

Media, Changes in Lifestyle and Relation with Individual Happiness: An Analytical Framework

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Abstract

An individual's lifestyle makes him or her happy, or unhappy about their respective lives. This lifestyle and the resultant happiness or unhappiness is influenced by an endless list of factors. These factors in a way reflect our approach towards life. At present, this approach and the feelings and experiences that lead to the construction of the same are being strongly affected by media, in a positive as well as negative manner. This research paper will try to define the meaning of few important concepts, analyse the relation and dependency between them, and their role and impact on our day to day life. This article will examine the changes that happen in an individual's lifestyle by means of different media content that one is exposed to and the resultant happiness or unhappiness produced in life, due to the changes in the lifestyle.

Keywords: Lifestyle, Media, Media Content, Happiness.

1. Introduction

Concept of Lifestyle

Lifestyle is a way of life that reflects the attitudes and values of a person or a group. Today, the lines between personal identity and the everyday doings that signal a particular lifestyle have become blurred in modern society. An individual's lifestyle gets affected by a variety of factors like diet, peer pressure, health, stress level, dissatisfying relationships, stagnant life or lack of new challenges, intake of alcohol, demands of marketing, technological innovations and environmental factors. In terms of demographic factors, lifestyle gets affected by habits, attitudes, tastes, moral standards, economic levels, and etc. According to a psychographic segmentation acronym called as VALS (for "Values, Attitudes and Lifestyles") which is used to predict consumer behavior in marketing; individual's qualitative lifestyle patterns depend on certain frameworks that segment the consumers into multiple categories namely- innovators, thinkers, believers, achievers, strivers, experienced, makers, and survivors. These categories somewhere indicate the 'basic nature' of consumers and the specific set of actions and reactions undertaken by them to transform, revolutionize or amend their lifestyle.

Happiness and Its Relation with Lifestyle

Change in lifestyle caused by all the factors discussed above and many more, lead to a number of other alterations and conversion in life, which together contribute to the happiness and unhappiness of an individual. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that humans make changes in life and the way of living to achieve a certain level of happiness.

3Happiness, as a concept has been differently defined by different scholars on the basis of their intellect, wisdom and experiences. It thus has been referred to as a state of subjective well being, characterized by emotions, ranging from contentment and satisfaction to bliss and intense joy. It's considered as an agreeable feeling or condition of the soul, arising from good fortune or propitious happening of any kind. Happiness is a prize which comes to vigour in the character for the development of the resources of society, avoiding self-importance. 4Happiness is not about good money or fame or power but good health and bad memory. It is a combination of the experiences of peace, harmony, laughter and love. Happiness is the absolute peace of the un-manifest ground of being in which individuals experience freedom from the knot of existential tension that abides at the core of our self-sense. Happiness describes the state of an individual person; so it doesn't apply to collectivities. The word 'happiness' refers to judgment, which integrates all the appreciation criteria used. It is the way we choose to think about ourselves, our place in the world, and the world around us, and how we act in that world. Happiness is natural and can be in tune with the sadness of this world too. It is 'the overall appreciation of one's life as a whole'. Definitely happiness is an important concept in life and it varies from individual to individual.

Compared to happiness, unhappiness can be defined as, "a feeling or spell of dismally low spirit's which include blues, dejection, depression, despondence, despondency, doldrums, dolefulness, downheartedness, dumps, dysphoria, funk, gloom, glumness, heavy-heartedness, melancholy, mope, mournfulness, sadness." Happiness is no doubt a gainful concept as far as an individual's health is concerned. People are living longer and healthier, their spending power is increasing, which means more houses, transportation facilities, advances in travel, communication and entertainment options. People are concentrating on ways to live their lives and trying to forget the travails of modern life. The importance of happiness is thus increasing all over the world and the concept is gaining ground with each passing day. One of the main reasons for this is physical, psychological and mental turmoil which is forcing the people to find some way out, so as to be happy. There is no better antidepressant than happiness as it makes one independent of the situation and circumstances around them. It makes people understand that it's not the environment and the situation that create our state of mind; it's the other way round. Experimental studies have shown that happy people are more inclined to help others and are more concerned about social problems. There is also evidence that happiness activates and encourages social involvement.

