Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the introduction of the study. It introduces the statement of the research problem in the light of extensive review on mobile phone and its different communicative architectures, use patterns and social functions (both positive and negative) by designing methodological strategy comprising the universe, units, sources of data, tools for data collection, significance and organization of the study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent years the world has seen an explosive growth of ICTs, particularly mobile phones. The overwhelming presence of mobile communications has added a new dimension to communication in the public as well as private sphere. The mobile telephone is probably the most talked-about consumer product in the last few decades as human beings seem to have developed a fascination for mobile phones. In India the endless promos on the wayside, shops, restaurants or in electronic media confirm the increasing fascination for mobile among the people. The mobile phone is often perceived as an emblem technology of space-time compression, touted as a tool for anytime and anywhere connectivity. Discussions of young people in response to the use of mobile phone in particular are often seen as the libratory effects of mobile media, and how it enables young people to escape the demands of existing social structures and parental surveillance. Mobile media is comparatively recent development in the technology, though its origins can be clearly traced to the late 1980s to 1990s and even earlier, if we include many kinds of portable media technologies. In the last 10 years, the development of mobile phone technology has been unbelieving swift; from analogue to digital and from plain and simple cell phone to the current 3G smart phone which can serve as a mini-computer, telephone, or camera, and transfer data as well as video and audio files. There seems to be a constant stream of new technology breaking into the mobile phone market. This system plays an important role in the networking of notebook computers, mobile telephones and personal digital assistants in the recent as well as coming years. These systems are now merging, producing portable computers capable of sending and receiving phone calls, faxes and e-mails as well as looking up information in remote databases and doing this anywhere on earth. Mobile phone, the newly appeared media, has become an integral part of our daily lives; many people finding it very difficult to imagine life without the possibility of making a quick call from wherever they might be. People of all ages have been using this media for different purposes irrespective of age and sexes in different areas like rural and urban. Young people, particularly college students are most enthusiastic users of the mobile phone. Mobile phones have become an indispensable part of the mobile savvy youth due to the wide range of services that mobile offers. The high-tech gadget has gone beyond the boundaries of wireless

communication and text messaging. Mobile phone is today used for a variety of purposes like expressing thoughts, social networking, internet surfing, banking, navigation, reading news, music and playing games. Over the last decade or so, it has undergone a dual transition of digitalization and democratization. High speed mobile broadband services, in addition to the country's much touted fixed broadband network, are available in major metropolitan as well as many other urban areas and the socio- cultural functions. And the impacts of this transition have drawn a good deal of scholarly attention. Around the world, researchers are grappling with the question: What implications the mobile communication technology and user practices are having for social structures and vice versa? This can be taken as the fast-changing mobile communicative architectures, its diversified uses and the resultant social functions and dynamics are at the centre of the inquiries of the media and social science researches. Youth in India as well as all over the world form an attractive constituency of the mobile communication by its extent, practices and impacts among them. Then, its ever growing use among rural youths has potential for revolutionizing social structures. Assam is the hot spot of multi-cultural identities in the North-eastern region and like any other part of India it has also been drawn into the vortex of mobile communication for a decade or so. Here, a question arises: What communicative architectures, uses and social functions of mobile phone are perceived among youths in Assam, particularly the rural youth?

 REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The explosive growth of mobile technology is remarkable and the social implications are myriad, the amount of social science research in this area is relatively small when compared to other pervasive communication technologies, such as the internet (Rice and Katz 2003).The good news is that mobile communication research is on the rise and researchers from all over the globe are making valuable contributions to the understanding of its social implications (Fortunati et al. 2003; Katz 2003; Katz and Aakhus 2002; Ling 2004). Mobile users in the early 2000s tended to be heavy users of the internet and e-mail. When the effects of internet use were controlled, mobile phone use (Palackal, Antony & others 2011) decreased the geographical diversity of social ties. This surprising finding implied that the diffusion of mobile telephony had complex effects and perhaps different consequences for social networking than its advocates imagined. The global impact of its adoption and use and the international composition of researchers in this area have drawn attention to the trends or ways people think about and use mobile telephony in various cultures. Recent research has shown that mobile phones can play a significant role in development if applied efficiently and appropriately. It can be used in education to facilitate distance learning (Anderson & Hatakka 2010), and in farming and fishing activities, most notably to assist with agricultural market information services, improving rural livelihoods (Jensen 2007; Shaibu & Powell 2008; Bhavani et al. 2008; Muto & Yamano 2009; Mokotjo & Kalusopa 2010), in health (Idowu et al. 2003; UN Foundation 2009), in small business development (micro-

entrepreneurship), governance (Narayan 2007), in disaster management and emergency situations (Monaresa et al. 2011; Ketabdar & Polzehl 2009; Agar 2003), in environment and weather (Houghton 2010), and in mass communication and entertainment. Even as scholars struggled to evolve a comprehensive understanding of the internet, the literature on mobile telephony has burgeoned into an interdisciplinary study of mobile technology as it interacts with the social order (Geser 2002; Castells et al. 2007). Yet, characterization of the effects of mobile telephony has often been abstract and non-specific. Castells and associates summarized a vast amount of work on 'mobile network society' with the proposition that it represents an enhancement of the social structure by new, wireless communication technologies (2007:6).The enhancement that provides the evidence for this claim is largely based on characteristics of the technology: micro-coordination of schedules made possible by the ability to communicate while moving, establishment of new business that provides mobile telephony, use of new surveillance capabilities embedded in cell phones equipped with GIS, cultural innovations (sex, entertainment, news feeds), the potential for rapid political mobilization. Yet, if enhancement of social structure is simply the continuation of old practices through new means, or the introduction of a new resource that will differentially accrue to those with pre-existing advantages, mobile telephony does not portend any major shift.

