

Cross culture motifs and motives via updated technologies: Coke Studio and AIB

Mrinal Singh¹, Neha Bhagat²

¹(Amity School of Communication, Amity University, NOIDA, India)

²(Amity School of Communication, Amity University, NOIDA, India)

Abstract: Internet today is probably the fastest mode of widespread communication. This paper involves the understanding on internet in India is being used/ utilised for rapid transfer of news, stories and opinions crossing various barriers. We will also study the opinions and ways in which opinions are making its dominance in today's society. We shall look at how new shows like Coke Studio and AIB are helping people around the world to communicate on a common platform. Information Technology, being expeditious, is the platform these programs are utilizing to provide information to its users at a single time. Truly said that music binds people together. Music knows no boundaries, and coke studio is one of the established and flourishing platform that is crossing all boundaries. Singers from across borders collaborate with talented artists from different countries, and all it spreads is musical love. This communication with music is done so beautifully that no boundary can stop people from sharing their values and cultures with the rest of the world.

AIB, a absolutely separate concept from Coke Studio. But if we look closely its strategy and motive is quite similar. Coke Studio is a TV show along with a internet podcast which enables people to access information and connect with people of the world who share the same opinions. AIB is one of the most popular platforms for social activism within India. Comedy is a form that is widely popular communication methodology when it comes to discussing controversial topics. AIB, a group of 4 comedians stand up on different problems the society is facing. The messages are well crafted and leaves the audiences set back and make them think and re-think their opinions. In a world where all that we this is influenced with our cultural backgrounds and education we need such platforms that challenge our thinking processes. From Conversations with people like Russell Peters to Anurag Kashyap, from Bollywood spoofs to Net Neutrality, AIB has always been active in spreading and communicating with the masses. AIB owns a channel on Youtube and podcast on Sound Cloud. The two platforms, You Tube and Sound Cloud are one of the biggest hits on Internet. AIB nearly has one million subscribers on You Tube and the count is still on.

Coke Studio and AIB are one of the favourites programs which people follow religiously. A simple platform of Digital Media and Information technology is what these two shows have used to communicate with people of different cultures, with people around the world. Quick, easily accessible, fast, digital media is proving itself to be the greatest invention by humans. But with so many opinions comes the baggage of conflict. Internet is fast becoming the face of a many faced god. Hence, in this paper we aim to see that digital media and information technology is a path through which cross culture communication is taking place among masses. Focusing on the examples from Coke Studio and AIB we shall do a descriptive and detailed research to find if and how digital media is helping bring cultures to come together and changing the fast changing opinions of people across the globe.

Keywords: Internet, Youth, Youtube, All India Bakchod, AIB, Coke studio, Cultural studies

I. Introduction

Culture – a term often used commonly and without much consideration in our lives. It is the way we lead our lives. It the way we understand our surroundings. It is the festivals that we celebrate. It is the food that we eat. It is architecture that we see. It is something that we feel. Big theorists have given various definitions over centuries for Culture such as- “Culture... consists in those patterns relative to behaviour and the products of human action which may be inherited, that is, passed on from generation to generation independently of the biological genes.”¹- Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), U.S. sociologist. But for people with little inclination towards theoretical understanding, it is in fact everything that we grow up with, the traditions, the stories, the art, the music, the musical instruments, the songs. Everything come together to construct a beautiful structure. This not only gives a sense of belongingness but also provides the world a vibrant diversity to any region. Coke Studio (India) targets at this very emotion. In this paper we will attempt to explore how Coke Studio (India) is using

¹ Definitions of Culture- <http://faculty.berea.edu/richeyj/DEFINITIONS.pdf>

mainstream cultural and folk culture to bring people from different walks of life to come together and make 'symphony'. The amalgamation of various kinds of music from every corner of the country and from the world is a stunning example of crossing cultural boundaries. The cross-cultural motif and motive stands out in every song of Coke Studio. We shall focus on Coke Studio (India) and discuss a few particular songs and their special features.