Role of Media in Changing Lifestyle

At present the 'industry' that has a major influence on people, their lives, their happiness, their lifestyle and their environment is what we call as the media industry. Everybody is concerned with changes in his/her lifestyle for the better, in a way to live a happy, contented and comfortable life. People understand the importance of outer happiness and inner happiness in life and the relative changes in lifestyle are being brought to achieve the same. The role of media in the whole process is becoming more and more inseparable. The goal remains the same whether it is accomplished by watching a never-ending saga of saas bahu or by a musical or reality-based show being hosted by some Hollywood/ Bollywood celebrity or whether it is about reading a romantic/ spiritual or self-help book or watching a celebrity performance-oriented Film fare awards or getting entertained by magical IPL or listening to a FM channel or glancing through a supplement that communicates 'What's hot' on a particular weekend. Consumers prefer to consume the products being offered to them by media, so as to transform their lives and live happily. Today people desire to take a charge of their lives, be more conscious and aware of themselves and their lives, wish to be more positive about situations and things around them. And to achieve all these they are depending heavily on media content. Media is everywhere -in office, at home; in one or the other form, strongly influencing our lives and hence our lifestyle.

Major forms of mass media are the print (newspapers, books, journals and magazines, etc.) and electronic (radio, television, films and web). Media have been responsible for fulfilling five major functional requirements of society including that of communication, production, defense, social control and member replacement in the society. Media information can be used by individuals for surveillance, interpretation, socialization and entertainment. It has helped us in creating social identity in a multicultural setting thus becoming an important part of our lives. It would not be wrong to say that media has strongly influenced the attitudes and values of individuals, though the proportion of this influence varies from person to person.

Media and Happiness

People fancy media because majority of their emotional, psychological, and relationship related need that lead to increase in happiness, are fulfilled by media. At present people use USB, I Pods, Satellite radios pump, Personal video recorders to make their own music play lists, to customize television line-ups, for commercial free music in their cars. Individuals come together by means of online communities like face book, twitter, orkut, linkedin, etc., generate their own content, mix it, and share it through a growing number of social networks. They do all this to feel more connected, more acceptable, for enjoyment, for staying updated and at the end of the day 'to be happy'. Media is certainly making the life more relaxing, as people are coming up with the ideas of entertaining themselves in every possible manner, coupled with the measure of cost-effectiveness. No longer are people captive media audiences, but lifestyle media has made them unique, demanding, and engaged.

An individual's happiness level fluctuates on the basis of some factors that have been discussed above, like economic wellness, environmental wellness, physical wellness, mental wellness,

social wellness, and political wellness. Though all these types of 'wellness' are increasing with life, making life more comfortable and luxurious. Yet the index and level of happiness is not increasingly proportionately. This fact can be used to support an idea that media is contributing in happiness level of an individual, which can be positive as well as negative. It is thus becoming more and more necessary to measure happiness caused by media content, or otherwise, and the respective variations in it due to the quality of the content. As far as happiness is concerned it can be qualitatively and quantitatively measured by Happiness Quotient. Level of happiness however cannot be measured directly, but increase and decrease in it can be judged on the basis of certain factors which are believed to lead to it.

