CHAPTER – VI

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The ultimate objective of the study is to examine the use of Dalit websites and blogs to mediate the experience of Dalits to rest of the world. The research focuses on how Dalits disseminate and share information about their tribulations at times when their issues fall deaf ears to the mainstream media. The research frames these practices within the theory of alternative media particularly with reference to the four approaches of alternative media proposed by Bailey et al., (2008) in their book ‘understanding alternative media’.

The first chapter deals with the introduction, statement of the problem, scope of the research, theoretical framework, explanation to major terms of the research and limitation of the study. The review of literature is presented in the second chapter and the methodology for the research is in the third chapter. The data analysis and interpretation for the online survey is presented in the fourth chapter. In the fifth chapter content analysis of the Dalit websites and blogs supported by the semi-structured interview is presented. The sixth chapter summarizes all the findings of the previous chapters and offers recommendations for further scope of the research.

6.1 Summary of the Findings

6.1.1 Demographic and Social Variables

6.1.1.1 Age

Findings of the research show that the age group of 26-40 years is majority with more than half of the respondents followed by the age group 41-60 years.
6.1.1.2 Gender

It is established from the research that the majority of the participants of the online survey on Dalit websites and blogs are male while the percentage of the female respondents are comparatively very low. Though the online survey was posted in different services of internet for over six months, the respondents of the survey were only 210.

6.1.1.3 Educational Qualification

Findings of the research reveal that absolute majority of the respondents of online survey are post graduates followed by under graduates.

6.1.1.4 Language

As English is the universal language on the Internet, all the respondents obviously knew the language English. Among the respondents Hindi is spoken by 67 %, Tamil 46 %, Marathi 24 %, Telugu 14 % and Malayalam 13%.

6.1.1.5 Profession

As the findings of the research reveals most of the respondent of the online survey fall under the category of Banking/Marketing, Professionals and academics. It is interesting to note that students too have evinced interest in answering the survey which connotes that young generation are coming forward these days to participate and discuss social issues like Dalit related problems.

6.1.1.6 Community

It is found from the research that absolute majority of the respondents of the survey are from the Dalit community as the non-Dalits are only 10 %. The result clearly explains that only Dalits are interested in talking about the issues and problems surrounding Dalit community as we find only least percent of non-Dalits evince interest in Dalit issues.

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6.1.2 Reasons for accessing Dalit websites and blogs

Finding of the research point out that absolute majority of the respondents cite their community identity i.e Dalit and their personal interest in Dalit issues as the reasons for accessing Dalit websites and blogs. Half of the respondents access Dalit websites and blogs to know the issues being discussed in it. The research also throws light that the average of 40 percent respondents participate in Dalit websites and Blogs for getting updated on Dalit issues, to know what others think, for getting associated with Dalit activists and for sharing their experience. 20 % of the respondents have cited that posting articles/videos/pictures, education, expressing oneself, making new friends, seeking and giving advice for accessing Dalit websites and blogs. Findings of the research concludes that the ‘Dalit identity and their interest in knowing Dalits issues’ make the respondents to access Dalit websites and Blogs as it secures the highest percentage.

6.1.3 Characteristics of Dalit Websites and Blogs

It is ascertained from the study that 57 % of the respondents agree and 28 % of the respondents strongly agree that Dalit websites and blogs criticize and analyze the works done by the mainstream media. 51 % of the respondents agree and 32 % of the respondents strongly disagree that Dalit websites and blogs advocate for a different system of value than mainstream media do. 47 % of the respondents agree and 38 % of the respondents strongly agree that Dalit websites and blogs offer favourable coverage to Dalits and promote activism and mobilize people to participate more than main stream media do. 43 % of the respondents agree and 32 % of the respondents strongly agree that Dalit websites and blogs express Dalit’s voice and opinion. 38 % of the respondents agree and 46 % of the respondents strongly agree that Dalit websites and blogs are devoted to issues and events. It can be
summed up from the result that majority of the respondents view Dalit websites and blogs more positively as the media for Dalits. The characteristic of ‘devoted to issues and events not discussed anywhere’ is very high.

According to Friedman test, ‘devoted to Dalit issues’ is the most important characteristics of Dalit websites and blogs, followed by promotes activism and mobilization, favourable coverage to Dalits, advocates value system, free expression and criticizes and analyses.

