

Abstract

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The Virtual Child: Indian Children in Virtual and Geographical Spaces

The study aims at understanding the paradigm shift that has happened for children in the realm of digital spaces that are timeless, seamless, endless, full of new possibilities, new life roles, assumed identities & un gendered co existence. The study relies on primary information collected through interviews with over 500 children in India. It maps and explores the media preferences of the children to the time spent in the virtual world and changing life patterns in the real life world.

The study draws upon the technological advancements that have redefined the operatives of the real world and the physical society. It has also taken children away from play fields and planted them in a virtual environment where the context of peer groups, bullying, decision making, relationships, life goals and expectations has been redefined. My work focuses on how TV viewing patterns have gotten merged with the virtual spaces that the millennials co-inhabit today across geographies. A total of 118 TV shows being played on the Indian Television with presence on the web world were sampled, reviewed and analysed. A total of 201 girls and 294 boys were interviewed about their preferences. The programs analysed were found to have content drawn up in India, localisation of foreign content (e:g Oggy and the Cockroaches), adaptation of foreign formats like that of The Big Brother throw a light on global consumption patterns. The study also

highlights the relationship and the interaction between the visual and the geographical spaces.