Pertinent Questions Related to Analytical Analysis

The points that can be raised after the conceptual analysis of these three important notions would be that in the whole series of events that is taking place in our day to day life and have been explained in detail above, what has been the actual impact of the media on our lifestyle and the resultant 'happiness'. This point can be further dissected into many questions like what is the extent to which media plays its role in changing lifestyle and hence the happiness. There has to be some quantification of this extent with respect to lifestyle and happiness level. People use media for the fulfillment of a variety of needs and it would be interesting to know the amount of increase or decrease that happens in happiness due to media content. Also, how a particular media is being selected and used by people to improve their lives or stay happy. Do they choose it as per the uses and gratification theory or agenda setting theory or through the concept of stalagmite effect, as suggested by eminent communication researchers, or the selection and usage criteria of media content is influenced by other dynamic forces as well. Is the role of media a major one or a minor one, in influencing lifestyle and what are the direct and indirect affects of media content on an individual's lifestyle and resultant happiness? Is the message received at an audience end is strictly restricted to the study of cultivation theory of communication or modeling and meaning theories or goes beyond them? What are the factors other than media that effect and the proportionate value of that effect on lifestyle, and how does this lead to self improvement

and collective welfare at an individual's end once that improved happiness level is attained by change in lifestyle, which is influenced directly or indirectly by media.

Examining The Relation Between Media, Changes In Lifestyle & Resulting Happiness

To answer and ponder over the above discussed concepts and raised questions in detail, a survey was conducted on a sample size of 100 respondents. The main aim of the survey was to know that what kind of media is accessed by people and for how many hours, what influences their content selection choices, does the media content lead to reflection upon lifestyle, does this reflection, if any, leads to some changes in life, and if yes what is the nature of those changes, how does an individual defines his/her lifestyle. This survey also tried to examine the factors in addition to media that affect the lifestyle and tried to answer a pertinent point that does the changed lifestyle leads to happiness among the audience or does the changed lifestyle motivates one in some way, to contribute in the societal welfare.

The survey technique was selected to substantiate and authenticate the findings so as to help in measuring the outsiders' point of view (respondents perspective) with respect to the raised questions. Survey technique was combined with overt observation strategy so as to analyze the non-verbal communication of respondents. The survey was conducted on the respondents belonging to NOIDA and Delhi regions of India and were mostly the students of mass communication and journalism. The sampling technique used for the purpose was a combination of probability and non-probability sampling designs, so as to ensure statistical efficiency. The respondents were selected by applying convenience sampling and random number table method. The variables, both qualitative and quantitative that were considered during the research and during the sample selection fall in the following categories: Gender (males and females, to know the lifestyle patterns of both and holistically know the impact of media on the lifestyle and happiness of both the categories), Age (24-40), Education level (graduates and postgraduates who refer to various types of media to know better about their life), Occupation (working class & business class) and Income level (upper middle class, middle

Table 1. Indicates the media most frequently accessed by respondents along with their preference assigned to each media.

Media Choices/ Preference	Preference 1 st	Preference 2 nd	Preference 3 rd	Preference 4 th	Preference 5 th	Preference 6 th	Preference 7 th	Preference 8 th
Newspaper	14	18	17	8	12	8	10	0
Books	3	4	5	12	16	29	18	0
Magazines	0	2	12	14	21	21	17	0
Films	9	9	15	20	21	8	5	0
Television	28	35	9	6	2	5	2	0
Radio	0	4	15	12	11	15	30	0
Internet	36	18	15	11	1	1	3	2
Other	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	85

class and lower middle class). Since, the study was conducted on students, henceforth their family income and occupation was taken into account.

For the accomplishment of the above mentioned objectives, in total 17 questions were considered in the questionnaire. Questionnaire was a combination of open and closed ended questions. Some of the questions were divided into sub parts too. Out of a sample size of 100 respondents 13 didn't respond to majority of questions. Hence, their questionnaires were not included during the analysis. Analysis for the survey was done on the sample size of 87 respondents.

Analysis & Findings

Respondents were asked to rate the media, they most frequently have an access to as per their preference and for the purpose they were given eight options comprising newspapers, books, magazines, films, television, radio, internet and other.