6.1.4 Prospect about Dalit Websites and Blogs

As the research reveals, Dalit websites and blogs have the responsibility to the society, especially towards Dalits. It is found that 52 % of the respondents agree and 41 % of the respondents strongly agree that ‘Dalit websites and blogs should encourage people to get involved in civic life’. 50 % of the respondents strongly agree and 46 % of the respondents agree that ‘Dalit websites and blogs should help to protect Dalits’. 51 % of the respondents strongly agree and 41 % of the respondents agree that ‘Dalit websites and blogs should pursue social justice’. 57 % of the respondents agree and 40 % of the respondents agree that ‘Dalit websites and blogs should give right skills to bring social changes’. Thus, the overall percentages evinced that Dalits have a high expectation from Dalit websites and blogs.

According to Friedman test, ‘helping to protect Dalits’ is the most important prospect on Dalit websites and blogs, followed by ‘pursuing social justice’, ‘bringing social change’ and ‘encouraging to get involved in civic life’.

6.1.5 Conception about Mainstream media

Findings of the research point out that majority of the respondents strongly disagree and 42 % of the respondents disagree that ‘the mainstream media is neutral in its approach’.
47 % of the respondents agree and 40 % of the respondents strongly agree that the ‘mainstream media is biased’. 48 % of the respondents state that they agree and 40 % of the respondents strongly disagree that ‘the mainstream media supports status quo’. 45 % of the respondents state that they agree and 35 % of the respondents strongly agree that ‘the mainstream media is compromised by corporate interests’. 45 % of the respondents agree and 35 % of the respondents strongly disagree that ‘the mainstream media have undemocratic practices’. 50 % the respondents strongly agree that ‘the mainstream is motivated by profit’. Thus, it is evident from the responses that mainstream media is not well perceived by Dalits and it has created a negative image about itself in the minds of the respondents.

Based on Friedman’s mean rank ‘mainstream media is biased’ is the most important perception towards mainstream media, followed by mainstream media has undemocratic practices, supports status quo and compromised by corporate interests.

6.1.6 Motivation for engaging in Dalit websites and Blogs

The research on Dalit websites and blogs explains that absolute majority of the respondents say that they access Dalit websites and blogs ‘to inform readers about current Dalit issues. More than half of the respondents access Dalit websites and blogs for communicating with like-minded people on Dalit issues, sharing one’s materials on Dalit related information and educating the significance of Dalit’s social life and identity. 48 % of them for engaging and encouraging the readers in advocacy efforts, 45 % of them for reading posts or articles related to Dalit, 42 % of them for finding a voice in the public sphere and reporting errors or omissions in the mainstream media, 37 % of them for connecting with other Dalits and 36 % of them for pouring out one’s thoughts and emotions.
The results of the study confirm that significant percentage of respondents have responded positively on the motivation for engaging in Dalit websites and blogs.

**6.1.7 Association between Demographic Variables and Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Websites**

In this analysis, demographic variables such as age, education, gender and occupation are associated with the number hours that the respondents spend in internet to find out whether any impact they have with each other.

**6.1.7.1 Association between Education and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Websites**

Chi-square test confirms that there is an association between the number of hours spent in Dalit websites and blogs. The test asserts that the educated persons especially with the qualification Post Graduation and Under Graduation spend more time in Dalit websites than the persons with lower education qualification.

**6.1.7.2 Association between Age and the number of hours spent in Dalit websites**

From the test it can be concluded that there is an association between the age group and the number of hours spent per week on Dalit websites. It is noticed that majority of the respondents belonging to of all age group do evince interest in visiting Dalit websites and blogs. It is noticed that majority of the age groups except below 25 years spend more than 7 hours per week and 45% of the age group of below 25 years spend more than 10 hours in Dalit websites.
6.1.7.3 Association between Gender and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Websites

The analysis reveals that gender does not play any role in anyone to spend more time in Dalit websites. Thus there is no association between gender and the number of hours spent in Dalit websites.

6.1.7.4 Association between Occupation and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Websites

It is found that there is an association between the occupation and the hours spent in Dalit websites and blogs. Absolute majority of the respondents belonging to different professions spend below 7 hours in Dalit websites. It is found that 31% and 21% of students spend 7-10 hours and above 10 hours respectively. Hence, it can be said that the student community evince more interests in surfing through Dalit websites than the rest of the groups.