Comedy on the other hand is an absolutely different concept. What is comedy? Aristotle defined the outlay of comedy. "Aristotle divides the object of imitation into superior action and inferior action. Within the dramatic genres, comedy imitates inferior action. The proper object of comic imitation is, however, not 'every sort of fault,' but 'the ridiculous, which is a species of the ugly (49a33-34).' From the fact that comedy is an imitation of the inferior action derives the requirement that it should represent a complete and whole action with magnitude and must have the same constitutive elements as tragedy."² In doing so the comedian today picks up a topic of controversy 'a fault' and ridicules it to make people think about it from various other angles. AIB (All India Bakchod) is our generation's newest and one of the most popular comedy groups in India. In this paper we shall also look at the transition of AIB from merely a group of stand up comedians to one of the most controversial internet phenomena in India.

What connects these to topics? We answer Internet. Internet is a global concept today. It connects people beyond boundaries. Newspaper, Radio and Television may have brought media to a pedestal for the common people but internet has revolutionised it. With world wide access to information and technology Coke Studio (India) and AIB have flourished within this. Further in this paper, as we discuss the cultural boom within the country and the youth stepping up to have strong opinions we shall focus how these two are what they are thanks to the extraordinary concept called- The Internet.

II. Coke Studio – Cultural Motifs and Motives

Coke Studio is one of the most popular music platforms for new and old artists to experiment with the new and already existing music/songs. It is interesting to see this fresh mix and revival of music. Coke Studio is a brilliant stage for new artists with creative minds to exchange and bring forth an absolutely new kind of music that has never been explored with such dynamics. It not only focuses on the rejuvenation of music but also introduction of various music instruments- regional and international instruments along with regional, national and international artists. The brilliant technological approach of the show is complimented by many. "Technology is widening scope for musicians every now and then. We are getting a better chance to explore ideas through new softwares. It has provided more options to us to showcase our talent," Trivedi told IANS in an interview over the phone from Mumbai. "More of computer-based music is in demand today, and there is special software through which music is created," he added.

We will focus on Coke Studio (India) as it is a vast topic and one paper is not sufficient to justify the entire cult of Coke Studio. Talking about the platform for experimental fusion music, Trivedi said: "It's wonderful. There are no actors involved here for whom we have to do lip sync. It's a stage where artists can show their talent without any involvement of film fraternity. It's like telling the world about pure music." As reported in Firstpost. For Coke Studio (INDIA) Amit Trivedi composed a song for the fourth season of "Coke Studio@ MTV".

The unique characteristic of Coke Studio (India) is that it gives an open stage to singers and musicians to showcase their wonderful art. As Trivedi rightly says "There are no actors involved here for whom we have to do lip sync. It's a stage where artists can show their talent without any involvement of film fraternity." This stage is for artists of various ethnicities to cross boundaries of states, religion and culture to make music that has revolutionized the music industry with its uniqueness. It is a dream come true for every musician. 'It is a culture'¹.

In 2011 when Coke Studio aired on Indian television for the first time, the man putting it together, Leslie Lewis commented "It's a sound India has never heard before". What he must have meant then is the rainbow of music that this platform was about to cast on Indian music industry. This first season saw big weights such as Kailash Kher, Colonial Cousins and the Wadali brothers. These singers and musician were already popular for their out of the box amalgamation of music. Giving a sneak peek into what Coke Studio was going to be, Lewis explained what he had tried to do with the show: "I have interspersed people - like Shankar Mahadevan and Khagen Gogoi who is a well known folk singer from Assam. So when I mix the Assamese stuff with Mahadevan's Marathi angle, that mixes it all up. So it's two separate cultural tunes. But you can't make it happen unless there's a proper groove behind it - I have to string everything together".

The second season grew in its originality and diversity and the seasons there after, followed the same progression. The consequent seasons have been doing the same even more so. The focus of Coke Studio in India was to create something new from what already existed. With the inclusion of instruments and artists from every