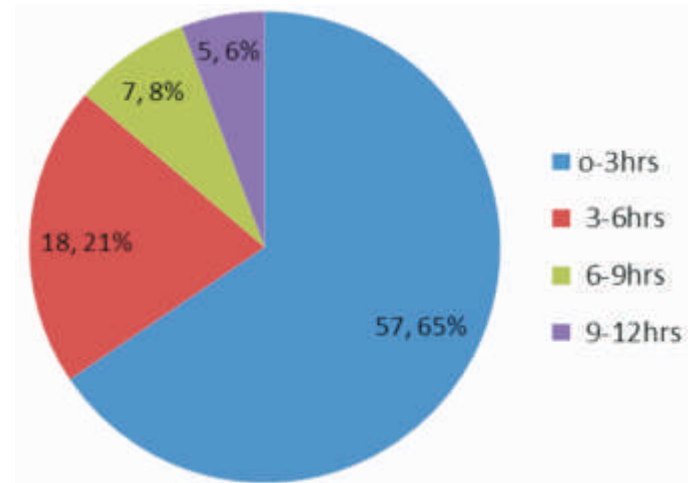
Two respondents specified other as their 3rd preference and mentioned that they relied upon interpersonal interaction and discussions as a preferred medium. When asked for how many hours did they access their favorite media, 66% (57 respondents) opted for 0- 3 hours, 21% (18 respondents) opted for 3- 6 hours, 8% (7 respondents) opted for 6-9 hours, 6% (5 respondents) opted for 9-12 hours. (Refer to pie chart 1). Respondents were also asked to give reasons for their choice and majority of them stated the following reasons for their choice.

1. To be updated about the current happening.
2. For entertainment, information and networking.
3. Due to busy schedule cannot access more that the specified number of hours.
4. To check mails and for socializing.

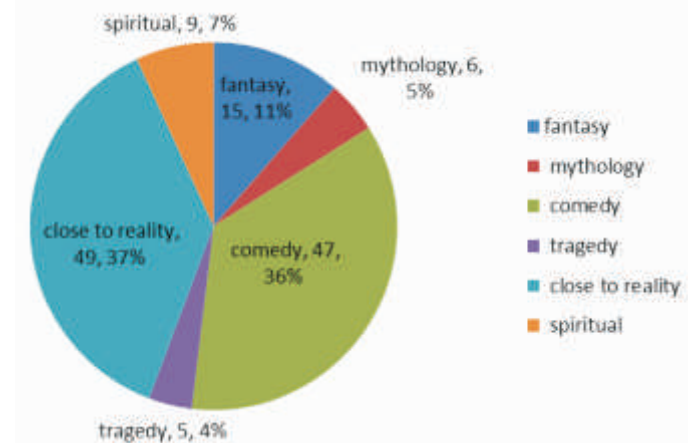
As a sub component of this question, respondents were also asked to tell the kind of content they like to watch/ hear/ read from their favorite media and why. The 'kind of content' was categorized into the following options: fantasy, mythology, comedy, tragedy, close to reality and spiritual. 11% of them liked fantasy, 5% liked mythology based content, 36% loved comedy, 4% liked tragedy, and 7% liked spiritual content, while the majority liked the content that was close to the reality. (Refer to pie chart 2). Most of them gave following reasons for their choice.

1. For entertainment & awareness.
2. To gain exposure and form a perspective about people and things around.
3. To distress.
4. To learn from other's experiences.
5. To become a better person.
6. For motivation.
7. To be happy.
8. To educate thyself.
9. Like to be in fantasy world.
10. Like anything that projects the mirror image of our society.

Also, there were people who opted for more than one choice. (refer to table 2.)



Pie chart 1. Indicates the number of hours for which the favorite media is accessed.

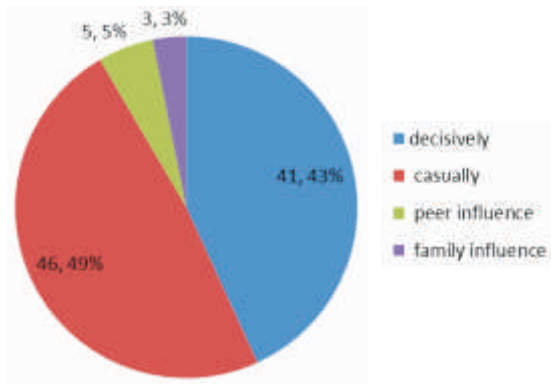


Pie chart 2. Indicates the kind of content accessed through favorite media.

