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PERFORMANCE OF CONSUMER REDRESSAL AGENCIES IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Consumer disputes redressal mechanism has been established by the Government under Consumer Protection Act, 1986 to provide simple, speedy and inexpensive justice to the common and aggrieved consumers. This mechanism includes the agencies at District, State and National levels to resolve the grievances of consumers. As per provisions of the Act, Himachal Pradesh Government has established Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (CDRCs) at State and District levels to provide justice to the consumers. Since their inception, State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (CDRC) and District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions (CDRCs) of Himachal Pradesh are meant for resolving the complaints of the consumers but cases of consumer disputes remain pending at both levels. This paper attempts to evaluate the performance of Himachal Pradesh Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in term of disposal of cases by them. For analyzing the performance of the Commission, data have been analyzed with the help of percentage, correlation coefficient, mean and interpreted accordingly.

KEYWORDS

Himachal Pradesh state consumer disputes redressal commission, district consumer disputes redressal commissions, consumer protection.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 is the most important law that has been enforced to protect the consumer rights. The Act makes provision for the establishment of appropriate machinery for the settlement of consumer disputes and redressal of consumer grievances at various levels. There are three tier Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies functioning at District, State and National level known as District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions, State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions and National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions.

As per the Act, a District Consumers Disputes Redressal Commission (District Commission) has the responsibility to dispense justice to the consumers in each District, which deals with the transactions upto Rs. 1 crore and monetary relief. Forums are situated in the district headquarters. Further, the Act provides each State/Union Territory Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (State/UT Commission), which deals with the cases in which the value of transactions and relief is between Rs. 1 crore to 10 crore which may amend time to time. It has jurisdiction of the whole State /UT in which it is constituted. It has the authority to hear appeals against the orders of District Commissions.

National Commission is the Apex authority situated at Delhi which deals with the cases where the value of transaction and relief is above rupees 10 Crore and it has authority to hear appeals against the orders of the State Commissions according to the Act. It consists of one president and four other members. It was constituted in the year 1988.

According to the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, the State Government of Himachal Pradesh has established the State Commission and a District Forum in the first instance with its headquarters at State Capital Shimla which started functioning from 01.11.1989. At present, there are four whole time Districts Forums in the Himachal Pradesh namely; Shimla District Consumer Commission, Mandi District Consumer Commission, Una District Consumer Commission and Kangra District Consumer Commission at Dharamshala. The three-tier quasi-judicial machinery is meant for quick redressal and effectively performs in disposal of cases. The trend of pending cases determines the performance of these agencies. Keeping this in view, a study has been conducted to examine the performance of Himachal Pradesh Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies with regard to disposal of cases.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chaudhary's (2015)¹ study "Evaluation of Efficacy of the Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies in India" reveals that Consumer Disputes Agencies are striving hard to dispose the cases and still a large number of cases are pending in Consumer Courts in India. Certain immediate measures through improvement in existing functioning of these agencies and by evolving new model of alternative by using information technology tools are needed as per the scholar. He also recommends that stake holders should be proactive to resolve the consumer problems so as to make business world the place of worth trading and transacting and Consumer Protection Councils are required to be strengthened so as to protect the rights of the consumers.

Manmohan and Auxcelian (2015)² stated in "Working Performance of Consumer Disputes Redressal Agency in India" that the redressal machineries in India are playing a vital role to protect the interests of consumers by providing justice to the aggrieved consumers and the government should take steps to evaluate the efficacy of redressal agencies to avail speedy justice and betterment of consumer welfare.

Paul and Sudhakaran (2018)³ have stated in their study entitled "A Critical Evaluation on the Performance of Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in India" that the forums are functioning efficiently and have shown considerably high rate of disposal. But sufficient action should be taken to curtail the hike in the number of pending cases. Further, they realized that people especially those who belong to the rural sector, are still unaware of redressal mechanisms prevailing in the country and they are still being exploited. So, there should be more awareness programmes to educate consumers about their rights and privileges.

Minhas Shammi (2019)⁴ has inferred in his research "Consumer Disputes and Consumer Redressal Forums in India" that all the agencies at National, State and District levels are trying best to redress the grievances of the customers. But the performance of district consumer forums is higher as compared to the others agencies. The study suggests that the consumer cases should be finalized within reasonable time period so that faith of the consumers on the consumer protection commission and forums could be enhanced and for more effective performance of Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies Central and States Government and should provide adequate staff to the National, State and District forums.

The aforesaid researches have been conducted at national level only. There is no study conducted earlier on the selected title. Further, it will provide more effective insight into the working of State Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies, if it is analyzed every State-wise separately. Keeping this in view, the present study is conducted.

3. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

The three-tier quasi-judicial machinery must perform effectively in disposal of cases. The consumer redressal bodies should dispose the cases within the stipulated time frame. But, in reality the consumer cases hardly disposed off with in specified time period. A study is needed to find out the performance of Consumer Disputes Redressal Bodies in Himachal Pradesh. The results of the present study will surely helpful to improve the functioning of these Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies of Himachal Pradesh.

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The performance of Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies was measured by analyzing the number of cases filed, disposed-off and pending with the Himachal Pradesh State and Districts Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions. The required data were collected from the office and website of Himachal Pradesh Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission for the period between 2005 to 2020.

5. OBJECTIVES

The present study has been carried out with the following objectives:

1. To compare the performance of Consumer Redressal Bodies of Himachal Pradesh and performance of such agencies in India.
2. To analyze the performance of Himachal Pradesh State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.
3. To evaluate the performance of the District Level Consumer Redressal Commissions in Himachal Pradesh.

6. METHODOLOGY

In order to analyze the performance of Consumer Disputes Redressal Bodies working in Himachal Pradesh, data has been collected from the official records and websites of Himachal Pradesh Consumer Commission. The data has been tabulated and analyzed according to the need of the study. The performance of these bodies has been analyzed by applying percentage, correlation, means and ranking methods.

7. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In order to accomplish the objectives of the study, collected data have been analyzed, interpreted and the results have been discussed as below:

7.1 Performance of Consumer Disputes Redressal Bodies of India and Himachal Pradesh

The study investigated the comparative performance of various Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies working National and Himachal Pradesh State levels to resolve the complaints of consumers as depicted in table 1 as under:

TABLE A: COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE OF CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL BODIES OF INDIA AND HIMACHAL PRADESH AS ON 31 DECEMBER, 2020

Agency	India		Himachal Pradesh	
	State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions	District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions	State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission	District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions
Cases Filed Since Inception	962282	4391348	32790	69131
Cases Disposed-off Since Inception	837347	4018139	32050	66615
Cases Pending Since Inception	124935	373209	740	2516
Percentage of Disposal	87.02%	91.50%	97.74%	96.36%
Percentage of Pending	12.98%	8.50%	2.26%	3.64%

Source: Records of National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Delhi & Statistics of Himachal Pradesh State Consumer Disputes Redressal commission. From the analysis of table-A, it is revealed that the performance of Himachal Pradesh State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (97.74%) is higher than the performance of District Commissions (96.36%) of Himachal Pradesh as only 2.26 percent are pending at the State Commission while the rate of pendency is more (3.64) at Districts Commissions of Himachal Pradesh. At national level the performance of Districts Commission is better than the State Commissions whereas in Himachal Pradesh; the State Commission is performing better than the Districts Commissions. Further, it is concluded from the analysis that the disposal rate of Himachal Pradesh State as well as Districts Commission is higher than the disposal rate of all the State and Districts Commissions of India. On the other side, the rate of pendency is higher at National Level than the pendency rate of Himachal Pradesh Commissions.

7.2 Year-wise Performance of Himachal Pradesh State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

The trends of performance of the cases filed, disposed-off and pending with the Himachal Pradesh State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission during the years 2005 to 2020 are as under:

TABLE B: YEAR-WISE PERFORMANCE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL COMMISSION AS ON DECEMBER 31, 2020

Years	Cases Filed in the year	Cases Filed (%) Growth	Cases Disposed off in the year	Cases Disposed off (%) Growth	Cases pending at the end	Cases Pending (%) Growth	% of Disposal	% of Pending
2005	1195	-	851	-	1043	-	71.21	87.28
2006	1664	39.25	2040	139.72	667	-36.05	122.59	40.08
2007	2180	31.00	1935	-5.15	912	36.73	88.76	41.83
2008	1508	-30.83	1521	-21.40	899	-1.43	100.86	59.62
2009	1694	12.33	1789	17.62	804	-10.57	105.60	47.46
2010	1722	1.65	1689	-5.59	837	4.10	98.08	48.61
2011	1357	-21.20	1183	-29.96	1011	20.79	87.17	74.50
2012	1452	7.00	2021	70.84	442	-56.28	139.19	30.44
2013	1584	9.09	1673	-17.22	353	-20.14	105.62	22.29
2014	1945	22.79	1700	1.61	245	-30.59	87.40	12.60
2015	1089	-44.01	1132	-33.41	202	-17.55	103.95	18.55
2016	1309	20.20	1260	11.31	251	24.26	96.26	19.17
2017	1296	-0.99	981	-22.14	566	125.50	75.69	43.67
2018	1369	5.63	1164	18.65	771	5.48	85.03	56.32
2020	625	-54.35	715	-38.57	740	-4.02	114.4	118.4
		-0.17		6.16		2.87		
r	0.81							

Source: Statistics of Himachal Pradesh State Consumer Disputes Redressal commission, <https://hpconsumercommission.nic.in/>

Table-B depicts that every maximum growth has been recorded in the year 2006 (39.25%) followed by the year 2007 whereas maximum negative growth has been found in the year 2020 followed by the year 2015. In the year 2006, comparatively higher numbers of cases disposed off by the State Commission indicates that in this year the settlement rate was high but immediately in the preceding year i.e. 2005, pendency rate was very high and in the year 2020, the number of cases filed was minimum. It is worth to mention here that in the year 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2020, the disposal rates indicate clearance of the preceding pendency of the cases filed. Further, the trends of the cases disposed-off and lying pending with the State Consumers Disputes Redressal Commission indicate that consistency is not maintained by the Commission to dispose-off the cases filed causing inconsistent trends of pendency. Moreover, the results also indicate that there has been decline by 0.7 percent in the cases filed whereas; there has been a growth by 6.16 and 2.87 percent in the cases disposed-off and pending with the Commission during the research period.

7.3 District-wise Performance of all the Districts Commissions of Himachal Pradesh

District-wise cases filed, disposed off and pending with the District Level Commissions are depicted and analyzed as under:

TABLE C: DISTRICT-WISE PERFORMANCE OF DISTRICTS COMMISSIONS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH AS ON DECEMBER 31, 2020

Sr No	Name of District Commission	Cases Filed Since Inception	Rank	Cases Disposed of Since Inception	Cases Pending Since Inception	% of Disposal	Rank	% of Pending
1.	Mandi	13661	2	13594	67	99.51	2	0.49
2.	Kullu	2574	9	2534	40	98.45	3	1.55
3.	Lahaul-Spiti	48	12	48	--	100	1	--
4.	Shimla	14896	1	13887	1009	93.23	11	6.77
5.	Sirmour	3060	8	2834	226	92.61	12	7.39
6.	Kinnaur	352	11	329	23	93.47	10	6.53
7.	Una	5849	5	5609	240	95.90	8	4.10
8.	Hamirpur	4091	7	3901	190	95.36	9	4.64
9.	Bilaspur	5670	6	5443	227	95.99	7	4.00
10.	Kangra	10361	3	10146	215	97.92	4	2.08
11.	Chamba	1963	10	1900	63	96.79	5	3.21
12.	Solan	6606	4	6390	216	96.73	6	3.27
	Σ	69131		66615	2516	96.36		3.64
	$\bar{X}$	5761		5551	229			
	σ	4902		4730	273			
	r	0.99						

Source: Official Records of Himachal Pradesh State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.

As per table-C, it has been found that out of total filed cases (69131) the maximum number of cases filed with the District Commission of Shimla (14896) followed by Mandi (13661) and Kangra (10361) District Commissions and the disposal rate of Mandi, Kullu, Lahaul-Spiti, Kangra, Chamba and Solan has been recorded higher than the overall average disposal rate (96.36%). The results reveal that highest disposal rate against the filed cases has been recorded of Lahaul-Spiti (100%) followed by the District Commission of Mandi (99.51%). So, it can be concluded that as compare to other District Commission, the District Commission of Mandi and Kullu are performing better to resolve the complaints of consumers as they have the lowest pendency rate of the filed cases though the disposal rate of all the District Commissions is very high. In addition to this, the matter of grave concern is that average number of cases filed (5761) is more as compare to average number of settled cases (5551). However, correlation coefficient is significantly high between the cases filed and disposed-off.