The mobile phone is rapidly becoming the user device, the device that seems to have it all and becomes even more indispensable than it is now. Mobile phone has already started functioning as more than just communication device. It is used by the youth for different purposes in different social and cultural settings. A person considers their mobile phone as an article of fashion because it is worn on the body, many users regard the technology as an extension of their physical selves (Gant and Kiesler 2001; Hulme and Peters 2001) and characteristically fashionable (Katz et al. 2003). For this reason the style of a mobile phone is a primarily influencing factor in brand selection for some users of the technology (Lobet-Maris 2003). Numerous studies show that adolescents are particularly conscious of handset styles and tend to view the mobile phone as symbolic artifact of personal display (Alexander 2000; Green 2003; Ling 2003, 2004; Lobet Maris 2003; Skog 2002).

Wilska (2003) documents the increased consumer culture promoted by mobile phone adoption by young people. Technological enthusiasm and trend consciousness have a large role to play in young people's consumption of new technologies. Srivastava (2005) also noted how new mobile phones are now marketed as fashion labels; however he attributes the success of the cell phone among young people to their ability to own and individualize something which is not controlled by authority figures such as parents. Mobile phone plays its role as an instrument of security, because at any critical situation one can send a message or dial to others. Ling and Yttri (1999, 2002) identified three primary uses: Safety/ security, micro coordination and hyper coordination. Safety/security refers to mobile phone use for instrumental purpose and hyper

coordination refers to mobile phone use for these reasons as well as expressive purposes. Studies illustrate that mobile phone use for expressive purposes can demonstrate and reinforce social networks (Johnsen 2003; Licoppe 2003; Plant 2001; Taylor and Harper (2001) and the way in which one uses the mobile phone is at least partially influenced at micro level through interaction in personal communication networks (Campbell and Russo 2003). This study explores whether mobile phone use is shaped at larger cultural levels as well.

According to Marilyn Campbell (2005) the adoption of the mobile phone by young people has been a global phenomenon in recent years. It is now an integral part of adolescents' daily lives and is for the majority, the most popular form of electronic communication. In fact, the mobile phone has turned from technological tool to social tool. Young people use the mobile phone in positive ways to organise and maintain their social networks. However, there are also negative impacts on young peoples' peer relationships. These can include ostracism and cyber bullying. Similarly, the mobile phone has led to changed dynamics in the family, with issues of safety and surveillance from a parental perspective leading to negotiated and changing freedoms for young people. While functional coordination can be beneficial for the family, other problems can arise such as financial difficulties, non-custodial parent access, as well as overreliance on the mobile phone for safety issues and intrusion into young people's lives. The mobile phone was originally created for business use by adults (Aoki & Downes 2003). This is extremely similar to the fixed telephone in the early 20th century whence telephone engineers explained that the telephone was made for the business world and not for social conversation (Flinchy 1997). The growth of mobile phone technology is demonstrated by the fact that in 2002 the number of mobile phone users worldwide surpassed those of fixed-phone users (Srivastava 2005) and by the end of 2005 the number of mobile phone subscribers worldwide was expected to reach 2 billion and in Australia it was expected to reach 19.2 million (Fisher 2005). While these figures are impressive, the rate at which young people have adopted the mobile phone in many parts of the world is even more impressive. The mobile phone had been in existence for about a decade before young people really adopted this technology. The reduction in the cost of the handsets, their smaller size and the introduction of the pre-paid phone card in the 1990s contributed to the surprisingly rapid adoption rate by young people (Ling 2001, 2003). Leopoldina Fortunati (2000) views mobiles as offering the possibility of choice in sociality that often leads us to distance ourselves from strangers or acquaintances, moving public spaces to the background in favour of an itinerant or nomadic intimacy. Hans Geser (2002) calls the pattern one of regressive social insulation, as highly traditionalistic relationships are perpetuated rather than modern, fleeting and dispersed ties. The cell phone allows individuals to remain within the fixed field of the familiar and shield themselves from potentially threatening and novel situations and interacting partners. In short, cell phones facilitate network closure and a focus on known

relationships. They allow micro social systems to exist in the absence of spatial separation and thereby empower primary bonds (Gergen 2002).   Enpocket (2005) and Hession (2001) inform that young people prefer their mobile phone even to the television or the Internet. It is children's favorite method of communication (Livingstone & Bober 2005) with younger adolescents (school years 7 to 9) more attached to their mobile phones than older adolescents (school years 10 to 12) and they need to return home to collect their phone if they forget it (Mathews 2004). Young people also save text messages which they value and cherish (Taylor & Harper 2003).

The mobile phone is a status symbol for young people. The features of the phone, the appearance and personalised accessories, all, attest to the phone's status. They were keen to upgrade their mobile phone (Netsafe 2005). As a fashion accessory it satisfies the need for individualization by having choices in mobile wallpaper, ring tones, phone covers, carry bags and other accessories (Srivastava 2005) and yet it also signifies as part of the peer group (Williams & Williams 2005). Indeed, even the ownership of a mobile phone shows one as socially connected, accessible and in demand. It can also be seen as a symbol of one's independence from family.