1 choice	2 choices	3 choices	4 choices	5 choices	6 choices
51	15	17	3	0	1

Table 2. Respondents who opted for more than one choice for the kind of content they like to access from their favorite media.

The third sub part of the second question was to know that how the desired content is selected by the respondents from their favorite media, so as to know what influences their choices. The results are indicated in pie chart 3. There were three respondents who opted for more than one factor that influences their choice of content selection.



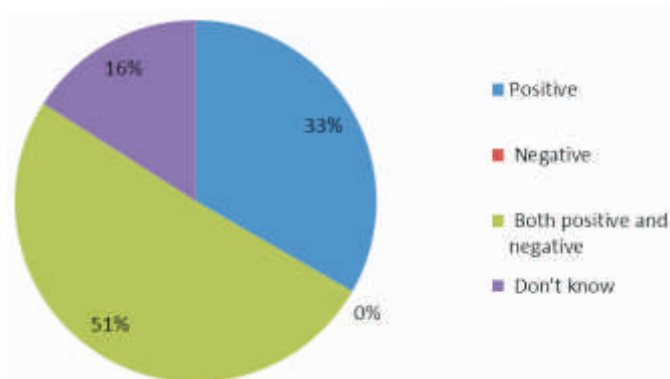
Pie chart 3. Indicates how the desired content is selected from the favorite media.

When asked did they reflect upon their lives after receiving the content from favorite media, only 3 % said that they always did that, while 74% said that they did it often. 6% said that they never did that, while the rest 17% were not sure and hence opted for can't say. The respondents, who said that they did reflect upon their lives after receiving the media content, were asked to confirm if that reflection lead to some change in their lifestyle. While 56% said that the changes in lifestyle do happen after introspection, 17% denied it. 27% were not sure of it and six respondents didn't opt for this question. Respondents were also asked to express themselves for the options they have selected. Few of them responded by stating the answers given in the table below. (Summarized responses, with respect to each option are stated below).

S.NO.	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	It leads to an increase in the desire of consumerism. Media content forces to buy things unduly.	Values and principles are more important than the desire to bring changes in lifestyle, after getting exposed to the media content.	At times, may be unknowingly it does happen
2	Changes within lifestyle make more comfortable with the dynamic environment, lead to entertainment and add humor in life.	Retention ability with respect to the media content is low, so usually don't think about the changes in lifestyle.	At times the media content convinces but the changes needn't get incorporated in real life.
3	Love to learn something new every day.	Don't relate to content often or usually take it as a mediated reality.	Never given a thought to the idea.
4	Start incorporating the media content, character behavior, trends and dialogues in real life.	Changes in lifestyle can happen naturally and needn't depend on media content.	Changes might prove out to be motivational but not really sure about it.
5	Changes help in dealing with life practically and make more decisive.		Depends upon the nature of content and its effect.
6	Changes make one more cautious and responsible towards environment. Help in growth and make mature.		Change can happen due to anything and at any point of time and needn't depend only upon media content.
7	Changes motivate, provide new meaning and direction to perspectives,		

The respondents who agreed upon the occurrence of change in lifestyle, were asked to rate the nature of change through the options namely positive, negative, both positive and negative, and don't know. 33% defined the nature of change in lifestyle as positive, while 51% expressed it as positive as well as negative. 16% were not sure about the nature of the change. None of them expressed the change to be negative, while 18 respondents didn't opt for this question. The responses are indicated in pie chart 4. Also, when asked to elaborate upon the option selected, few of them responded by saying that:

1. Change can be positive as well as negative depending upon the nature of content and the related perceptions, content retention, understanding of it, present state of mind and actions. Also, at times the influence of media content can isolate us from actual or real world happening and realities.
2. Helps in self-improvement and leads to growth in perspective.
3. Human beings can convert and control any change happening to them. Every change has a potential to be positive.
4. Positive approach towards life leads to positive changes and influences the choice of content too.
5. Negative changes are often avoided, though they are appealing but can lead to troubles too.
6. Different situations lead to different changes.



