal identity' and 'surveillance'. Moreover, the researchers like M.G Jere et al., (2011) cited Stafford, Stafford and Schkade of their meta-categorization of gratification factors where they have identified some gratification factors for media consumers like content gratification, process gratification and social gratifications. Further, they have elaborated the concept that content gratification is nothing but using a specific medium for the purpose of content they generally derive from. And process gratification indicates that media consumer enjoys the process of using a particular medium e.g., using Internet for vicarious pleasure and other entertainment purposes. Finally the
social gratification implies when social gratification is met through normal social interaction, maintaining social relationship through friendship by using and accessing a particular medium. Here all the above gratifications are very useful and contemporary when one analyses new media usage pattern of media consumers. Therefore, the researcher has identified three gratification factors, of course considering the aforesaid notion of gratification viz., motivation factor, personal gratification dimension and academic gratification factor which supposedly influence the access to new media.

Researchers like M.G Jere et al. (2011) have studied Internet gratification and they cited Roy (2009) after literature review that six gratification motives like 'wide exposure', 'career opportunities' under content gratification and 'user-friendliness' and 'self-development' under process gratification. The factors like 'global exchange' and 'relaxation' were categorized as social gratification are dominant factors. Moreover, U&G approach fell out for decades mainly for its severe criticisms as many communication scholars opined but it gained momentum after the arrival of telecommunication technology especially the new media technology (Ruggiero, 2009). Ruggiero (2009) opined that 'new technologies present people with more and more choices, motivation and satisfaction become even more crucial components of audience analysis.'

Further Ruggiero (2009) outlined three major features of new media technologies which were not associated with conventional media. The identified attributes are 'Interactivity', 'demassification' and 'asynchronicity'. Interactivity profoundly upgrades the tenets of U&G approach like active user undermining the notion of passive user (ibid). Ha and James (1998), selected five attributes of
interactivity like playfulness, choice, connectedness, information collection and reciprocal communication. The other attributes like demassification is the skill or intelligence through which media consumer or user chooses a particular media from wide range of choices or menus (Ruggiero, 2009). Contrasting with other conventional mass media, new media or Internet offers the attributes of choiceable features which ultimately let the individual to select a particular media from vast array of choices as per their needs and preferences. And the concept of asynchronicity simply indicates the notion of sending and receiving messages at one's own convenience. With the Internet and through e-mail one can store, send, transfer messages through online web page to another person and when an individual makes the message digitized then he or she forcefully and skillfully influences the message for infinite times at their own convenience, and therefore, the individual has the control over the new media unlike conventional media (ibid).

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The rise of the Internet in society has prompted a relook at Uses and Gratifications research. (Ruggerio Thomas E., 2000). It was realized that Uses and Gratification (U&G) approach is a justified theoretical construct for the current work. This theory directs and assumes that individuals choose a particular media platform and its content to fulfill his desire, wants and other cognitive needs. Hence, this U&G approach is a psychological communication standpoint that scrutinizes why people use a particular medium. This theory overtakes the all powerful theory or magic bullet theory and all the assumptions like audiences are passive, defenseless, naïve and ultimately give birth to the concept that audiences are active users of media and
its product, they are selective in using the different medium as per their preferences or gratifications. Moreover, this theory has been established by countering the powerful media and defined individuals as active, selective and media negotiator. Media negotiation is one of the most important aspects of U&G approach.

Theory (U&G) was propounded by Blumler and Katz (1973) and suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media and defying the conventional passive role when media were considered to be all powerful. Media users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use. The theorists say that a media user seeks out a media source that best fulfills the needs of the user. Uses and gratifications assume that the user has alternative choices to satisfy their need. And also user will choose those media which will gratify their needs. Therefore, there are more than one-way to choose media and according to the theory, media consumers have a free will to decide how they will use the media and how it will affect them.

Elihu Katz (1959) stressed on the most important viewpoint of media and raises questions that ‘what people do with the media’ is more important, reliable, and justifiable rather than ‘what the media do to people’. According to Blumler (1979), there are three fundamental principles regarding the connection or association between media and user: the users are active and selective, the users are conscious or alert of their desired wants, and they are selective of media as per their gratifications.

Different scholars identified different factors related to needs, motives and gratifications of media use. Hitherto, there is no unanimous viewpoint among the
researchers regarding the uses and gratifications of media. For example, Leekyung Kin (2011) referred to many researchers in this regard like Katz and his prescribed factors that are connected to media motives and benefits: information, learning, self-improvement, identification, social connection, escape and passing time.