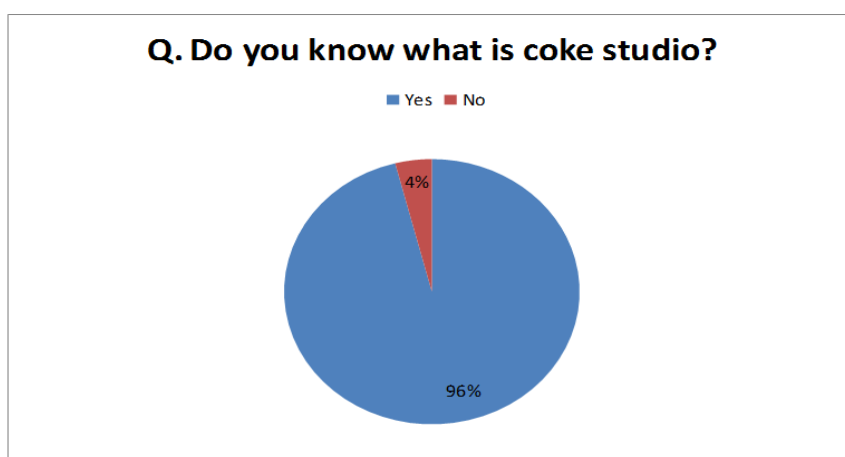
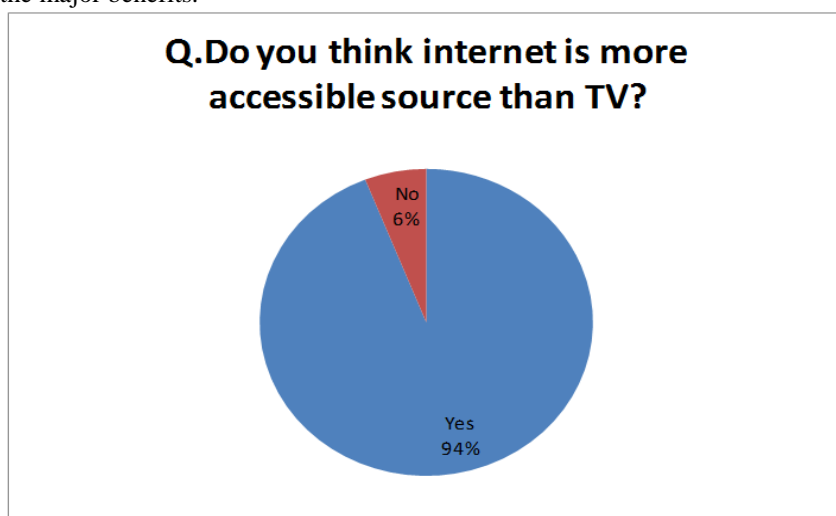
²Aristotle's Theory of Comedy, Masahiro Kitano. Section 3- The Comic - <http://www.gpwu.ac.jp/~kitano/papers/comic.pdf>

corner of the country and of the world Coke Studio has grown into an extraordinary and unique show. Songs like “Rangabati” by Ram Sampath, Sona Mohapatra & Rituraj Mohanty, “Aaj jaane ki zid na karo” by Ramya Iyer and Rupmatii Jolly, “Peer manaa waan challiyan” by Sameem Suliman and Sukhwinder Singh, “Laadki” by Sachin- Jigar, “Allah Ve” by Manj Musik, Raftaar and Jashan Singh and many such versions are a gift to the ears. The brilliant concept of showing the artists and musicians along with their instruments is simply genius. The videos are not only a breeze of fresh air to ears but refreshing to watch. We see singers, musicians, regional artists all coming together and enjoying the one thing that is important to them- exquisite music.

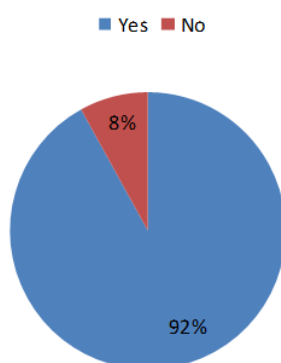
The basic idea behind choosing Coke Studio as one of our study topics was this uniqueness that had not been explored on national and international television. Take the case of ‘Zariya’ⁱⁱ it is a wonderful amalgamation of Buddhist, Jordanian and Indian (Hindi) lyrics and mesmerizing music. The crossing of cultural boundaries cannot be better defined by any other song. The smooth transitioning along with wonderful lyrics to support and the pleasant sound that reaches your ears are beyond words. The three cultures despite of being so different from each other are beautifully locked together and the listeners are appreciating it for the beauty that it is. Rahman has dedicated the song to mothers. Any mother. She is the creator, she is the hand of God on us.ⁱⁱⁱ

Coke Studio, as a branded concept (brilliantly marketed by Coke), originated in Brazil, which, given its polyglot and polyrhythmic musical traditions, was undoubtedly a feast for the ears. But it’s Coke Studio Pakistan and India is that is going to be the focus of our study here. Along with its extraordinary attempt to bring cultures together we are also going to discuss its accessibility over internet which take a huge credibility for its popularity.