Pie chart 4. Indicates the nature of change

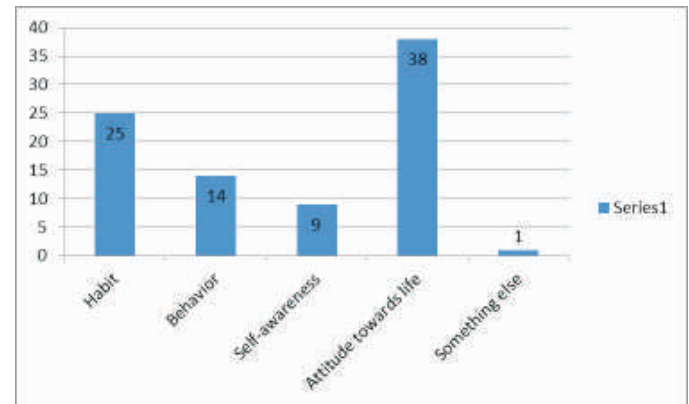
They were asked to rate the extent of change that has happened on a Likert scale of 1 to 10 such that 1 stands for 10% while 10 stands for 100%. The responses are expressed in table 3. 38 respondents didn't opt for this question.

Table 3. Indicates the extent of change that has happened in respondents.

EXTENT OF CHANGE										
10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%	TOTAL
4	5	1	5	7	10	10	4	2	1	49

Respondents were asked to define their lifestyle through a close ended question such that the options given for the same were: habit (eating, drinking, travel, dressing, socializing, etc.), behavior, self-awareness, and attitude towards life, something else (specify- an open ended choice). The results were

interesting, though 14 respondents didn't opt for this question and eight of them opted for more than choice. Refer to Bar diagram 1.



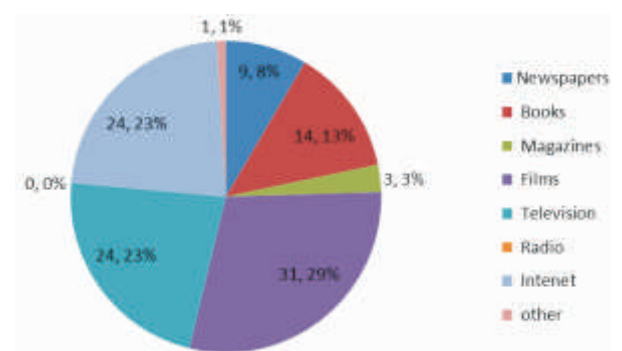
Bar diagram 1: Indicates the expression of lifestyle according to respondents

80% of them expressed their happiness with the present lifestyle, while 6% were not happy with the same. 14% of them were not sure about their happiness level with respect to the lifestyle. Respondents were asked to express their opinion on the role played by media in changing the lifestyle. 16% strongly agreed to the fact that media does play a role in changing lifestyle, 52% of them agreed. 30% were neutral about their opinion, while 2% disagreed with the same. None of them strongly disagreed with the same. Respondents were asked to choose their favorite media that has strongly influenced their lifestyle. The media choices given to them were the same as given in Table 1. The results are given below, in pie chart 5. 13 respondents opted for more than one choice, while only one respondent left it unanswered. They were also asked to elaborate upon how their favorite media has influenced their lifestyle and some of the responses are as follows:

Media has influenced the lifestyle:

1. By providing information and entertainment.
2. By bringing changes in lifestyle and perspective towards things
3. By making tolerant towards others opinions and forcing to think upon issues holistically.
4. By spreading awareness about the real world.
5. By developing personality and motivating.
6. By helping in socialising.

Pie chart 5. Indicates the choice of favorite that has strongly influenced the lifestyle.