Ling (2004) views that with its subscriptions swelling into billions worldwide and ever growing, the social implications of mobile telephony are both profound and far-reaching. Use of the technology is transforming the social landscape by giving rise to new forms of coordination, relational expression and social connection. Undoubtedly, mobile communication has become a valuable resource for strengthening bonds among social network ties (Campbell and Russo 2003; Ling 2008). According to Gergen (2008), the social privatism associated with this phenomenon can have negative consequences for involvement in the broader spheres of public life. Mobile telephony is also a highly personal technology that cultivates individuation. For example, mobile phones and their dialing numbers are associated with individual user, as opposed to the shared nature of the domestic landline. In addition, the technology is carried, even worn on the body, further incorporating it as part of the user's individual identity (Campbell 2008; Katz 2006; Katz and Sugiyama 2005; Lobet-Maris 2003). As Ling (2004) points out, the dynamics between social connection, social privatism and individuation raise important questions about the implications of mobile communication for social capital.

Mobile telephony coupled with telecommunications has enormous potential for increasing the uptake of educational services (especially in remote rural and inaccessible areas) besides changing the teaching –learning scenario (Rajput & Ansari 2008). Educators and technologists alike are keenly interested in how wireless and mobile technology can enhance the way people learn and interact with one another. Obviously these m-learning technologies (e-learning using mobile devices and wireless transmission) can potentially provide significant opportunities for learning and collaborative interaction. Most mobile devices are useful in education both as administration, organisation and teaching aids for practitioners, and also as learning

support tools for students (Thiyagu and Amirthagowri 2009). According to Kapil Loomba and Pooja Loomba (2009) it is true to say that these mobile-learning (m-learning) technologies (e-learning using mobile devices and wireless transmission) can potentially provide significant opportunities for learning and collaborative interaction. However, technology is showcased as demonstration system in various experimental e-classroom initiatives, and the penetration in general settings is painfully slow. In addition, many m-learning technologies are often limited to content delivery onto mobile devices, missing the rich potential for more interactive learning paradigms.

Castells (2000) states that in recent years social activity ties have been shifting from local involvement with proximal others to sparsely knit network connections which bridge, if not redefine, space and time. Mobile communication plays an important and distinctive role in this trend, which Wellmen (2002) characterizes as networked individualism, because it allows for connection virtually anytime, anywhere with network ties. Indeed 'mobile communication deepens and extends the logic of networked individualism' (Castells et al. 2007: 97).While networked individualism opens up new opportunities for social connectedness with distant others, it may also have implications for traditional forms of face-to-face engagements that foster interpersonal trust and community. As for the effects of networked individualism, that is, the shift from little boxes of proximal relations to dispersed network connections (Wellmen 2002), one can anticipate that accounting for local and non-local mobile communication patterns will reveal differential patterns at the level of face-to-face social engagement. Of course, some individuals are connected both inside and outside their local community. Wellmen calls this group glocal, melding the words global and local. Wellmen (2002) tells that in this glocal group 'People go from somewhere to somewhere to talk to someone or people telephone somewhere to talk to someone'.

Various surveys worldwide have found high rates of mobile phone use amongst young people. In Norway in 1999, 80% of 13 to 20 years old owned a mobile phone, while in the United Kingdom in 2001, 90% of young people under the age of 16 did so (www.capacitybuilder.co.uk). In 2003, in Italy 56% of children aged 9 and 10-years-old owned mobile phones and of the 44% who didn't, all expressed a desire to own one and amongst teenage girls in Tokyo, the adoption rate is almost 100% (Srivastava 2005). In Australia in 2004, a survey by iTouch revealed that 50,000 children aged between 5 and 9 years of age owned a mobile phone, one third of the children aged 10 to 13 years and 45% of 13 to 15 years old also owned the device (Allison 2004). Thus, in recent years the number of adolescents owning a mobile phone has risen so dramatically that adolescents are now more likely to own and use a mobile phone than their parents (Netsafe 2005).

Mobile communication lowers the threshold for interaction and provides new opportunities for instrumental and expressive communication, which may offer important consequences for involvement in peer groups. By mitigating constraints of space and time (Ling and Campbell 2009) the technology offers heightened flexibility for the nuanced coordination of social activities and maintaining personal relationships. Indeed, mobile phone users have come to regard the technology as a critical resource for making plans with others and filling in the gaps between face-to-face contacts (Ling 2004; Ling and Yttri 1999, 2002). While incessant use may raise concerns that it can replace traditional forms of socializing with others (Gergen 2008), this is not well supported in the research (Ishii 2006). In fact, Wellman et al. (2003) argue that the mobile phone and other new media are 'adding on to other means of communication rather than substituting for them'.

One of the main reasons for young people's use of the mobile phone is functionality or 'micro-coordination" of their social life. Adolescence is a time of transcending the family boundaries and generating more extensive networks with peers. As all social life is based on ongoing interpersonal interaction, the fixed telephone has been an essential instrument to enable young people to organise their social life (Manceron 1997). This ability to communicate has been extended further by the use of the mobile phone which not only enables coordination free from the constraints of physical proximity, but also of spatial immobility, that is, the need to stay at specific places (Geser 2004). The ability of the mobile phone to directly contact a person allows young people even more flexibility and spontaneity in their lives. Young people are able to arrange or rearrange social functions extremely quickly which leads to a "more fluid culture of information social interaction" (Geser 2004).