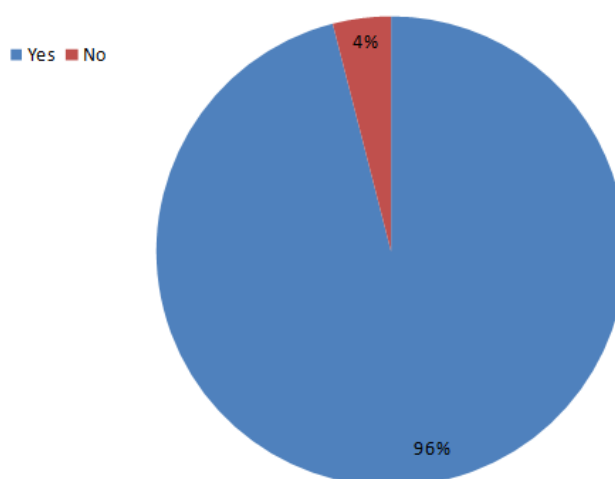
We conducted a survey via questionnaires for the age group of 17 years to 30 years with questions that targeted how many people are aware of what is Coke Studio, if it is integrating cultures and if they watch it over television or internet. The answers were in the favour of this research. Almost 92% thought that internet is more accessible source than television. 96% knew what Coke Studio is and 92% believed that Coke Studio promotes culture. Coke Studio airs on MTV as per the season schedule and despite of that people prefer watching it over internet because of accessibility over long period. Not only that, the benefit of being able to download it for keepsake is one the major benefits.



Q. Do you think coke studio promotes many cultures?



Q. Do you think coke studio has opened platforms for regional/folk music?



Also, 96% confirmed that shows like Coke Studio have opened platform for regional and folk music. Children in India grow up with Bollywood music. With the growing scale of Bollywood and tremendous cross culture usage of characters and stories it is only fit to have music that touches our lives with a new and fresh breeze. Songs like 'Jugni' in the movie Cocktail are being borrowed from Coke Studio (India). So the concept of revival of Bollywood song alone is not enough for Coke Studio. It is a lot more than one can put in words, it is said 'Where words fail, music speaks'. It is something that we feel. Coke Studio has become a world wide phenomenon. The absolutely stunning music one hears on Coke Studio- Pakistan is another aspect that is helping bridge the gap between varied cultures. Even though Pakistan culturally is close to Indian audiences, it stands different from Indian music and has been appreciated by Indian audiences with great zeal. The Cultural motif of using varied instruments and calling in singers from various ethnicities is very prominent throughout seasons of Coke Studio (India). Its motive of making the world aware of the vibrant various cultures of every corner of the country and the world is spectacular.

III. AIB (All India Bakchod)- Motives and the Internet success story

AIB is an Indian comedy group which uses satirical humour to inform the audience about any issue that the society is facing in the current scenario. The members of the group are stand up comedian, Gursimran Khamba, Tanmay Bhat, Rohan Joshi and Ashish Shakya. The group owns a YouTube channel which focuses on their comedy sketches and parodies on topics such as politics, society, Hindi film industry and what not. AIB

started in February 2012 by putting their first episode which was a comedy podcast that discussed current affairs. The group also had conversation with their guests ranging from Russell Peters, Raju Srivastav to Ranvir Shorey. AIB, not only owns podcasts channels and a YouTube channel but they also perform live stand ups, sketches, musical and improvised comedies on stage. AIB has almost 13 Lac Subscribers on YouTube and earns lacs of rupees in a single show. Highlighting current issues through satire is the basis of making videos. They have worked with famous celebrities like Imran Khan, Kalki Koechlin, Alia Bhatt, Irfan Khan to name a few. Recognizing the fact that Internet majorly YouTube is the easiest option for youths to access to any kind of information, they relied on it to promote their work. Before 2013, the group produced podcasts of their work and later used YouTube as the platform for the showcase of their work.