6.1.8 Association between Internet Usage and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Websites

In this analysis, frequency and the duration that the respondents spend in internet is studied to find out whether these factors have any association with the number of hours the respondents spend in Dalit websites and blogs.

6.1.8.1 Association between Frequency of Internet Usage and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Websites

Findings of the research elucidates that there is a relationship between frequency of internet usage and the number of hours spent in Dalit websites and blogs. Thus, it can be said that the persons who spends more time in internet tend to access Dalit websites more often and in fact they spend a lot of time in reading and feeding Dalit related information.

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6.1.8.2 Association between the Number of Hours Spent in Internet and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Websites

Chi-square test finds a relationship between the numbers of hours spent in internet and the number of hours spent in Dalit websites. Thus, the research findings suggest that the persons who use internet for many hours a day tend to access Dalit websites.

6.1.9 Association between Demographic Variables and engagement in Dalit Blogs

In this analysis, demographic variables such as age, education, gender and occupation are associated with the number hours that the respondents spend in Dalit blogs to find out whether any impact they have with each other.

6.1.9.1 Association between Educational Qualification and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Blogs

Findings of the research through Chi-square test reveal that there is an association between educational qualification and the number of hours spent in Dalit blogs. Hence, it is found that people with higher qualification tend to spend more time in Dalit related blogs than persons with lower educational qualification. Particularly, respondents with Post Graduation spend more time in blogging than Under Graduates or any other groups.

6.1.9.2 Association between Age and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Blogs

Chi-square test confirms that there is an association among age with regard to the hours spent in Dalit blogs. Findings of the research disclose that absolute majority of the respondents of all the age group spend below 7 hours per week in Dalit blogs.
6.1.9.3 Association between Occupation and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Blogs

From the Chi-square analysis it can be seen that occupation does not seem to have any impact on the in spending number of hours in Dalit blogs. Thus, there is no relationship between occupations the number of hours spent in Dalit blogs.

6.1.9.4 Association between Gender and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Blogs

Findings of the Chi-square test clarifies that there is no association between gender and the number of hours spent in Dalit blogs. Hence, being male or female does not have any connection with hours spent in Dalit blogs.

6.1.10 Association between Internet Usage and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Blogs

In this analysis, frequency and the duration that the respondents spend in internet is studied to find out whether these factors have any association with the number of hours the respondents spend in Dalit blogs.

6.1.10.1 Association between hours spent in internet and the number of hours spent in Dalit blogs

The analysis points out that there is an association between hours spent in internet and the number of hours spent in Dalit blogs. The study says that absolute majority of the respondents access internet at least spending below 7 hours per week.

6.1.10.2 Association between the Frequency of Using Internet and the Number of Hours Spent in Dalit Blogs

Chi-square test throws light that there is an association between the frequency of using internet and the number of hours spent in Dalit blogs. Thus, it can be concluded that whenever the respondents access internet depending upon their availability, majority of
them do visit Dalit blogs. Most of the respondents seem to be spending more time in Dalit blogs during their presence in internet.

6.1.11 Association among Demographic Variables, internet usage and Blogging

Platform Used for Blogging

In this analysis, age, gender, educational qualification, occupation and internet usage such as hours and frequency spent in internet will be studied with the blogging platform to find out whether those factors play any role in choosing the kind of blogging platform used for blogging.

The study discloses that there is an association between the educational qualification and the blogging platform used by Dalits. Hence, it is found that ‘Blogger’ is preferred by most of the respondents of all the groups followed by ‘Wordpress’. This factor is also in concordance with age group in years where most of the persons of all the age group favour ‘Blogger’ followed by ‘Wordpress’. Whereas in the case of gender and occupation, there is no association found with blogging platform.

In the case of hours and frequency spent in internet, chi-square test proves that there is an association among the number of hours spent in internet, frequency of internet usage and the blogging platforms used for blogging. It is found that the absolute majority of persons who spend below 1 hour, 2-3 hours and above 4 hours per day prefer ‘Blogger’ platform followed by ‘Wordpress’.
6.1.12 Association between the hours spent in internet and receiving of E-mail 

Notification from Dalit websites and Blogs

Chi-square test asserts that there is an association between the hours spent in internet and receiving of E-mail notification from Dalit websites and blogs. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents who spend more time in Dalit websites and blogs receive e-mail notification regarding recent articles and posts from Dalit websites and blogs.