Rich Ling (2007) says that the mobile phone has lowered the threshold for communication for an age group that takes peer group interaction very seriously. The mobile phone has given millions of young people some of the freedom that in the past was available only to the fortunate few with cars. It has also given them a communication tool that they can call their own, rather than a shared landline phone trying them to the living room or the hallway. It also shows the use of the mobile phone by parents as an intrusion into young people's lives. Williams and Williams (2005) base their argument of intrusion on claiming that the "relations between children and parents are increasingly characterised by negotiation, replacing more conventional relationships and traditional ideas of parental authority". They argue that parents use the mobile phone to enter into their children's space and are thus able to socially influence their children and exert a certain degree of control over them in a public space. Keeping 'tabs' on their children is seen as parental intrusion both by talking on the mobile phone and using text messages. Parents identify where their children are and often (by texting) maintain an almost constant dialogue, similar to face-to-face conversation. Young people, however, have many ways to counteract their parent's surveillance. They program certain numbers to go

to the message bank or block numbers, turn their phone off straight away, or answer and pretend there is too much interference to hear (Ling & Helmersen 2000).

Campbell and Kwak (2003) inform that as for the heightened flexibility of mobile telephony it is reasonable to expect similar trends for this technology as well. Because communication loosens constraints of both time and space, users are presumably better able to fit voluntary organizational activities into their daily lives and better equipped to carry out those activities. Furthermore, mobile communication provides another dimension of flexibility by allowing users to talk about community and organizational matters with others, in addition to textual exchange and information retrieval. Although research in this area is thin, the relevant work thus far indicates that mobile communication can play a positive role in community life, organizational membership and civic engagement (Campbell and Kwak 2003). Anderson (2003) states that some young person's sleep is disturbed when friends call them on their mobile phone to talk or when text message is deposited (Anderson 2003). In New Zealand 11% of young persons woke up every night by a text message or voice call (Netsafe 2005). Young people are texting under bedcovers at night and using their mobile phones as their alarm clock and torch. Probably because of the sleeping issue the most common rule set by parents is that children have to leave their mobile phones out of their rooms at night. Their parents frequently had to ask them to stop using their mobile phone late at night. This is the most common disagreement between them and their parents (Matthews 2004). Users who speak on their mobile phones in public often do so at the expense of others around them. By standers are unwittingly cast into the role of spectators when mobile phone users talk too loudly while around others (Fortunati 2003). Some are curious about what is being said (Paragas 2003) and even treat it as a 'linguistic treasure hunt' (Fortunati 2003). However, others have voiced complaints about being forced into eavesdropping (Ling 1996). This problem stems from the conflicting nature of private and public space, resulting in ambiguous norms for mobile phone use in public (Gant and Kiesler 2001; Love and Kewely 2003; Palen et al. 2001). However, individuals are making efforts toward developing norms by explicitly discussing appropriate and inappropriate mobile phone use (Campbell and Russo 2003; Ling 2004; Ling and Yttri 1999, 2002). In addition, there are some noticeable trends wherein mobile phone users tend to silence their handsets or turn them off. Mobile phone users frequently leave their handsets off in certain public settings such as theaters, concert halls, churches and some meetings (Campbell 2006; Campbell and Russo 2003), while public sidewalk, grocery stores and buses appear to be more suitable settings (Campbell 2004).There is also evidence that certain behaviours during mobile phone use in public help mitigate the social intrusion, especially speaking quietly and keeping conversations brief (Campbell 2004).

Suresh Chandra (2010) in his book 'Global Mobile Satellite Communication' quoted the views of Leopoldina Fortunati on social identity of the mobile phone. Leopoldina Fortunati analyzes the social identity of the mobile phone in Italy in

comparison with the rest of Europe in her data from three research projects: one, a telephone survey sample (n = 6,609) in Italy, France, Germany, Spain and the UK; second, a sample of Italians only (n = 1,400) as well a free association test of a sub-sample and, third, a dataset again from a telephone survey (n = 1400). She uses these data to put into critical perspective some common assumptions about the use of the mobile phone specifically that it presents itself, as it were, as a communicative, mobile, metropolitan, portable, intimate technology. She also seeks to account for the mobile phone's success in an Italian setting as well as some problematic of the technology in relation to the body. She also argues that the symbolic and social dimensions of the telephone are important. It is especially intriguing that Italians are very light users of the landline telephone (less than a quarter of US usage), and have not increased their landline use over the past few decades to any substantial degree. They have, however, embraced the mobile phone enthusiastically and are among Europe's heaviest users. To explain this, she relies on explanations that extend beyond the functional aspect.