The founder of AIB along with Tanmay Bhat, was one of the anti-reservation group representatives who met the then President- Dr. Abdul Kalam to present a petition against reservations. While doing his graduation from Delhi College of Arts & Commerce, he was also an active member of AIESEC. He decided to move to England to pursue his post-graduation on full scholarship but life had different plans for him. For around 6 months he was bed ridden because of Tuberculosis. During this time he amused himself by watching stand-up comedy on YouTube. He then started a blog that was called Khamba's Blog this he claims he did to pass his time. There he used to present the social and political issues of India in witty and quirky way. The blog was a big hit and Gursimran earned thousands of followers on Twitter. Rajneesh Kapoor, a popular stand-up comedian got impressed by Gursimran's work and invited him for an open-mic night. That is how his journey started. While Khambagot admission in TISS and studied Media & Cultural Studies in 2012, he moonlighted as a stand-up comedian. One of his works right-wing fraction was found to be objectionable by some of the students.

The co-founder of AIB Tanmay Bhat is not only a stand-up comedian but a producer and a script writer too. Tanmay even performed alongside comics from UK in a Best Stand Up event. He was one of the first four comedians who were featured at Comedy Store, Mumbai's first all-Indian comedian lineup, titled Local Heroes. He was named a "Top 10 Comic" by the Times of India.

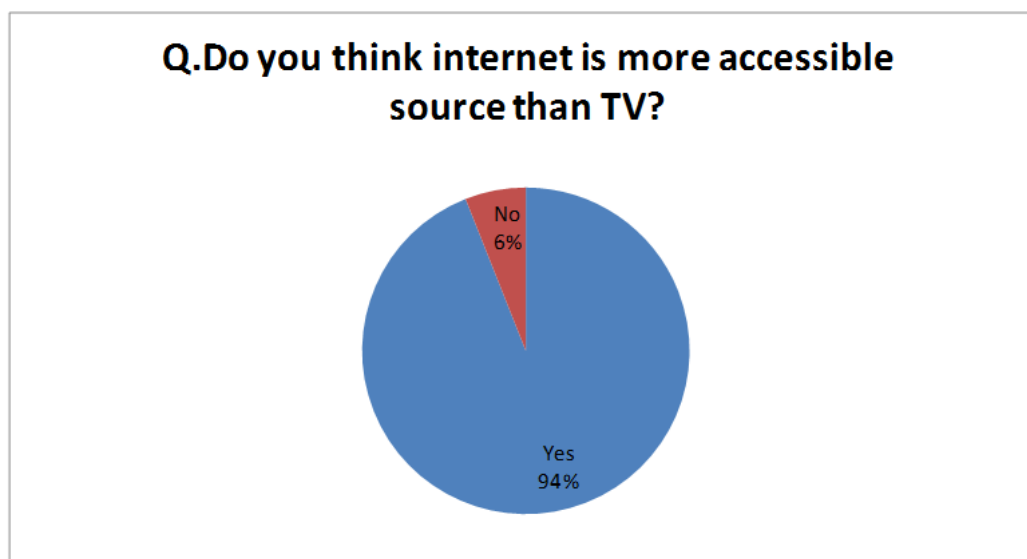
The other two members of AIB, Rohan Joshi and Ashish Shakya are close friends of Tanmay and Gursimran. The group met each other at open mic nights by Vir Das, stand-up comedian and actor. The four came together and started performing live stand-up, sketch, musical and improvised comedy on stage.