6.1.13 Association between the hours spent in internet and Dalit websites and Blogs

Reduces alienation

Findings of the research show that there is an association between the number of hours spend in internet and Dalit websites and blogs reduces alienation. Thus, it is found that the persons who spend more time in internet, access Dalit websites and blogs, through which they find people of the same community and interest. So, they contact them. This in turn gives them the sense of being belong to a group. Thus, they reduce alienation from the society in which they are discriminated and alienated.

6.1.14 Relationship between Demographic Variables and the Dimension of Dalit Websites and Blogs as Alternative Media

In this analysis, demographic variables such as age, education, gender and occupation are studied to gauge how the respondents falling under these variables view Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media.
6.1.14.1 Gender and the Dimension of Dalit Websites and Blogs as Alternative Media

Findings of the study says that there is no significant difference between male and female with respect to the all the dimensions of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media. Based on the mean score, male respondents has slightly better opinion in the dimensions of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media than the female, but, not significant at 5% level.

6.1.14.2 Age and the Dimension of Dalit Websites and Blogs as Alternative Media

Findings of the research explicates there is a relationship between the age group with respect to the dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as serving the community and the overall opinion about Dalit websites and blogs. Based on Duncan Multiple Range test, the opinion that Dalit websites and blogs serve the community is highly felt by the respondents of the age group between 26-40 years than the rest of the age group. The overall opinion about Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media is felt highly by the respondents by the age groups of below 25 years than the rest of the age groups.

6.1.14.3 Educational qualification and the Dimension of Dalit Websites and Blogs as Alternative Media

The analysis shows that there is a significant difference between educational qualifications with respect to the dimensions of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative to mainstream media and part of the civil society. The ANOVA technique followed by Duncan multiple range test, applied to know the level of impact on different groups, establishes the fact that the respondents with educational qualification up to Under Graduation have been slightly high in accepting the fact that Dalit websites and blogs are alternative to mainstream media and part of the civil society than the respondents with Higher secondary, while the
respondents with educational qualification Post Graduation are not significant with other
dimension.

6.1.14.4 Occupation and the Dimension of Dalit Websites and Blogs as Alternative

Media

It is revealed from the research that there is a significant difference between the
occupation with respect to the dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as alternative to
mainstream media and the part of the civil society. Based on Duncan Multiple Range test,
the respondents who fall under the category of professionals and media professionals show
high agreement with the dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as alternative to mainstream
media and part of the civil society than the rest of the occupation. But the students,
academicians and banking/marketing professionals are not significant with the dimension of
alternative to mainstream media and part of the civil society.

6.1.15 Relationship between Internet Usage and the Dimension of Dalit Websites and

Blogs as Alternative Media

In this analysis, how the usage of internet by the respondents is associated with the
dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media.

3.1.15.1 Frequency of Internet Usage and the Dimension of Dalit Websites and Blogs as

Alternative Media

Findings of the study reveal that there is a significant difference between the
frequency of internet usage with respect to the dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as an
alternative media. Thus, it is found that respondents who use internet feel that Dalit websites
and blogs are in concurrence with all the four approaches of alternative media – serve the
community, alternative to mainstream media, part of the civil society and rhizomatic media.
The ANOVA technique followed by Duncan multiple range test, applied to know the significance, it is evident that the respondents who use the internet more than once a day have shown higher level of agreement with all the dimensions of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media than the rest of the respondents who use the internet either once a day or once a week. With regard to the overall opinion about Dalit websites and blogs, respondents who use the internet more than once a day have shown higher level of significant that the other two groups.

6.1.15.2 Hours Spent in Internet and the Dimension of Dalit Websites and Blogs as Alternative Media

It is found that there is a relationship between the number of hours spent in internet with respect to the dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media for Dalits. Based on Duncan Multiple Range test, it is found that the respondents who spend more than 4 hours in internet have higher level of agreement with the dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media. With respect to the overall opinion of Dalit websites and blogs, the respondents who use internet for more than 4 hour per day have higher level of consensus than the rest of the groups. But the people who are spending 2-3 hour per day in internet are not significant with the dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as rhizomatic media.
6.1.15.3 Hours Spent in Blogging and the Dimension of Dalit Websites and Blogs as Alternative Media

From the findings of the research it is noticed that there a significant difference between the number of hours spent in blogging with respect to the dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media for Dalits. Based on Duncan Multiple Range test, it is found that the respondents who spend more than 10 hours per week in blogging have higher level of agreement with all the dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media. With respect to the overall opinion of Dalit websites and blogs, the respondents who blog more than 10 hour per week have higher level of consensus as Dalit websites and blogs are alternative media than the rest of the groups.