7.4 Year-wise Performance of District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions of Himachal Pradesh: Year-wise

There has been a decline in the number of cases filed, disposed-off and pending with the District Level Consumer Disputes redressal commissions as per the following table:

TABLE D: YEAR-WISE PERFORMANCE OF DISTRICT CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL COMMISSIONS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH AS ON DECEMBER, 31 2020

Years	Cases Filed in the year	Cases Filed (%) Growth	Cases Disposed off in the year	Cases Disposed off (%) Growth	Cases pending at the end	Cases Pending (%) Growth	% of Disposal	% of Pending
2005	1868	-	1913	-	2866	-	102.40	153.43
2006	2105	12.69	1889	-1.25	3082	7.54	89.74	146.41
2007	2064	-1.95	2332	23.45	2814	-8.70	112.98	136.34
2008	2153	4.31	2290	-1.80	2677	-4.87	106.36	124.34
2009	2387	10.87	2253	-1.62	2811	5.00	94.39	117.76
2010	2229	-6.62	1956	-13.18	3084	9.71	87.75	138.36
2011	2298	3.10	1943	-0.66	3439	11.51	84.55	149.65
2012	2060	-10.36	2104	8.29	3395	-1.28	102.14	164.81
2013	2024	-1.75	2313	9.93	3106	-8.51	114.28	153.46
2014	1860	-8.10	1981	-14.35	2985	-3.90	106.50	160.48
2015	1613	-13.28	1718	-13.28	2880	-3.52	106.51	178.55
2016	1678	4.03	1882	9.55	2676	-7.08	112.16	159.48
2017	1546	-7.87	1592	-15.40	2630	-1.72	102.98	170.12
2018	1442	-6.73	1528	-4.02	2544	-3.27	105.96	176.42
2020	532	-63.11	378	-75.26	2516	-1.10	71.053	472.93
		-6.05		-6.3		-0.7		
r	0.91							

Source: Statistics of Himachal Pradesh State Consumer Disputes Redressal commission, <https://hponconsumercommission.nic.in/>.

The analysis of table-D reveals that maximum rate of growth has been recorded in 2006 and during the research period between 2005 to 2020, positive growth is recorded in the number of cases filed and pending with the District Level Commissions in five years indicating that the disposal rate has remained comparatively high thus efficiency in performance. Further, in the year 2005, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018, the disposal rate of cases has exceeded by hundred percent which means that the past pendency is also cleared by the Districts Commissions of Himachal Pradesh. It is a matter of grave concern that the number of pending cases is higher than the number of filed showing slow process of settlement of cases by the Districts level Commissions. It is analyzed that during the research period overall the cases filed, disposed-off and pending with these agencies have declined by 6.05 percent, 6.3 percent and 0.7 percent respectively.

8. FINDINGS

- The disposal rate of Himachal Pradesh State as well as Districts Commissions is higher than the disposal rate of all the States and District Commissions of India. Thus, the performance of Himachal Pradesh CDRAs is better as compare to all the Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies of India as the rate of pendency is lower at Himachal Pradesh CDRs.
- When compared, the Himachal Pradesh State Commission's performance is better than that of the Districts CDRs of Himachal Pradesh.
- The trends of the cases disposed-off and lying pending with the State CDRC indicate that consistency is not maintained by the Commission to dispose-off the cases filed causing inconsistent trends of pendency. Further, there has been decline in the cases filed whereas; there has been a growth in the cases disposed-off and pending with the Commission.
- The District Commission of Mandi and Kullu are performing better to resolve the complaints of consumers as they have the lowest pendency rate of the filed cases though the disposal rate of all the District Commissions is very high. But the average number of settled cases (5551) is less than the average number of filed cases (5761).
- It is a matter of grave concern that the number of pending cases is higher than the number of filed showing slow process of settlement of cases by the Districts CDRs. Analysis shows that overall the cases filed, disposed-off and pending with these agencies have declined.

9. SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of observation and findings of the study, following suggestions can be made to improve the effectiveness of Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies:

- Districts Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions have to review their working so that the pending cases be disposed at a fast rate to bring smoothness to give justice to consumers at the right time.
- The correlation between the cases filed and disposed-off is highly positive which shows that the performance of the redressal agencies is good but the rate of disposal should be increased further to decrease the pendency of cases.
- There is need to identify the reasons for delay in disposal of cases.
- Consumer redressal agencies should be equipped with the sufficiency of experts, infrastructure facilities and services at the first priority so that the redressal of consumer cases be redressed and expedited.
- Awareness programmes need to be organized to make consumer aware about their rights and to apply for redressal of their matters by the concerned agencies.

10. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that Consumer Redressal Agencies of Himachal Pradesh at State and Districts levels are performing efficiently for the redressal of consumer complaints as the rate of pendency is very low in the State. The working of Districts Commissions should be reviewed to speed up the disposal rate. Consumer must be aware about their rights as a consumer so that they can protect their rights in every possible way.

11. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is confined to evaluate the number performance of Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions of Himachal Pradesh based on number of cases filed, disposed-off and pending. In order to evaluate the performance, 15 years data have been collected.

12. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Performance evaluation by applying parametric and non-parametric test.
- Consumer performance regarding the functioning of Consumer Disputes Redressal Bodies in Himachal Pradesh.
- Comparatively performance evaluation between Himachal Pradesh and Other States.

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT IN TECHNOPARK

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ABSTRACT

The world is still grappling with economic, social and public health challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Kerala's IT sector was not badly affected as other sectors. The industry was able to withstand the worst of times successfully as the revenue has increased to Rs 125.43 Crores (10% increase) during the FY2019- 20. Kerala has made significant progress in terms of investments, infrastructure development and employment generation through various initiatives for the promotion of IT industry. Technopark has shown steady growth in export, revenue generation and employment from 2010-2020 amidst the outbreak of Covid-19. IT companies are shifting to a hybrid working system where they combine work from home and work from the office. Creation of small work-sharing facilities in different regions across Kerala with Net connectivity, electricity and laptops facility established by the government in collaboration with Kerala IT Parks helps professionals to 'Work Near Home' (WNH). Prefabricated incubation facility at the Technopark campus was designed to assist businesses with beginning work and getting up to speed, prior to their office space becoming operational.