Also the researcher Leekyung Kin quoted McGuire (1974, pp 167-196) and his suggestion of two sorts of psychological motives as cognitive and affective, the former emphasizing on individual's information seeking and the latter stresses on the individuals feelings such as emotional. Again, Leekyung Kin mentioned uses and gratifications of the Internet use. He cited Hills and Argyle (2003, pp 59-70) and their suggested factors categorized as work, social use, use at home and leisure. Similarly, Landers and Liunsbury (2006) prescribed Internet use for social, leisure and academic use. Also the concerned researcher Leekyung Kin exemplified Hamburger and Ben-Artzi (2000, pp 441-449) classified the Internet use as social service, leisure service and information service. Moreover, Rafaeli (1986) identified three motives for Internet use: entertainment for diversion and relaxing stress during spare time, learning and communication. Rubin (1994) identified other factors for using Internet as social identification, social identification, social interaction, relationship, escaping reality, entertainment, observation of environment. Barbara (1996) described six factors for Internet use as entertainment, passing time, social interaction, escape, information and website preference. Therefore, it can be said that there cannot be a uniform, unanimous and reasoned viewpoint on Internet use and its varied motives.
1.2.1 System Theory Perspective

The basics of system theory (Pavlik, 1997) are the offshoot of the belief in complexity and this complexity refers to the heterogeneity in a particular system and most importantly considered to be a fundamental attribute of all systems. This complexity determines how systems respond to input, stimuli or change in its environment. Dr. Murray Gell-Mann who propounded the concept of complexity in system theory and behavior mechanism of complex system, prescribes two types of complex systems, examples of first type being the complexity of solar system or galaxies which don’t have any capability to learn or germinate biologically and the second being the capacity of adaptive behavior. This sort of complex adaptive mechanism is related to the notion of new media technologies. This is evident with the emergence of artificial intelligence and artificial life; it is an amalgamation and interaction between complex and multifaceted systems of trade, government and new media technologies and its elementary role of feedback mechanism, cybernetics as communication in complex adaptive systems. Therefore, each and every complex system is inter-reliant on emerging new media technologies in the progression of co-evolution (ibid).

John V. Pavlik (1997) asserts from the perspective of uses and gratification research that new media users may satisfy social and psychological needs citing that one of the many usages of new media consists of erotic communication and voyeuristic pleasure and it comes from sexual drives of netizens. Simultaneously he refers to the benefit of e-mail and other social media communication for the maintenance of varied social relationship over great distances.
Table 1: John V. Pavlik mapped the consequences of new technology and its possible influences in a tabular form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended consequence</th>
<th>Communication worker</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intended consequence</td>
<td>Communication worker</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintended/unexpected consequence</td>
<td>Communication worker</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: John V. Pavlik: 'New Media Technology' page no: 5
1.2.2 Internet and Information Superhighway

If anything marks twenty-first century it is the evolution of Internet. Internet has a common technical protocol (TCP/IP) in direction-finding data across networks. There is a belief that Internet is the example of information superhighway. It cannot be superficially controlled by any institution or any individual or can own it. And any device can be connected to Internet but it must have a common unique TCP/IP (John V. Pavlik, 1997). But Fredrick argued that Internet is not a panacea for electronic journalist or information consumer because all the information is not available online. As many web searches produce many information which has little use. Fredrik argued ‘Going into the World Wide Web is like going through some else’s trash’ (ibid). Flamed content, spam mail, intranets, browser wars, cookies, different search engines and streaming video are some of the ingredients of Internet superhighway.

1.2.3 Contours of New Media

In the new media landscape there are some important terms and notions which is vital in energizing the contemporary discussion, e.g., the convergence of new technologies, the way large number of information are compressed, squashed and processed, digitization i.e., the conversion of analog signal to binary format 1s and 0s i.e., the format through which computer can read. The other inescapable contours of new media topography are hypertext- a nonlinear text and this language is very much user friendly for World Wide Web. The term ‘hypertext’ was pinpointed by Ted Nelson, (1965) an American Sociologist, Philosopher and the pioneer of Information Technology and the term ‘hypermedia’.
1.3 Information Technologies in India

Information Technology (IT) industry in India has played a vibrant role in placing India on the global scenario. The first computers to be installed in India were imported in the 1960s and 70s. The Rajib Gandhi government initiated the 'information revolution' and opening up of the Indian market to foreign investors; gradual privatization and deregulation of first telecommunications and later other industries, reducing import and excise duties on electronic goods, computer hardware and software, and providing other incentives to the developments of the information industries.