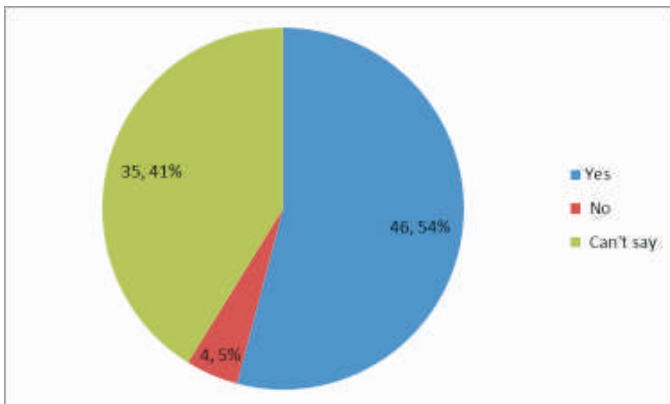


When asked what were the other factors, in addition to the media, that influenced their lifestyle, 49% said it's their family members, while 40% were influenced by their friends. 8% said it's their peer group, while only 3% opted for other factors apart from these. 16 respondents opted for more than one option. To reconfirm the above findings, on the scale of 1 to 7 the respondents were asked to rate the contributions of media and other factors in changing their lifestyle. Results have been indicated in table 4. 38 respondents didn't opt for this question while 10 of them gave equal importance to media as well as other factors. Also, out of 86 respondents 45 were happy from the changes caused by media, while only two were unhappy. 39 of them were not sure about their happiness/ unhappiness levels while one didn't opt for this question.

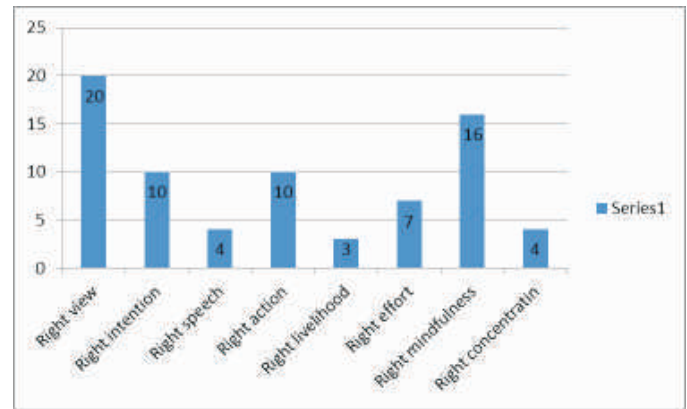
Table 4: indicates the contributions of media and other factors in changing the respondents' lifestyle.

Choice/ Preference	1 st preference	2 nd preference	3 rd preference	4 th preference	5 th preference	6 th preference	7 th preference
Other Factors	8	1	7	0	10	2	2
Media	2	1	5	0	1	0	0

When asked how has media changed their lifestyle 12% indicated that it has happened via direct contact with the media, while 27% said that it has happened due to the interaction with others in addition to the direct contact with media. 53% opted for both the options, while 7% opted for none of the factors. Only 1% opted for 'others' option and two didn't attempt this question. Respondents were also asked to share their opinion on the direct proportional relation between the influence of media and the number of hours of media content exposure. 6% of them were in strong agreement with the direct proportional relation between the influence of media and the number of hours of exposure, while 38% agreed and 35% were neutral about the same. 17% of them disagreed with it, while 4% were in strong disagreement with this proportional relation between media influence and exposure hours. Only one respondent didn't opt for this question. They were also asked to express their agreement/ disagreement on the improvement in lifestyle after media exposure and what is their expression about the 'improvement in life'. The results were interesting. (Refer to pie chart 6 & bar diagram 2.) 24 respondents didn't express their opinion on this



Pie chart 6. Indicates the opinion on the improvement in lifestyle after media exposure