6.1.15.4 Hours Spent in Dalit Websites and Blogs and the Dimension of Dalit Websites and Blogs as Alternative Media

According to the ANOVA test, there is a significant difference between the number of hours spent in Dalit websites and blogs with respect to the dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media for Dalits. Based on Duncan Multiple Range test, it is obvious that the respondents who spend more than 10 hours per week in Dalit websites and blogs have higher level of agreement with all the dimension of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media. With respect to the overall opinion of Dalit websites and blogs, the respondents who spend more time in Dalit related websites and blogs have higher level of unanimity in saying that Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative media than the rest of the groups.
6.1.16 Dalit Websites and Blogs as Serving the Community

In the approach of alternative media is ‘serving the community’, strong emphasis laid on the concept of community. From the findings of the research, all the attributes of ‘serving the community’ is either agreed or strongly agreed by majority of the respondents of online survey. The attributes of ‘serving the community’ such as discussion of relevant issues, access and participation, education, and freedom of expression were measured with equal weighted average to establish the fact that all these attributes were perceived equally important by the respondents, followed by the attributes like Dalit websites and blogs as communication channels for Dalits and validates and strengthens the Dalit Community.

According to Friedman’s test conducted to find the significant difference between the mean ranks towards the view on Dalit websites and blogs as serving the community, the test confirms that there is significant difference between the mean ranks towards the attributes of Dalit websites and blogs as serving the community. Based on the mean value, ‘communication channels/exchange of opinions’ is the most important attributes of Dalit websites and blogs as serving the community, followed by access and participation, platform for discussing Dalit issues, and validates and strengthens Dalit community.

6.1.17 Dalit Websites and Blogs as an Alternative to Mainstream Media

Frequency distribution on Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative to mainstream media throws light that vast majority of the respondents either agree or strongly agree on the attributes of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative to mainstream media. Exchange of one’s own opinions and to produce their own news information has been rated as the most weighted average attributes of Dalit websites and blogs as an alternative to mainstream media followed by counter-hegemonic representation and discourse to the mainstream
media, provides space for critical debate and in depth analysis of Dalit issues left out buy the mainstream media, multiplicity of societal voice, countering bias and prejudices, supplement to mainstream media, news source and alternative representation.

Friedman’s test concludes that there is significant difference between the mean ranks towards the characteristics of Dalit websites and blogs as alternative media to the mainstream media. Based on the mean rank, Dalits producing their own media content is the most important characteristics of Dalit websites and blogs as alternative media to the mainstream media.

Chi-square test finds that the majority of the respondents who fall under the age group of 26-40 say that Dalit websites and blogs ‘always’ as the space for countering bias and prejudices. Further, Chi-square test finds that the persons who spend more number of hours in internet say that Dalit websites and blogs produce their media content. The aspect of Dalit websites and blogs offer counter-hegemonic representation to the mainstream media is endorsed by the age group of 26-40, according to Chi-square test. This notion has been accepted by all the interviewee too.

6.1.18 Dalit Websites and Blogs as Part of the Civil Society

Majority of the respondents answered positively for the attributes of Dalit websites and blogs as part of the civil society. Based on the weighted average on the attributes of Dalit websites and blogs as part of the civil society, the attributes of ‘Dalit web Sites and blogs unites Dalits’ is ranked top by the respondents followed by the attributes fighting civil rights, provides awareness, promoting democratic value, facilitates macro participation, space for public debate and opportunities for self-representation, integral part of the civil society, watchdog on government and provides legal advocacy.
According to Friedman’s test, there is significant difference between the mean ranks towards the characteristics of Dalit websites and blogs as part of the civil society. In this test ‘Dalit websites and blogs unite Dalits’ is the most important attribute of Dalit websites and blogs as part of the civil society.