Work by Licoppe (2004) in France suggests that mobile communication leads to tightly integrated small groups; in other words, cliques. Although mobile phones are not pervasive among people of all ages and occupations, young people continue to use their phones more, spend more on phones, and engage in higher frequencies of text mobile e-mail exchanges (Yoshi 2002). Likewise the young teens also use mobile phone for sending messages and making interaction. In this regard Fortunati (2001) comments," Teens are, perhaps the most consummate mobile telephone users. Teens have made text messaging into a common form of interaction. They have learned how to coordinate and indeed micro– coordinate and interaction via the mobile telephone. They use the camera to share photos of enticing members of the opposite sex and to gather peer opinion on the colour of potential clothes purchases." The phone as prized essential technology of friendship and youth culture is undergoing a metamorphosis. There are two bodies of literature that have delved into social networking systems and the cultures that have developed around these. A number of important studies have sought to understand cultures of friendship and the transformation of media represented by Facebook and the wide variety of kindred social networking systems centered thus far on the Internet (Boyd and Ellison 2007; Tong et al. 2008). The concept of "friendship" prevalent in social networking systems has led researchers to investigate the various meanings this takes, the practices of friendships and the changing nature of social connection it represents (Papacharissi 2009; Valenzuela et al. 2009; West et al. 2009).

The mobile phone leads to problematic use in schools. As Ling (2000) states, the mobile phone is "at cross purpose with the mission of the school". Whilst in school grounds students take on their prescribed student roles, free from contact with the outside world. The mobile phone, however, allows the blending of roles and interrupts students whilst in their student role. Fixed telephones in schools allowed minimal disruption but with their parents' eagerness to maintain contact, the mobile phone is becoming part of

the classroom. Thus, the mobile phone has the power to undermine the schools' authority and weaken their control over students (Geser 2004). The main issue for teachers is the disruption to classroom learning that can occur due to the disruptive nature of mobile phone calls and texting. The functionality of SMS lets students send and receive messages unobtrusively (Geser 2004). Combining this with the ease of hiding the device due to its small size makes it very difficult for teachers to control. Because of the short time frame in which an answer is expected to a message (Kasesniemi & Rautiainen 2002), the excitement of finding out who has called and what the message is (similar to snail mail letters), young people are reluctant to turn off their mobile phone during class time. It would be easy to believe that communication technology has always allowed people to overcome barriers of time and space. People have used the telegraph, telephone, television, computers and the internet to share information and interact across temporal and geographical boundaries. In some cases communication technologies have even encouraged the shift and acceleration of information flows. With the rise of electronic and networked technology, scholars have suggested that social interaction has become increasingly disembedded from the particulars of time and space (Giddens 1991; Meyrowitz 1985). People can use the internet and mobile technology to connect with friends and family from all over the world. The fixed telephone is a powerful means of communication between fathers and their children in cases of 'broken' homes (Castelain-Meunier 1997), the mobile phone has extended this communication to give even greater access between non-custodial parents and their children, as well as greater privacy. As Ling and Helmersen (2000) argue, the mobile phone can assist the non-custodial parent to contact their child without interference from the other parent if relations are not cordial between the parents. Thus, the mobile phone allows a way in which parent-child relationships can be strengthened even though instability may exist in the parent- parent relationship (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1995).

People increasingly use mobile social networks to transform the ways they come together and internet in public space. Almost 50 million people worldwide engage in mobile social networking (Shannon 2008). These services allow members to access networks of friends or potential friends through their mobile phone. Much likes social networks sites on the internet (Boyd and Ellison 2007; Ellison et al. 2007), new mobile social networks can be used to build and reinforce social ties (Humphreys 2007).These mobile social networks can facilitate the flow of new kinds of information into public spaces and as such can rearrange social and spatial practices.

Pretti Kumar (2008) in his article 'Mobile-Assisted English Language Learning' has mentioned the report prepared by Polly Wright on the usages of mobile phone and youth. Polly Wright in his report 'Importance of Mobile Phones to Young People' states the reasons for buying phone. He remarks, "Nearly half of the people buying them say that they have bought them for personal use only. They are bought by boys and girls alike. Many people phone to contact their parents if they are going to be late back from

school. Others use the phone to stay in touch with friends, or to discuss homework during the week. Phones have become fashionable. Young people compare different types of ring tones and programmes. Many phones have often been bought by parents. Young people feel out safer if they can reach family and friends quickly."

Mobile phones are used by the teens, young and the women for safety. The mobile phone (Fortunati 2001) is a safety link, it allows for effective coordination, it is an object lesson in the use of money for teens and often, it is a reluctantly accepted umbilical cord to their parents and a central artefact of their self-image. The women also find safety in public places from any dangerous situation. Women are socially conditioned to understand that being alone in public poses more risks to them than to men (Bondi and Domash 1998). Women fear of public space often centres on their sense of vulnerability to be harmed by men (Valentine 1989). Owning a mobile phone makes 80% of young people feel safer when out and about shopping, socialising or travelling or travelling to and from their school or college. Mobile phones have a new avatar – that of the road guide. In case one feels lost in the serpentine lanes and bye lanes of the city, searching frantically for an address, the mobile phone comes in handy.