KEYWORDS

IT companies, technopark, covid-19, infrastructure, work near home.

JEL CODES

L74, M15, Q54, R30.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has swept the globe with uncertainty, tragedy and panic. Kerala's usual economic pillars have been crumbling in distress amid the pandemic outbreak. But the IT companies and startups in Kerala experience a boost in business. The world is still grappling with the enormous economic, social and public health challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and Kerala's IT sector was not badly affected as traditional sectors.

IT Sectors has adjusted and adapted to lockdown restrictions by quickly putting in place work-from-home protocols. This results into a hybrid model, with employees working from home and at office. The fact that there continues to be a demand for space in the three major IT parks in the State indicates that the disruptions in growth and productivity, created by the pandemic, are well controlled at present. With the easing of lockdown restrictions, companies started showing their intent to set up operations in the State. Existing companies are expanding their operations, further pushing up the demand for space in IT parks. There was an upswing in the employment figures for the sector. The year 2019-20, with all its difficulties and challenges, has proved that Kerala's IT sector is built on solid foundations. The industry was able to withstand the worst of times successfully as the revenue has increased to Rs 125.43 Crores (10% increase) during the Financial Year 2019- 20.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The development of infrastructure will develop the economic growth of the country. The performance of infrastructure is the reflection of the performance of the company. The researcher found that it would be worthwhile to study the Infrastructure management practices of Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram during the covid-19 pandemic.

OBJECTIVES

1. To ascertain the global and Indian IT scenario during Covid 19 pandemic
2. To ascertain the Infrastructure management practices of Technopark to overcome the challenge caused due to lock-down.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study has been conducted using secondary data. The study adopted is descriptive in nature based on published data sources particularly journals, newspapers and online database.

GLOBAL IT/ITeS INDUSTRY SCENARIO

The global IT/ITeS sector shows a negative growth of 5 to 10 percent in Financial Year 2020-2021, probably for the first time, due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. This will in turn hurt IT/ITeS industry in India. IT industry may show a negative growth for the Financial Year 2020-2021 was the statement given by former CFO of Infosys. Everest Group, a consulting firm, estimates a negative growth of 5 percent during the Financial Year 2020-2021 globally and the magnitude of COVID-19 has never been witnessed by the IT industry.

Globally IT firms may see a 5 to 10 percent decline and it is bound to impact Indian IT service providers. But according to a NASSCOM estimate, Indian IT/ITeS industry revenue would be \$191 billion growing at 7.7 percent. Both Infosys and Wipro in their US Securities and Exchanges Commission filings said that COVID-19 will impact its growth and profitability as there are project terminations, deferrals, bankruptcy filings and also pricing pressure from clients.

But there is a silver lining, especially for big IT firms. Their portfolio is balanced distinct from smaller firms. If banking, retail and energy sectors are down, other sectors such as telecom and healthcare seem to be growing. Another reason as to why they could fare better is that they have zero debt and cash reserves to tide over the crisis. Cash reserves of top IT firms TCS, Infosys and Wipro stand at \$5.9 billion, \$3.6 billion and \$3.53 billion at the end of March 31, 2020, respectively. These firms could afford to go for acquisitions and that could be the key growth factor during COVID-19.

As a result of continued slowdown in business, companies will ensure tight control on costs and trimming of staff will be one of the measures that will be used. When this stage does arrive, IT-ITeS companies will use factors like skills & competency, outcomes and impact, and costs and compliance when deciding which employee types will be given a trim. Over 90% of the workforce of Indian IT firms continues to work from home. Small firms have started termination of employees as their growth came under pressure.

INDIAN IT/ITeS INDUSTRY SCENARIO

India is the topmost offshoring destination for IT companies across the world. Having proven its capabilities in delivering both on-shore and off-shore services to global clients, emerging technologies now offer an entire new gamut of opportunities for top IT firms in India. The industry is expected to grow to US\$ 350 billion by 2025. Indian IT's core competencies and strengths have attracted significant investment from major countries.

The IT sector ranked 2nd in FDI inflow as per the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). Indian IT & ITes industry, accounting for 8% of India's GDP, has also been impacted due to lockdown in key global as well as domestic markets. Major IT and ITes export markets such as US and UK were much affected by the global pandemic. Further, major client sectors such as Aviation and Tourism have experienced more impact on their businesses.

TECHNOPARK

Technopark, fully owned by the Government of Kerala, was set up to create world class standard IT infrastructure. It has five campuses spread over 662.54 acres under different phases of development. According to the Kerala State Planning Board, Technopark has a turnover of Rs 14,000 crore, export of Rs 7000 crore, investment of Rs 4979 crores, 410 companies and more than 60,000 workers in 2018-19.

Kerala has emerged as the 1st digital State in India, announced by the Hon'ble President of India in February 2016. Kerala has made significant progress in terms of investments, infrastructure development and employment generation through various initiatives. With various IT companies like TCS, Infosys, Wipro, Oracle, HCL, Cognizant and Cap Gemini setting up offices in the state, it can clearly be stated that Kerala is one of the preferred IT destination state. TECHNOPARK in Thiruvananthapuram, INFOPARK in Kochi and CYBER PARK in Kozhikode are the three IT Parks promoted by the Government of Kerala. All these Parks have world-class IT infrastructure facilities.

Technopark is an autonomous organisation fully owned by the Government of Kerala registered under the Travancore-Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act, 1955. Being one of India's largest IT Parks, it is one of the greenest Technopolis as well. Technopark came into existence in 1990 at Kerala State Capital. Technopark companies employ more than 62,000 IT professionals spread across 662.54 acres of land with 102.7 lakhs square feet built up space and about 450 companies are operating at present.

GROWTH OF TECHNOPARK FROM 2010 TO 2020

The growth of Technopark is viewed in terms of the number of companies functioning in the Technopark campus, built-up space and exports. Technopark has shown steady growth in export, revenue generation and employees' strength for about ten years. The trend in Technopark is shown in Table No. 1

TABLE 1: GROWTH OF TECHNOPARK

Sr. No.	YEAR	No. OF COMPANIES	BUILT SPACE (in Sq.Ft)	REVENUES EXPORT	NO OF EMPLOYEES
1	2010-11	200	46,50,000	1963 Cr	30,000
2	2011-12	265	60,00,000	3400 Cr	38000
3	2012-13	285	71,00,000	3493 Cr	40520
4	2013-14	336	72,00,000	4250 C	45390
5	2014-15	342	72,00,000	5100 Cr	47100
6	2015-16	358	85,10,000	6250 Cr	51865
7	2016-17	370	9300000	5000Cr	52746
8	2017-18	400	9700000	6452Cr	56000
9	2018-19	410	9700000	7000Cr	60000
10	2019-20	450	10270000	7350Cr	62000

Source: Economic Review

TOTAL INVESTMENT

Major MNCs that began operations at the Technopark campus during the period 2016-2020 include Nissan Digital India, Tech Mahindra, Teranet, Way Dot Com, and HnR Block India Pvt Ltd, which together account for an investment of Rs 27.5 crore. The investment trend during the pandemic period is also quite attractive which is depicted in the Table No. 2.