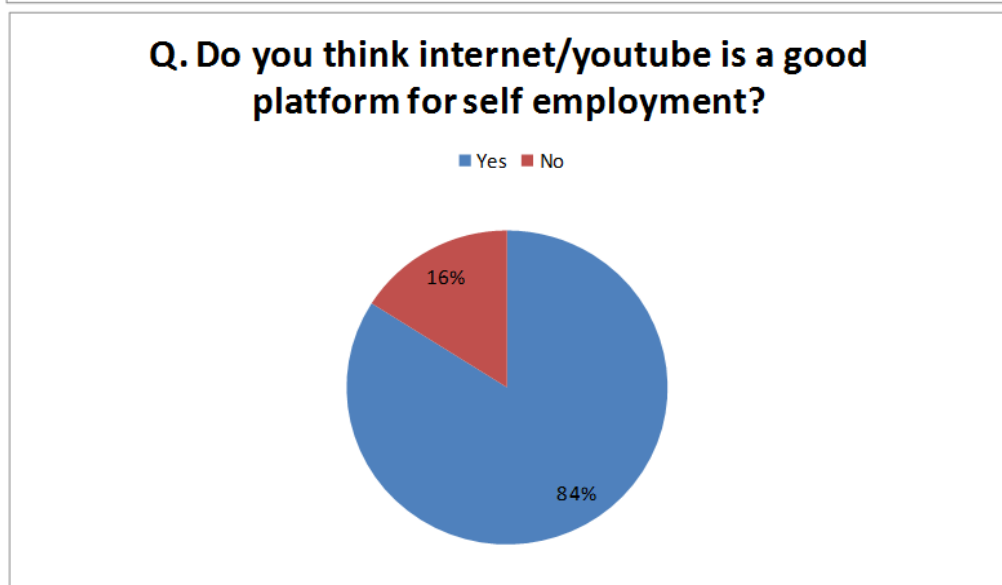
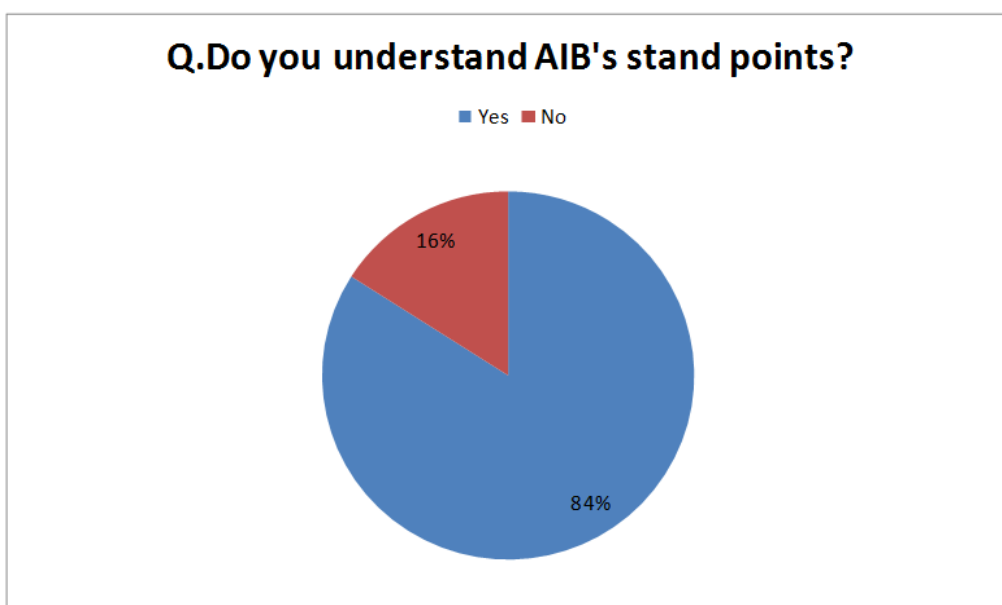
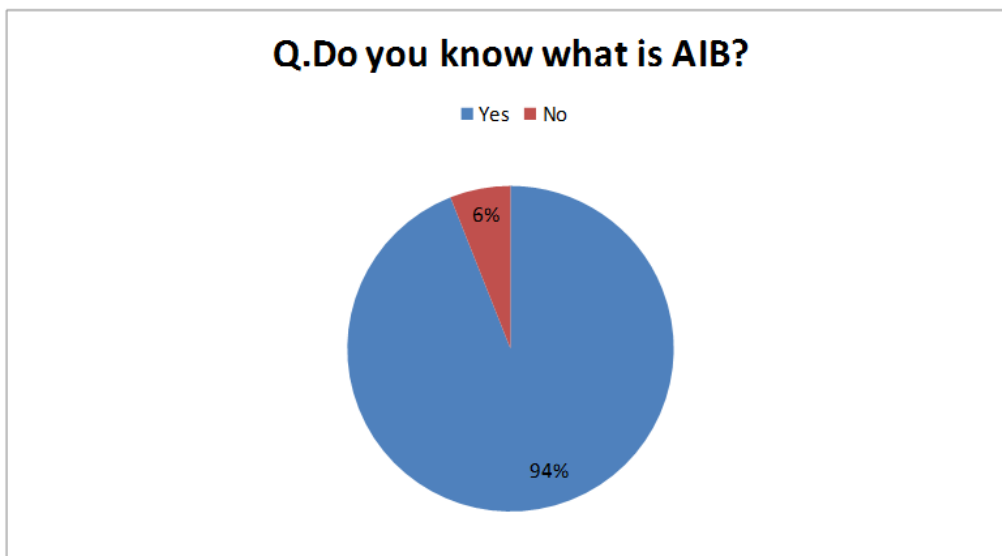
AIB started with their podcast and soon had a channel on YouTube. The group has commented on various section of the society. They came up with a unique concept of announcing winners of the worst movies, direction, advertisement, music and so on in their show called "The Royal Turds"^{iv}. AIB chooses from the society something unique and showcases it in a different manner. This gives a chance to the viewers to see the different aspects of the society and present it their way. In one of their videos "Honest Weddings", they showcased the actualities that groom side and the bride side faces but pretend in completely different manner. The work of AIB also focussed on the major problem that the women in India are facing. "Rape It's your fault"^v explains the victim's side. The satirical comments leaves the audiences amused but at the same time envisage of the situation of Indian women. In India, when net neutrality was in danger AIB came up with a video having two parts explaining why we needed net neutrality. This time they did not use their usual satire to send out their message but a clean and a direct message telling how important net neutrality is. Not only the common man appreciated the effort but also the bollywood industry.^{vi}