Thus, the literature reveals that mobile phones have been very popular among young and the various studies conducted on mobile phones among youth have focused on three broad aspects of mobile phones; (i) the communicative architecture of mobile, (ii) the user practices of mobile and (iii) the social functions of mobile use. A few studies have been conducted on mobile and the youth, and quite a few on the rural youth in India while there is emerging a bulk of mobile using rural youth and this impact is felt to have imminent socio-cultural results. Therefore, the present study is proposed to fill the gap of social research on mobile technology of communication and its impact on rural youth. Most of the studies of mobile use have been conducted on teens, adolescents, or general population whereas youth is an important group of working population and it is supposed to be used for business purpose. However, variations are expected in terms of structural differences of rural youth. Hence the present study has been undertaken to study mobile phone among the rural youth in Assam.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To identify the communicative architectures (mini-computer, internet, telephone, camera, data transfer facility, video, audio etc) of mobile as media among rural youth

2. To analyse the use patterns (thought/opinion expression, social networking, internet surfing, banking, navigation, reading news, music listening, playing games etc) of the mobile communicative architectures among rural youths

3. To examine the social functions (socio-cultural integration or individuation) of the mobile communicative practices among rural youths

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been attempted in the Study:

1. What communication facilities are available on mobile phone of rural youth?

2. What patterns of mobile use are perceived among rural youths?

3. What are the social functions of mobile use among rural youths?

4. What negative social functions of mobile use are perceived among rural youths?

5. Of functions or dysfunctions which one is having dominance in the personality formation of rural youth?

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study has focused on the uses and users of mobile phones among the rural youths of Jorhat district of Assam and examines the changes reflected in the youths due to use of mobile phone.

Conceptual and Operational definitions of the Key Terms

(a)   Youth

Youth is defined by the United Nations, without prejudice to the definitions adopted by individual nations, as those between the age of 15 and 25 years (Subramanian 1989). According to Gore (1997), 'When contrasted with childhood on the one hand and old age on the other, youth seems to stand for the period of full physical and mental maturity, somewhat analogous to the period of adulthood'. The National Youth Policy 2001 has covered all the youth in the country in the age group of 13-35 years. It is acknowledged that since all the persons within this age group are unlikely to be one homogeneous group, but rather a conglomeration of sub-groups with differing social roles and requirements, the age group may, therefore, be divided into two broad sub-groups, viz., 13-19 years and 20-35 years (Narayanaswamy 2003). According to T K Oommen (1975), 'When we refer to youth, we have in mind an age group, usually

between 15 and 30 years. The age group we are considering is one full of psychic and physical energy and enthusiasm which need outlets.' Usha S. Naidu (1981) limits youth to 15-29 years' age group viewing them as a distinct social category which has promise and potential for the future. In present study the term 'rural youth' refers to persons in the age group 18-35 in the four selected villages.

(b) *Social Structure*

The "structure" of anything consists of the relatively stable interrelationships among its parts; moreover, the term "part" itself implies a certain degree of stability. Since a social system is composed of the interrelated acts of people, its structure must be sought in some degree of regularity or recurrence in these acts (Johnson 1981)

According to S F Nadel (1957) structure refers to a definable articulation, an ordered arrangement of parts. It is related to the outer aspect or the framework of society and is totally unconcerned with the functional aspect of society. So, he has emphasized that the social structure refers to the network of social relationship which is created among the human beings when they interact with each other according to their statuses in accordance with the patterns of society. Nadel therefore says, "Structure indicates an ordered arrangement of parts, which can be treated as transportable, being relatively invariant, while the parts themselves are variable. Talcott Parsons (1937) has explained the concept of social structure in abstract form. All the units of social structure, ie, institutions, agencies, social patterns, statuses and roles are invisible and intangible and hence are abstract. He has emphasized that the statuses and roles of individuals are determined by customs, traditions and conventions of society. These statuses give birth to different institutions, agencies and patterns. All these when interrelated and organized in a particular manner build the social structure of society. Social structure is concerned with forms of inter-relationship between these units rather than with the other units. These units constitute the society. The ordered arrangement seen between these units is the social structure. MacIver and Page (1959) who have also conceived social structure as an abstract form, composed of several groups like family, church, class, caste, state, community etc. They have given due consideration to those sources and powers which bind these groups into a chain, a definite form of social structure. Since society is the organization of social relationship and is abstract, therefore, its structure also is abstract. They also refer to the stability and changefulness of social structure. They write, "For a while the social structure itself is unstable and changeful it has a definite character at every stage, and many of its major elements have shown greater persistence of type through change." In their study of social structure they have included the study of associations, institutions, groups, functional systems and institutional complexes.

In this study social structure of each village is a whole of social relations consisting of the elements like age, gender, education, religion, caste, community, income, occupation etc.

(c) *Mobile Communication*

Mobile media communication, comparatively a recent development, is sending and receiving phone calls, faxes and e-mails as well as looking up information in remote databases and doing this anywhere on earth, through merging and producing portable computers. It is the provision of telephone services to phones which may move around freely rather than stay fixed in one location. Mobile phones connect to a terrestrial cellular network of base stations, whereas satellites phones connect to orbiting satellites. Both networks are interconnected to the public switched telephone network to allow any phone in the world to be dialed. Now, this new media has influenced all the persons of the world, irrespective of age and sexes. In this study mobile communication refers to the communicative architectures of mobile phone, its use patterns and functions and dysfunctions among youths in the four villages of the Jorhat district in Assam.

Sources and Types of Data

Both primary and secondary sources were used for collecting data in this study. The primary data had been collected from the youths who had mobile phone. The youths were asked some questions related to mobile phone architectures, its use patterns and social functions (positive and negative) played by it. On the other hand, secondary data were collected from govt.records, books, journals and websites.