6.1.19 Dalit Websites and Blogs as Rhizomatic media

Findings of the research based on the frequency distribution of weighted average on Dalit websites and blogs as rhizomatic media explains that the attribute ‘Dalit websites and blogs independent from the state and the mainstream media’ is the most important attribute followed by Dalit websites and blogs questions the mainstream media, Dalit websites and blogs linkage to Dalit activists and Dalit websites and blogs are elusive and contingent media and Dalit websites and blogs as crossroads of the civil society.

According to Friedman’s test there is no significant difference between the mean ranks towards the characteristics of Dalit websites and blogs as part of the civil society. This implies that the perspective of Dalit websites and blogs as rhizomatic media is not perceived positively by the respondents of the online survey. In other words, respondents don’t view Dalit websites and blogs as completely rhizomatic media. This dimension has been accepted by the participants of the in-depth semi-structured interview. Content analysis of Dalit websites and blogs substantiate these findings. It is found that there is very limited number of space occupied by the attributes of rhizomatic media.

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6.1.20 Correlation Coefficient among Serving the Community, Alternative to Mainstream, Part of the Civil Society and Rhizome

The correlation co-efficient between serving the community and alternative to mainstream media is 0.592 which indicates 59 percentage positive relationships between serving the community and alternative to mainstream media at 1% level. The correlation co-efficient between serving the community and part of the civil society is 0.630 which indicates 63 percentage positive relationships between serving the community and part of the civil society at 1% level. The correlation co-efficient between serving the community and rhizome is 0.600 which indicates 60 percentage positive relationships between serving the community and rhizome at 1% level. The correlation co-efficient between alternative to mainstream media and part of the civil society is 0.841 which indicates 84 percentage positive relationships between alternative to mainstream media and part of the civil society at 1% level. The correlation co-efficient between alternative to mainstream media and rhizome is 0.768 which indicates 76 percentage positive relationships between alternative to mainstream media and part of the civil society at 1% level. The correlation co-efficient between part of the civil society and rhizome is 0.754 which indicates 75 percentage positive relationship between part of the civil society and rhizome at 1% level.

The multiple correlation coefficient is 0.301 measures the degree of relationship between the actual values and the predicted values of the overall opinion about Dalit websites and blogs. Because the predicted values are obtained as a linear combination of age group in years (X₁) gender (X₂), Educational qualification (X₃), Occupation (X₄), Often to use internet (X₅), Number of hours spent in internet per day (X₆), Number of hours blogging per week (X₇) and Blogging platform (X₈) the coefficient value of 0.301 indicates
that the relationship between the overall opinion about Dalit websites and blogs and the eight independent variables is quite moderate and positive.

The value of R square is 0.091 simply means that about 9% of the variation in the overall opinion about Dalit websites and blogs is explained by the estimated SRP that uses age group in years (X1), gender (X2), Educational qualification (X3), Occupation (X4), Often to use internet (X5), Number of hours spent in internet per day (X6), Number of hours blogging per week (X7) and Blogging platform (X8) as the independent variables and R square value is significant at 5% level.

6.2 Conclusion

To call something as an alternative media, it should have the characteristics of alternative media. Various scholars like Chris Atton, John Downing etc, have studied the concept of alternative media and they have identified the potentials and the role of an alternative media. Drawing on the expertise of alternative media scholars, Bailey et al., (2008) have constructed theories of alternative media. The present study attempted to find out whether Dalit websites and blogs are an alternative media for Dalits based on Bailey et al., theories of alternative media.

Findings of the study substantiate that Dalits are making use of internet to articulate the issues confronting them in their day-to-day lives through websites and blogs maintained by them. Findings narrate that Dalits and Dalit activists perceive internet as an alternative media for them. Although all the four approaches of alternative media – serving the community, alternative to mainstream media, part of the civil society and rhizomatic media – did not receive equal scoring, based on the overall response rate, it can be concluded that Dalits are making using of internet as an alternative media. The study reveals that ‘to inform
readers about current issues on Dalits’ as the foremost motivation for accessing Dalit websites and blogs.