The very famous yet largely criticised show, AIB roast was a comedic art form adapted from New York based show Roast with Charlie Sheen that originated in 1949. The setup that was seen AIB Roast was the replica of Charlie Sheen.^{vii} AIB wanted to bring that same culture and humour that New York followed but like many times they crossed the thin line and went vulgar in sending out their messages. No matter how many big celebrities were involved in the show, it was almost a houseful show. AIB hosted the show and commented on each and everyone present. Not only the Roast but AIB had gone vulgar in many of their videos on YouTube in the past. Their AIB Roast show hurt the sentiments of the Christian organisations for which the members of AIB had to apologise. As reported in Times of India, dated Feb 9,2015 AIB had sent a letter to the Christian community that read, The letter reads: "We, Tanmay Bhat, Gursimran Khamba, Ashish Shakya, Rohan Joshi at AIB hereby offer an unconditional apology to the entire Christian community for any offence that may have been caused to its members as a result of the AIB Knockout. While performing our acts, no matter the subject, we never intend to hurt anyone, though as an unfortunate consequence of the nature of our profession we sometimes do. We are sorry."^{viii} One of the leading actors of the Bollywood industry, Aamir Khan did not support the content of their show. Though he claimed that he believes in the [freedom of speech](#) but violence is not an element he would support in any way. "I completely believe in Freedom of Speech but we also need to realise that as people, we have certain limitations and responsibilities. But when I heard all that was said to me, I felt it was a very violent event. Violence is not just physical that I hit you with my slipper and it's violence. It can be verbal as well. It can be emotional as well. When you insult someone verbally, you are perpetuating violence. Not only are you doing something this violent, you are also proudly showcasing that to the whole

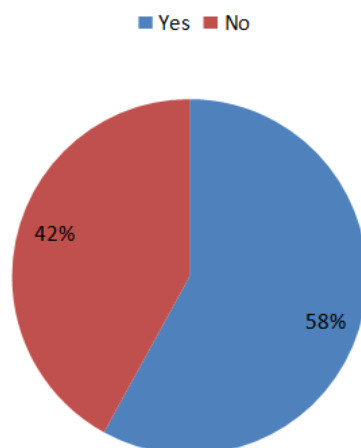
world". The content of the show went so vulgar and crossed its limit that FIR was registered against 14 people present at the show under sections 292 (Distribution of obscene content or lascivious or appeals to the prurient interest), section 67a of IT Act (Publishing or transmitting of material containing sexually explicit act, etc. in electronic form) and section 294 (Obscene Act in public place) of the Indian Penal Code, reported [India Today](#)^{ix}. Supporting the team behind AIB Roast, Anushka Sharma told The Times of India, "The way I look at it, we think it was in good humour. Not meant to be taken very seriously. This is our opinion and someone else may have a different opinion about it and that is the beauty of living in a democratic setup". The content was found to be vulgar by the government and Maharashtra's Chief Minister. Therefore the video had to be taken down from the internet.