Universe and Units of the Study

All youths in four selected villages constituted the universe and each youth as taken as the unit of the study for data collection. The four villages which differed in their cultural composition are (i) Komar Khatowal, a General Caste village dominated by the Kalita community, (ii) Charigaon, an OBC village dominated by the Konch community, (iii) Gorowal Chungi Gaon, an SC village dominated by the Koibortta community and (iv) Rampur Gaon, an ST village dominated by the Mishing community. The study was conducted by selecting 300 respondents; 68, 88, 83 and 61 respectively from the aforementioned villages. All the households in the four villages; namely' Komar Khatowal, Charigaon, Gorowal Chungi Gaon and Rampur Gaon were listed, coming to be altogether 1098 households. From the total households there was again listed the population of the villages coming to be altogether 6623. From the total population there was again listed the youths coming to be altogether 2014. In the village Komar Khatowal, the total population was found 1321, of which 751 were male and 570 were female. In this village population as 547 (Male: 298, Female: 249) in the age group of below 18; 269 (Male: 160, Female: 109) in the age group of 18-26; 188 (Male:107, Female:81) in the age group of 27-35 and 317 (Male:186,Female: 131) in the age group of above 35. Youths are signified in the age group 18-35, where total 457 (Male: 267, Female: 190) youths were found in the village.

In the village Charigaon, the total population was 2867, out of which 1688 were male and 1179 were female. In this population were 918 persons (Male: 536, Female:

382) in the age group of below 18; 401(Male: 261, Female: 140) in the age group of 18-26; 197 (Male: 114, Female: 83) in the age group OF 27-35 and 1351 (Male: 777, Female: 574) in the age group of above 35. Youths are signified in the age group 18-35, where a total 598 (Male: 375, Female: 223) youths as found.

In the village Gorowal Chungi, the total population was found 1518, out of which 758 were male and 760 were female. In this population were 508 persons (Male: 279, Female: 229) in the age group of below 18; 225 (Male: 127, Female: 98) in the age group of 18-26; 327 (Male: 151, Female: 176) in the age group of 27-35 and 458 (Male: 201, Female: 257) in the age group of above 35. Youths are signified in the age group 18-35, where a total of 552 (Male: 278, Female: 274) youths were found.

In Rampur Gaon, the total population was 917, out of which 495 were male and 422 were female. In this population there were 210 (Male: 99, Female: 111) in the age group of below 18; 229 (Male: 113, Female: 116) in the age group of 18-26; 178 (Male: 108, Female: 70) in the age group of 27-35 and 201(Male: 124, Female: 77) in the age group of above 35. Youths are signified in the age group 18-35, where a total of 407 (Male: 221, Female: 186) youths were found. The villagewise households, population, gender of persons and age groups are shown in the following table.

Table 1.1
Households and Population of the four Villages
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Villages	Households	Population												Grand Total		
		Under 18			18-26 (Early Youth Age)			27-35 (Late Youth Age)			Above 35					
		M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Komar Khatowal(General caste dominated Village)	207 (18.85)	298 (24.58)	249 (25.64)	547 (25.05)	160 (24.20)	109 (23.54)	269 (23.93)	107 (22.29)	81 (19.75)	188 (21.12)	186 (14.44)	131 (12.60)	317 (13.62)	751 (20.34)	570 (19.44)	1321 (19.94)
Charigaon (OBC dominated village)	548 (49.90)	536 (44.22)	382 (39.34)	918 (42.05)	261 (39.48)	140 (30.23)	401 (35.67)	114 (23.75)	83 (20.24)	197 (22.13)	777 (60.34)	574 (55.24)	1351 (58.07)	1688 (45.72)	1179 (40.22)	2867 (43.28)
Gorowal Chungi (SC village)	212 (19.30)	279 (23.01)	229 (23.58)	508 (23.27)	127 (19.21)	98 (21.16)	225 (20.01)	151 (31.45)	176 (42.92)	327 (36.74)	201 (15.60)	257 (24.73)	458 (19.68)	758 (20.53)	760 (25.92)	1518 (22.92)
Rampur (ST village)	131 (11.95)	99 (8.19)	111 (11.44)	210 (9.63)	113 (17.09)	116 (25.05)	229 (20.37)	108 (22.5)	70 (17.07)	178 (20.00)	124 (9.62)	77 (7.41)	201 (8.63)	495 (13.40)	422 (14.39)	917 (13.84)
Total	1098 (100)	1212 (100)	971 (100)	2183 (100)	661 (100)	463 (100)	1124 (100)	480 (100)	410 (100)	890 (100)	1288 (100)	1039 (100)	2327 (100)	3692 (100)	2931 (100)	6623 (100)

Source: Field Study Conducted during 25th Feb-22nd May 2014

Selection of the Units

At first a list of the youths was prepared from all the four villages: namely Komar Khatowal (General Caste dominated village), Charigaon (OBC dominated village), Gorowal Chungi (SC Village) and Rampur (ST Village). Total number of youths in the villages was found 2014 in the age group between 18 and 35. Then the list of the youths divided into two groups by genders: 18-26 (early youth age), 27-35 (late youth age). In the early youth age (18-26), there were 1124 youths: male 661, female 463 and in the late youth age (27-35) 890 youths: male 480, female 410. Out of 2014 youth, a sample of 15 percent youth who have mobile phone was drawn from each male and female of the age groups (early and late youth age) of the four villages.