Before liberalization of the computer industries, the Indian government's policy was on 'self-reliance through import substitution'. In the mid 1980s, Rajib Gandhi and Narasimha Rao government in the early 1990s introduced liberalization policy that gave a fillip to joint venture with multinational companies. Over forty MNCs like Microsoft, Motorola, and IBM have set up operations in Bangalore, Hyderabad, Gandhi Nagar, and Pune primarily for exporting software.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The arrival of Internet has impacted the entire process of use and gratification sought from a medium of communication in more ways than one. Internet has been hailed by the students, especially in the higher education sector not only as a principal source of information related to their academic pursuits, but it has also been hailed as a medium capable of meeting many needs. Internet has been found to be capable of serving emotive, affective as well as cognitive needs and thereby enhancing the
capability of a student in determining the goal objective in their academic life. Silchar happens to be located in a place far removed from the blessings of an urban technocratic society. So, the researcher finds it imperative to understand the role played by Internet in the average life of an undergraduate student in Silchar town in terms of its uses and gratifications, satisfaction, needs and expectancy to serve the academic and career-oriented needs of a student vis-à-vis other conventional media.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

**General Objective**

To evaluate the factors affecting the uses and gratifications of new media by college students in Silchar.

**Specific objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the motivational factors for the use of new media by college students.
2. Know the personal gratification dimensions of new media usage among college students.
3. Ascertain the social factors that influence the new media use.
4. Find out the academic gratifications sought by the students.
5. Evaluate the relationship between new media usage and usage of other media.
6. Know the relationship between access to new media and parental income of the college students.
7. To know the perception of the students about probable negative influences of Internet use on students.

8. To know the awareness level of the students of cyber security.

1.6 Research Questions

After narrowing down the research topic the researcher has developed ten research questions which are depicted below:

RQ1: What is the relationship level between motivational factors and the usage of new media by college students?

RQ2: What is the relationship pattern between personal gratification dimensions and the usage of new media?

RQ3: What is the correlation between influences of social factors and the new media use?

RQ4: What is the level of association between academic gratification sought by the students and the usage of new media?

RQ5: What is the relationship between access to new media and parental income of the college students?

RQ6: What is the correlation between parental education and usage of new media by the students?

RQ7: How far are the use of new media and the use of conventional media interrelated?
RQ8: What are, in any, negative influences of Internet use on students?

RQ9: What are the problems associated with content generation and protection on the web in terms of Internet security?

The research questions formulated and tested with the statistical technique of factor analysis, correlation, multiple regression and ANOVA.

1.7 Social Significance

The advent of new medium and inroads it has already made in the psyche of the average Indian student make it’s abundantly clear that higher education is virtually impossible to be transacted in the absence of Internet mediation even in the remotest parts of the country. While the Internet has been able to alter the pattern of consuming media texts by opting for digital platform through convergence, it has been able to change the practice accessing superior knowledge sources for the students of higher education sector.

India, like other developing nations faces the specter of a digital divide due to its different level of inadequacies. Illiteracy, gender disempowerment, financial incapability and inadequate distribution of material resources in different parts of the country are some of the factors responsible for keeping India in the throes of digital disempowerment. While the transaction of academics has become a completely digitally mediated practice for the students in some parts of the nation and thereby becoming digital natives, most of the students in the country are still very much digital immigrants and busy in overcoming the bottlenecks thrown in by the new digital culture.
So, the study would be able to shed light on the factors affecting access and uses of new media and the consequent bottlenecks the students in the colleges in Silchar face and how it can be overcome in future.

1.8 Study Universe

Silchar is situated in the southern part of the Indian state of Assam. It is the headquarters of the Cachar district. The city of Silchar is the second largest city in the state of Assam and an important commercial centre and consequently witnesses the settlement of a sizable population of traders from distant parts of India. The main city of the Barak valley is Silchar. The researcher has chosen all the four colleges from Silchar. Selected colleges are Guru Charan College, Cachar College, Radhamadhab College and Women's College.