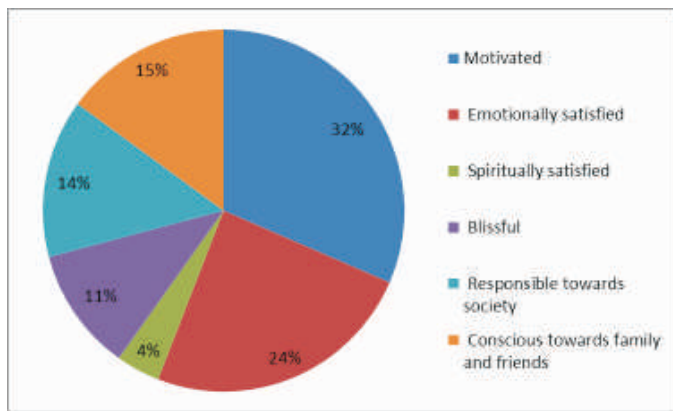


Bar diagram 2. Indicates respondents' expression about the 'improvement in life'

question, while four of them opted for more than one choice to define their expression about the improvement in life. 57% of them said that the change in lifestyle motivated them towards the societal welfare, while 21% disagreed with it. 22% were not sure about the motivation to work for societal welfare caused by changed lifestyle. Six respondents didn't opt for this question.

When asked to elaborate upon the option selected, some of them answered by saying the following (summarized responses with respect to each option):

S.NO.	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	Awareness spread by media leads to consciousness towards society and motivates to contribute in societal welfare. It makes one socially responsible.	Too much of negativism portrayed by media can force one to stay isolated from society.	Media content usually promotes consumerism and self-centered ideas.
2	Media content contributes to the value set inculcated by parents, provides clarity between right and wrong and helps in dealing with variety of situations.	Mostly concerned about personal welfare rather than societal welfare.	Media can be one of the factors that can lead to this feeling.
3	Change in lifestyle is not valuable if it doesn't encourage one to work for the betterment of society.		



Pie chart 7. Indicates the feeling respondents have while using their favorite media

Conclusion

From the analysis of the survey conducted on 87 respondents, it can be concluded that media does lead to change in the lifestyle and to an extent does contribute in the individual happiness. In majority of the cases the amount of happiness has increased after the exposure to media content. People use media to fulfill variety of their needs and have been entertained, have become more informed, aware and conscious of their surroundings. They have attained a realistic perspective about the society to a great extent and have developed as individuals. This paper provides a perspective on the way the media content is being selected by individuals and it seems to be closely related to uses and gratification theory and stalagmite effect, rather than agenda setting theory. In addition to this, there are number of other dynamic forces that do affect the content selection. Media is a powerful agent and does lead to a number of direct and indirect changes in individual lifestyle. It motivates them to do well in life, encourages them to work for the society betterment, changes their perspective about things around them made them conscious towards family and friends, etc. And it was found during the study that a good number of these affects are because of the continuous exposure to the same kind of media content which in a way supports the cultivation theory. Friends, family, peer group and teachers were found to be the factors other than media that affect the lifestyle of the individuals and at times the impact of media as well as the other factors can be equal too.

From this analytical analysis it can be stated that individuals choose books, television programs, music channels, newspapers, magazines, websites, etc., as per their needs to bring in changes in their lifestyle. And this change is desired to achieve a sense of contentment, inner peace, subjective well being state and hence 'happiness'. Media has certainly contributed in our lives. Moreover, at present the perspective of happiness and its measurement is dominating in every kind of social research. This analysis is an effort to highlight upon the meaning of concepts of lifestyle, media and happiness and their relation and dependence upon each other. There are still a number of issues and questions under this topic that are unanswered and are being explored upon by the researcher.

Scope & limitations for further research

This research paper does not reflect upon the quantification of the extent to which one attains happiness after the change in lifestyle. The impact of emotional quotient, intelligence quotient, spiritual quotient and happiness quotient on content selection and lifestyle can also be studied. Some of the questions were left unanswered which lead to the issue of item missing value. There were some administrative issues as well in conducting of the survey.

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