Hence, total sample youths were found 300 (68, 88, 83 and 61 respectively) in four villages. It is shown in the following table:

Table 1.2
Sample of the Youths Drawn from the four Villages
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Villages	18-26 (Early Youth Age)					27-35 (Late Youth Age)					Grand Total of Sampled Units		
	Population		15% Sample			Population		15% Sample					
	M	F	M	F	Total	M	F	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Komar Khatowal (General caste dominated village)	160 (24.20)	109 (23.54)	24 (24.24)	16 (23.52)	40 (23.95)	107 (22.29)	81 (19.75)	16 (22.53)	12 (19.35)	28 (21.05)	40 (22.47)	28 (22.95)	68 (22.66)
Charigaon (OBC dominated village)	261 (39.48)	140 (30.23)	39 (39.39)	21 (30.88)	60 (35.92)	114 (23.75)	83 (20.24)	16 (22.53)	12 (19.35)	28 (21.05)	55 (30.89)	33 (27.04)	88 (29.33)
Gorowal Chungi (SC village)	127 (19.21)	98 (21.16)	19 (19.19)	14 (20.58)	33 (19.76)	151 (31.45)	176 (42.92)	23 (32.39)	27 (43.54)	50 (37.59)	42 (23.59)	41 (33.60)	83 (27.66)
Rampur Gaon (ST village)	113 (17.09)	116 (25.05)	17 (17.17)	17 (25.00)	34 (20.35)	108 (22.5)	70 (17.07)	16 (22.53)	11 (17.74)	27 (20.30)	41 (23.03)	20 (16.39)	61 (20.33)
Total	661 (100)	463 (100)	99 (100)	68 (100)	167 (100)	480 (100)	410 (100)	71 (100)	62 (100)	133 (100)	178 (100)	122 (100)	300 (100)

Source: Field Study Conducted during 25th Feb-22nd May 2014

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Tools for Data Collection

An interview schedule was constructed, which comprised headings such as, social background of the respondents, family composition, household Status, economy, religious activities, marriage activities, mass media exposure, mobile communication architectures, use patterns of mobile communication and social functions of mobile communication. It was administered to the sampled 300 youths from the four villages during 25th February-22nd May 2014.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study is organized into seven chapters. **Chapter 1** titled *Introduction* discusses the statement of the problem, review of related literature, objectives of the study, research questions, methodology (including sources and types of data, universe and units of study, selection of the units and tools of data collection); significance of the study and organization of the study.

The chapter 2 titled *Field of the Study* presents a comprehensive survey of various aspects (including population, caste structure, income and occupation, social, cultural, educational and political organizations, transportation and communication, industry, medical facilities, electric and drinking water facilities etc) of the selected villages in general and specially describes the presence of mobile communication among youths in the four villages.

The Chapter 3 titled *Social Background of the Respondents* discusses the socio-cultural factors like age, sex, education, religion, caste, community, income, and occupation etc of the youth intermediate the effectiveness of mobile phone.

The Chapter 4 titled *Social Bases of the Mobile Communication Architectures* gives an account of the mobile communication architectures (phone, audio, video, camera, internet, face book, calendar, torch, clock, calculator, ring tones, wall papers, games, extra memory, bluetooth, mobile TV, map, screen saver, mobile lock etc.) used by the rural youth in different social and cultural settings of the villages.

The Chapter 5 titled *Use Patterns of the Mobile Communication* discusses the way, purposes and the extent of using mobile communication (thought/opinion expression, social networking, internet surfing, banking, navigation, reading news, music listening, playing games etc.) among the youths of the four villages.

The Chapter 6 titled *Social Functions of the Mobile Communication* analyses the social functions, both, positive (integrative) and negative (dysfunctions) among rural youths in the society. In this chapter it is tried to focus on the changes (positive and negative) in personality and social participation of the youth as a result of mobile phone uses.

The Chapter 7 titled *Summary, Findings and Conclusion* summarizes the discussion and presents the findings and conclusion of the study.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There are some communicative architectures in mobile phones like mini-computer, telephone, data transfer facility, internet, camera, audio, video etc which are used for thought expression, social networking, internet surfing, banking, navigation, reading news, music listening, playing games etc. The youths use these media for different purposes and these media bring changes among the rural youth in different aspects of their life like behaviour, attitude, education, interaction, business, communication etc. Emergence of youth as a powerful social group is one of the most notable features in our country in recent past. The youths are deemed as major human resource for development, and thus a key agent of social change, economic development and technological innovation. It has occupied a large part of the total population of the country. Its population is large in size both in rural and urban areas. The role played by this section of society in science and technology, education, culture, rural development and politics has been significant and it has directly contributed to the development. This section of the society also has brought transformations in media culture. Mobile phone is a new media that has appeared in society. This media is most popular not only among the youths of India or Assam but equally popular among the youths of the other parts of the world also. Mobile phones are used by the youths for different purposes and so, some significant changes in behaviour, attitude, education, business and communication have occurred among them.Two functions i.e. positive and negative are played by mobile phone. Some are benefitted by using mobile phones and others are not. It is already mentioned that the youths are the most users of mobile phone. But some youths use it unnecessarily and others for most essential purposes. The present study focuses on both functions and dysfunctions of mobile phone among youths in the holistic perspective.

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