TABLE 2: INVESTMENT, TURNOVER AND EXPORT

S. No	Year	Investment (in Crores)		Total Investment	Total Turnover	Total Export
		Technopark	By Companies			
1	2019-2020	979	4,000	4,979	15,000.00	7,350
2	2020-2021 (upto 30/09/2020)	979	4,200	5179	15000.00	7,350

Source: Economic Review

TECHNOPARK AND CRISIL

CRISIL, the foremost provider of ratings, data, research, analytics and solutions retains 'CRISIL A/Stable rating for Technopark in its latest review dated 24th July 2020. The rating reflects Technopark's steady cash flow and healthy debt protection metrics, backed by sufficient liquidity. It vouches that Technopark maintains its pre-eminent position in the IT sector, despite the impact of COVID-19 globally.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN KERALA IT SECTOR

The impact of Covid-19 on the IT sector and the response measures by the sector to the pandemic has been very significant. The fall in demand from the main markets is the key issue for the IT industry. The companies most immediately affected are those associated with airlines, hotels, tourism, and entertainment.

After the Covid lockdown, 20 new IT companies have come to Kerala to set up their operations. Along with this, five existing companies have also asked for more space as part of their expansion plans. In the post-Covid scenario, IT companies are shifting to a hybrid working system where they combine work from home and work from the office. Currently, IT Parks are operating with 5-10% of employees only. The new method allows companies to achieve up to 85% productivity. According to the companies, 20% of employees will continue to work from home even after pandemic.

With companies across the globe asking employees to work from home, IT parks and commercial buildings are facing a major decline in revenues as some organisations are looking at vacating office buildings with some being unable to pay rents due to the slowdown. The IT parks in Kerala seem to have bucked the trend, with the Infopark in Kochi, Technopark in Thiruvananthapuram and Cyberpark in Kozhikode continuing to grow. Compared to the past 2-3 years, the number of companies and techies working out of these IT parks has been increasing steadily.

INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

The government has waived rent for April, May and June 2020 for all IT and ITes companies which have taken up to 10,000 sq ft of space on rent. Rent has also been waived for these three months for the incubation centers operating from the IT Parks, irrespective of the area occupied. IT and ITes companies which have taken more than 10,000 sq ft of space have been offered a moratorium on rent for three months. These companies have been allowed to pay the rent for April, May and June 2020, by July, Aug and September 2020, respectively, without any penalty or surcharge. For all non- IT establishments (restaurants), functioning within the government IT parks and operating out of government buildings, rent has been waived for three months from April to June 2020. Three- month waiver will also be given to new companies on rent space to start activities in any of the IT parks.

The annual 5 percent hike in rents for IT and non- IT office spaces, shops and establishments in government-owned buildings within IT Park was not to be imposed in the financial year 2020-21. The fixed expenses such as electricity charges with companies are also to be reduced. As the power consumption will fall considerably due to the non-functioning of the companies in IT Parks during the lockdown period, the benefit of reduction in electricity bills will also be extended to the end-users by subsidizing electricity tariffs.

WNNH TO BEAT COVID-19

With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing people to change their lifestyle in a big way across the world, the work scenario in Kerala is also witnessing a change. The occasional work-from-home (WFH) option for information technology (IT) employees has now become a matter of urgency. Though the work-from-home facilities served well in the initial days of lockdown, employee productivity levels suffered a decline eventually. While the majority of women employees complained about the psychological pressure of handling household and office work, a loss in employee morale has been reported across firms.

'Work near home', which is to be rolled out in all the major cities in Kerala is also the notable strategy of the government to win this crisis. This will be easier for employees to be near their home and even work from home. Creation of small work-sharing facilities in different regions across Kerala with Net connectivity, electricity and laptops facility established by the government in collaboration with Kerala IT Parks facilitate professionals to 'Work Near Home' (WNNH). The working spaces being offered by Kerala are the most ideal and conducive as they lay great emphasis on environmental and sustainable parameters.

COVID 19 – PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES IN TECHNOPARK

Technopark is strictly adhering to the directions and guidelines issued by the Central and State Governments from time to time. The guidelines and directions are promptly communicated to all companies via mail and awareness posters are displayed at the building entrances. Proper signages are displayed at lifts, washrooms, chairs, dining area, etc. regarding the mode of usage and to ensure social distancing. All employees have to undergo thermal scanning at building entrances and cleaning and disinfection activities are frequently conducted.

No employee is permitted to enter the campus without a face mask and vehicles coming from distant places are disinfected before entering the campus. Hand sanitizer and handwashing facilities are provided in all buildings. Proper trainings are given to security and housekeeping personnel who are engaged in thermal screening, housekeeping and disinfection activities.

Most of the meetings inside Technopark are conducted through online video conferencing facilities to ensure social distancing. Only small meetings are conducted face to face, with proper precautions and social distancing. Technopark is making available necessary infrastructure such as thermal screening machines, hand sanitizer, hand wash, gloves, masks, etc. as part of precautionary measures. Restaurants are given instructions to ensure Government guidelines while preparing and serving food and also to ensure social distancing in the dining area.

PRE-INCUBATION FACILITY

Technopark provides business incubation facilities to start-ups in the IT and ITes field. Technopark Technology Business Incubator (T-TBI), a joint initiative of Technopark, Trivandrum and the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, with great interest helping the technology business start-ups with all the necessary resources and supports to grow as a ripened business.

A 62,500 sq ft prefabricated incubation facility at the Technopark campus was launched during February 2021 designed to assist businesses with beginning work and getting up to speed, before their office space becoming operational. The incubation facility has centrally air-conditioned plug-and-play office spaces. The spaces are equipped with meeting rooms, conference rooms, a cafeteria, Fire Alarm and Fire Protection systems, 100% power backup and Building Management System for efficient operations.