The approach ‘Alternative to mainstream media’, the online survey discloses that the characteristic of ‘Producing their own media content’ is overriding. The aspect ‘counter-hegemonic representation to the mainstream media’ follows next. Thus, there is a consensus among online survey respondents that Dalit websites and blogs are alternative to the mainstream media. The content analysis of Dalit websites and blogs reveal that majority of the contents fall under the purview of ‘alternative to mainstream media’, thus occupying the top most place among the four approaches of alternative media.

Among the four approaches of alternative media, the content analysis of both Dalit websites and blogs reveal that the characteristics of ‘alternative to mainstream media’ is dominating in terms of topics and themes discussed and shared in Dalit websites and blogs. In online survey, it is found that ‘producing their own media content’ is the overriding characteristic of this approach. The approach ‘alternative media a serving the community’ is also another important approach next the approach of ‘alternative to mainstream media. Content analysis points out that the characteristics of this approach too are predominant in Dalit websites and blogs. Online survey reveals that the characteristic of ‘Dalit websites and blogs as communication channels for Dalits’ is voted high by the respondents.

Although the approach, ‘part of the civil society’, did not have much content in Dalit websites and blogs, one can still find the effort of these internet platforms to be part of the civil society. In online survey, the characteristics of ‘part of the civil society’ such as ‘uniting Dalits’ and ‘fighting for civil rights’ have received a higher consensus. Furthermore, the in-depth interview too accepts the potential of Dalit websites and blogs as
being part of the society. In the approach, ‘Dalit websites and blogs are rhizomatic media’, the Friedman test proves that there is no significant difference the mean rank towards the characteristics of Dalit websites and blogs as rhizomatic media. Though the participants of the in-depth interview agree that Dalit websites and blogs have the potential to be rhizomatic media, they are skeptical about the present state of Dalit websites and blogs as being rhizomatic media. This perspective too is reflected in the online survey and in the content analysis where the response is very poor towards the approach of ‘rhizomatic media’.

Hence, in this study, the researcher attempted to find out the alternative media qualities found in Dalit websites and blogs based on Bailey’s et al., theories of alternative media. As seen earlier, the results have come out with mixed responses to all the four approaches of alternative media. It was found from the results that the respondents of the online survey were quite low as the number was 210, in spite of constant reminders and sufficient time duration for the reply. Thus, it was felt that there is a need for the literate Dalits to access and use internet regularly for speaking to each others, combating caste problems and bringing about mobilizing for their rights and equality. For, it was this internet platform such as social media that fueled revolution in Egyptian, Libyan and Tunisian and brought about a change in the society.

6.3 Recommendation and Scope for the Future Research

- It was observed during the study that apart from using Dalit websites and blogs, social media like Facebook playing an important role in the life of Dalits by connecting, expressing and sharing with others. Majority of the dalits who access internet have an account in Facebook and the Non-Governmental Organizations who
work for Dalits have an account with Facebook. This fact is vivid when one visits a Dalit website and a blog where the icon of Facebook leads them to their respective Facebook page. Thus there is a lot scope for doing a research on Dalits usage of social networking sites like Facebook.

- Though the study concludes that internet is an alternative media for Dalit where the mainstream media does not heed much of the voices of Dalits in India, it can be found that the presence of Dalits in internet very less. That’s the reason why reaching more number of Dalits in online became one of the limitations of the research. Though studies have proven that internet is a medium through which Dalits can voice and their voices can be heard, only a small segment of educated Dalit population are making use of the new technology. Thus, the research also throws light on the future research on the factors and social conditions that prevent them from accessing internet or the perception of internet by Dalit community.

- In India, we find minorities occupying a significant percent of population. As seen in the literature, media’s attitude is still the same towards minorities. Studies reveal that different types of alternative media are widely used by the minorities in other parts of the world. But in India, the usage of alternative media by the minorities is very low. Internet has gained momentum in the present scenario and it has the potential for alternative media. The current research is centered around only on Dalits and their internet usage as an alternative media. Thus, there is also the need for studying about the other minorities in India and their use of internet as an alternative media.

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• The present study attempted to study the role internet as alternative media, for which the researcher adopted the four approaches of alternative media. Hence, the characteristic of each approach was applied with Dalit websites and blogs to gauge whether they are alternative media for Dalits. Hence, this research could be further extended by studying more about the semantic of the online content and the language used by Dalits to communicate with others in Dalit websites particularly in Dalit blogs. It was found during the research that the language used by the bloggers is scathing and different from the language used in the mainstream media.