FINDINGS

1. Transition to WFH proved more challenging for small and mid-sized IT & ITes companies compared to large IT & ITes companies.
2. Larger proportion of small IT & ITes companies struggled to secure WFH authorisation from clients compared to mid-sized and large IT & ITes companies.
3. Larger IT & ITes companies were able to manage the transition to WFH, but have strong concerns about data privacy and the same concern is strongly reflected amongst the mid-sized IT & ITes companies as well.

SUGGESTION

- The rent waiver, which was announced by the state government, may be extended to all the IT companies which work in IT parks owned by the government.
- The request of the IT companies to expedite the payment of pending arrears of state government and GST refunds may be accepted.
- The state may take steps to maintain good internet connectivity and uninterrupted power to increase the efficiency of employees working from home.
- As most of the IT units come under MSMEs, they can also avail the assistance, support for workers, credit support, other measures, etc., in the economic revival package announced by the central government.

CONCLUSION

The Coronavirus has forced businesses to think about how to meet employee and customer needs differently than ever before. Businesses that are ready to serve employees and customers with good infrastructure will be the one that succeeds. Whether a business is small or big, its bottom line can be benefited from a well-managed infrastructure.

Considering the tough situation faced by the IT Companies in IT Park the government of Kerala has well managed the infrastructural requirements bringing Technopark to achieve growth and success. The importance of infrastructure for sustained economic development is thus well recognized.

LIMITATIONS

Lot of research is available on public domain related to the development of IT sector in India but they do not specifically mention the infrastructure management of IT park. There are not many reports or studies or research papers published on Technopark.

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ANALYSIS OF COVID 19 AND ITS IMPACT ON MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The dissimilarity among segments of Media & Entertainment sector has become more prominent with the experience of the lockdown. Marketing spend has moved noticeably towards digital media and away from three main traditional segments like Print, FM radio and to some extent Television also. The inception of the global pandemic and ensuing lockdown has dealt a severe blow to the Indian economy. The present study is an attempt to locate the M & E present status and their focuses for the major undertaken and the collision of the crisis.

KEYWORDS

KPMG, covid-19, media ethics, digital media

JEL CODES

L82, Q54.

INTRODUCTION

After the Spanish Flu of 1918, the world had forgotten pandemics but in the year 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic the picture of the entire world has been changed. It had shown its worst impact not only in the developing and least developing countries but developed countries are also mourning, if we consider the overall world economy which is taking a hit, all over there are wage cuts and job losses which results in reducing the consumers' purchasing power. As result spending was restricted to the most essential items alone, since March, 2020 there was no point in any marketing and advertising activities. Thus, while viewership increased, content consumption increased, for Entertainment and Media industry expenses increased, but its revenues hit rock bottom. In a long-term view, COVID-19 has put the world behind by at least four to five years, and returning to the normal will take to a great extent time. Moreover, it may not be normal as earlier, but a 'new normal', and it will be difficult to dislodge them for long. The pandemic has affected not only the world economy but also the entire world population financially, socially, emotionally and mentally which has directly and indirectly impact consumer decisions and behaviour as a whole. Even in case of M & E sector as media has only the power to change the Knowledge, Behaviour, Attitude, Social Aspects and Political Views.

TABLE 1
Size of Indian M&E market (₹ billion)

Segment	2019	2020	2021*	2023*
TV	787	685	760	847
Digital	221	235	291	425
Print	296	190	237	258
Online gaming	65	76	99	155
Film entertainment	191	72	153	244
Animation & VFX	95	53	74	129
Live events	83	27	53	95
Out-of-home (OOH)	39	16	22	32
Radio	31	14	23	27
Music	15	15	18	23
Total	1,823	1,383	1,730	2,235

Source: KPMG in India analysis, 2020, based on primary and secondary research

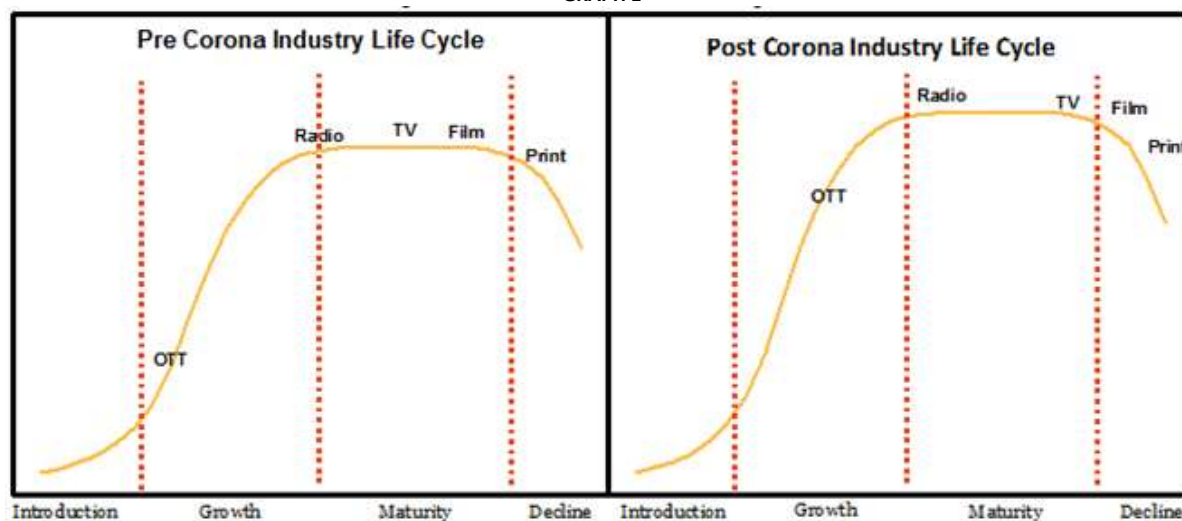
In the beginning of the year 2020, the lockdown imposed due to COVID-19, pandemic has significantly hit the major parts of the Indian Economy, whereas Indian Media and Entertainment industry is one of the largest sector which split into nine major segment (Television, Print, Films, Animation & VFX, Gaming, Digital advertising, Radio, Music, Out of Home (OOH) includes the noticeable decline primarily in Print, Television and as well as in the segment of Cinema. According to the Audit and Consultancy firm KPMG in the last five years the growth rate of Indian M & E industry was 10 percent that will decline 20 per cent in FY21.

GROWTH AND DECLINE: AN OVERVIEW

According to a latest report from KPMG, India's media and entertainment (M&E) sector should recuperate from its existing levels and post 33% growth in 2022, subsequent a reduction of 20% in 2021. This prominent that India was already experiencing a slowdown in financial activity even prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in March, with the country's real GDP declining from 6.1% in 2018 to 4.2% in 2019. Businesses will be encouraged to invest in credible digital fulfilment models as consumers migrate faster online thanks to the "low-economy" that has emerged credit to the COVID-19 virulent disease. Advertising spend on digital media is set to overtake Television by 2021.

The below Graph shows the Product Life Cycle (PLC) of the industry, before and after this disaster that how during the pandemic the traditional media grew up.

GRAPH 1



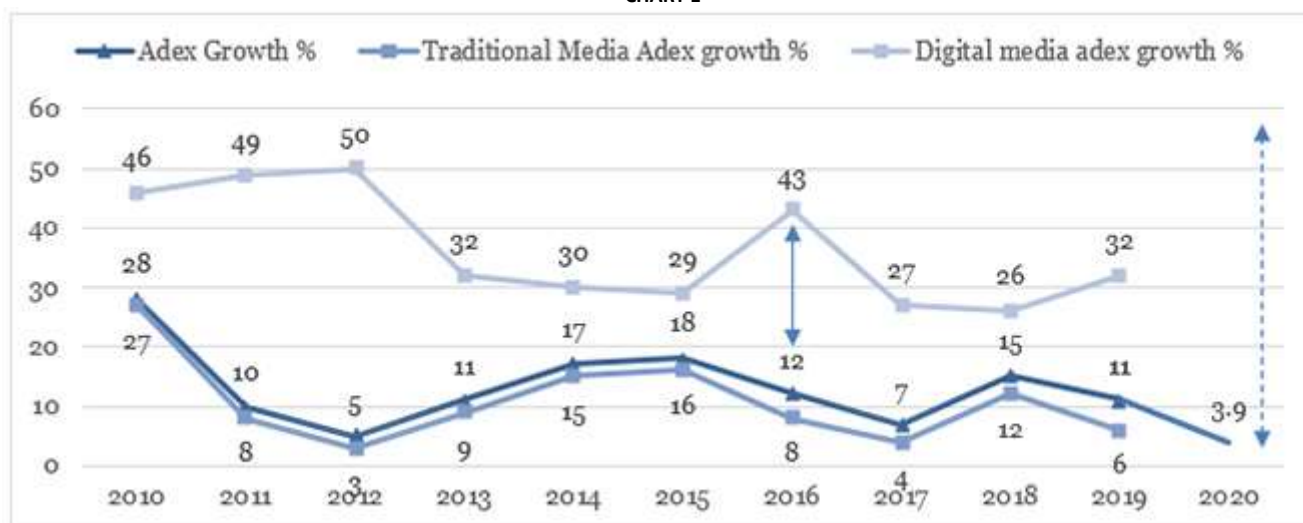
Source: orfonline.org

In 2020, Television was the prime part in terms of both generally revenues as well as advertisement revenues, with 9% growth overall. Virtual, however, posted overall 26% growth in 2020, with over the top (OTT) advertising growing by 24% which subscriptions grew by 47% and during the lockdown, likely to go exceeding as these became platforms of abundance during the lockdown.

KPMG expects that Ad revenues are also likely to be hit severely in 2021. Digital is again the only category that's expected to grow and overtake television. Print section is likely to drop by 46% in 2021. In 2022 print media is expected to recover but still be below the numbers it has in the year 2020. Similarly, TV is expected to dip 17% before recovering to INR 258 bn (US\$3.5bn) in 2022 (INR 4bn or US\$54.4m less than in 2020).

The chart shows the last ten years (2010-2020) Media Adex Growth rates, through two parameters Traditional and Digital ways:

CHART 1



Source: orfoline.org

The M&E sector is expected to bounce back in FY22 with growth of 33.1% over FY21 to reach a size of INR1.86 trillion (US\$25.3bn), at a Compound annual growth rate of 3.2% over FY20-22, with video gaming and virtual being the fastest emerging segments.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To review the performance of M & E industry in pre COVID 19 period.
2. To examine the pitfalls of M & E industry under post COVID 19 duration.

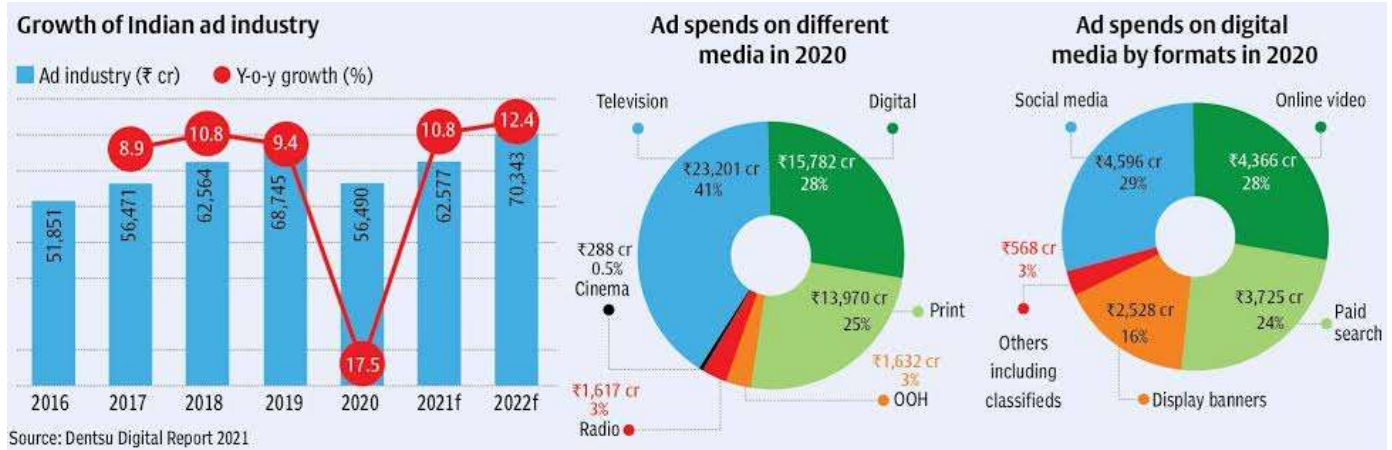
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the light of above objectives, the study has been based on secondary data. The data has been collected from the official websites of various agencies, articles published in reputed journals, blogs and other online and offline sources. An attempt has been made to understand the trends with the help of Time series analysis, Trend analysis and Percentage method.

MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY: CHANGING SCENARIO

According to the leading media and entertainment company ZEEL, the considerable impact on the viewership and affected the revenue of the network Advertising revenue is expected to decline in 2020-21. An estimate is that the advertising revenue for the entertainment industry could decline by 25-30 per cent during FY21. In FY2020, ZEEL's advertising revenues declined by 7 per cent largely due to the "macro-economic slowdown, fall in FTA revenue and loss of viewership" in certain markets.

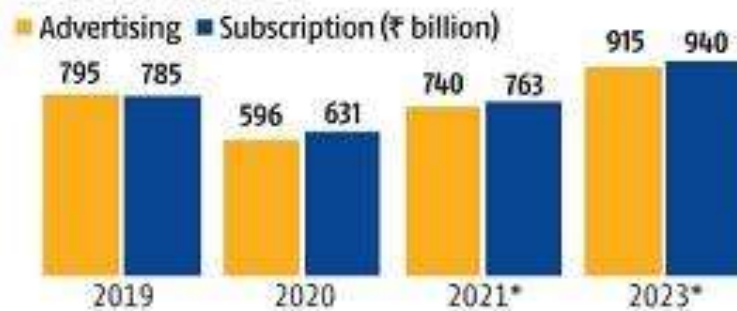
PICTURE 1



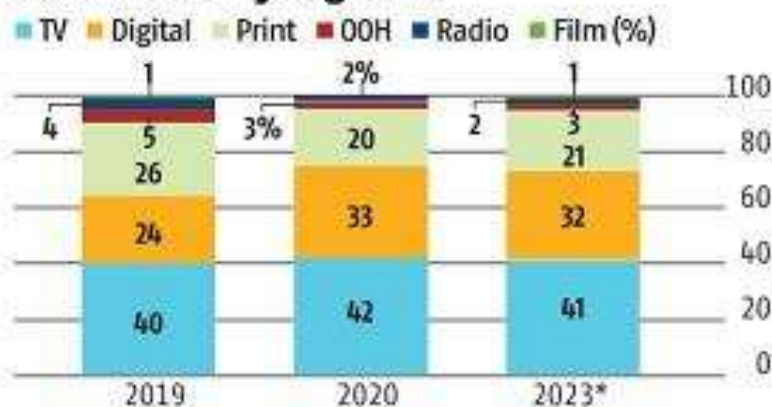
A study says that this sector would grow 25 per cent this year to reach Rs 1.73 trillion, covering up for the loss suffered in 2020, when the market shrank 24 per cent and, would cross the Rs 2.2-trillion-mark by 2023, growing at a compounded annual growth rate of 17 per cent. TV remained the leading subdivision, while the digital media had overtaken print, and online gaming had overtaken big screen amusement.

CHART 2

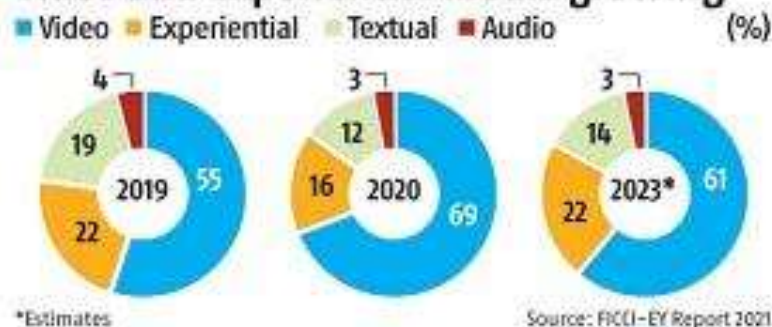
Ad vs subscription revenue: How they fared



Ad revenue by segment



Video and experiential media growing



Source: FICCI Annual Report, 2021

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The Indian M & E Industry is projected to increase at a CAGR (2019-2024) of 13.5% and estimated to reach US\$ 43.93 billion by 2024. Moreover it has also shown the robust demand in Digital infrastructure, estimated 907 million digital consumers by 2023 with 829 million mobile consumers by 2027.
2. An estimate is to achieve 33 per cent growth projected over FY21 along with Digital Gaming Consumption.
3. Whereas the survey found that other parts shrank:
Print (10%), Radio (13%), Films (7%) and OOH (9%)
The sector must recuperate these traditional segments.
4. On the other hand, the print industry's returns decline was led by a 41% fall in promotion and advertisements also show a 24% fall in circulation revenues. In case of the mass circulation of mainly English language newspapers. Focus should be given to other regional language newspapers also.
5. The Print segment also experienced the establishment of a new lower-cost operating standard, by reducing the print costs by over 25%.
6. In the next coming five years there will be increase in digital technologies which definitely lead to see change in consumer behaviour across all the segments of this sector. Thus, there is a need of hour to adapt innovation and changes accordingly.
7. The M & E sector must increase investments in Production efficiency, Human Capital and Innovative Techniques moreover not only in urban areas but also in rural areas.
8. The Government must provide economic liberty to the traditional M & E trade to improve their better service qualities.
9. The code of conduct should be followed on Public Trust, Truthfulness, Fairness, Integrity, Independence, and Accountability. Media Ethics and Standards should be on the top priority, so the industry gets more consumer loyalty and faith.
10. Estimates indicate that by 2023, there will be almost 450 million Social media consumers in the country thus Morals in Traditional and Social Media should be applied rigorously; it is the need of the hour to serve accurate and true information in the public interest.

It can be suggested from results obtained from the study that necessary steps should be taken to increase the revenues, especially in the areas of promotion and advertising. However, Government must focus on regulations to give further impetus to the production. COVID-19 has put the world behind by at least four to five years, and returning to the normal will take as much time so it is essential to re-establish and re-build the social, psychological, economic and technological aspects. In short it must be an ideal media, free from pressure, fact finding, focus on Nation building, responsible to preserve own Indian culture not based on improper content and most important to be gratis from totally profit oriented, political and religious pressure.

While the Social Media policies should maintain professional integrity and conduct to stop unethical activities while serving the public.

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