So, why comedy? Comedy or humour is something everyone notices. It hurts some and tickles the funny bone for some. For some it is just a more innovative and light hearted approach towards life not diminishing the importance these topics may have in personal lives or socially. On one hand youths all over the world are applauding AIB's work and feel what they speak is true. AIB is becoming one of the idols and motivating youths to get creative and think out of the box giving the youths an option to be self-motivated and self-employed. But at the same time by using crass language it is creating a buzz in the world. This has worked both in its favour and against it. With the government banning AIB Roast's from internet platforms such as YouTube. According to the survey done by us, almost 92% of the youths believe that internet is a more accessible source than TV. About 94% knew what AIB is but only 84% agree with AIB's stand points. With popularity in hand, thanks to internet AIB has also trying to motivate our masses to think and formulate their own opinions. AIB along with social motivation is also one of the biggest and most successful examples self-employment with creativity and social cause. Their method maybe put up for debate if it is wrong or right but the fact that people are watching and listening even if they like it or not speaks for itself. It has done what Jaspal Bhatti in 'Flop Show' did successfully. Critique the system as well as the masses for their lack of involvement. Only difference being within comedy, what has been their approach. Where 'Flop Show' aimed at a family entertainment, AIB seems to aim audiences at large and treat them as individuals. They give the issue straight forward and critique it openly, without inhibitions. This has been a matter of controversy. But nothing can negate the success of AIB in influencing audiences at such a large scale.

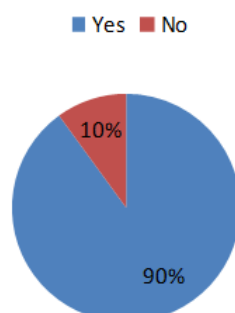




Q. Do you think internet is an elite concept?



Q. Do you feel internet especially channels on YouTube is encouraging youths to get into new employment opportunities?



IV. Conclusion

Internet is indeed the focal point of binding the world together. Making a huge pool of information, art, culture, humour, social issues etc available to every nook and corner of this globally diverse world. On one hand shows like Coke Studio are promoting regional/ folk music and promoting varied cultures through music. On the other hand, shows like AIB are creating a different genre of satirical comedy to convey a message. Through this research we can see the amalgamation of the cultures across boundaries through music. In a survey that we conducted 96% of the people knew what Coke Studio is and even these youths believe that cross culture is taking place through a platform like this. Different singers from every corner of the world have come and shared the stage together. Their style of singing is amalgamated with the others and they create music binding the styles of the many cultures. We conducted a survey via questionnaires for the age group of 17 years to 30 years with questions that targeted how many people are aware of what is Coke Studio, if it is integrating cultures and if they watch it over television or internet. The answers were in the favour of this research. Almost 92% thought that internet is more accessible source than television. 96% knew what Coke Studio is and 92% believed that Coke Studio promotes culture. Also, 96% confirmed that shows like Coke Studio have opened platform for regional and folk music.

India has always seen direct messages on a particular issue. With AIB, we could see a different genre of satirical comedy taking birth. Youth not only follows them but also enjoy and understand the content AIB delivers. The group is sending out their message loud and clear and are crossing boundaries but at the same time they are hurting the sentiments of many Indian minds. This kind of comedy did not exist in India, thus we need

time to understand and alter our mindset for these kind of shows. When we follow a particular group we tend to believe in them and their thinking is easily reflected in our personalities. We do believe that AIB is encouraging people to think in a creative manner and become self employed but it is true that somewhere they are inculcating vulgarity. According to the survey done by us, almost 92% of the youths believe that internet is a more accessible source than TV. About 94% knew what AIB is but 84% AIB's stand points. Through shows like AIB are getting popular over the internet and youths do believe that they motivate them to produce their own shows giving them a chance for self employment.

We are here to entertain the masses and that should be done within the laws and acts. If a message is needed to be sent to the masses and make an impact, there are other ways as well. Keeping the fact in mind that it is the Digital world- Internet where nothing can be hidden and it is very easy to access to any kind of information, it is the responsibility of media persons to monitor the content themselves. Binding the cultures together and giving the public messages by entertaining should be an aim of the upcoming talent. One cannot deny the fact that comedy is in fact something that crosses our hearts and leaves an impact no matter what.

References

- [1]. IB Times, AIB knockout controversy fir against Ranveer, Arjun, Karan, Deepika and others bollywood stars - www.ibtimes.co.in
- [2]. The Times of India, AIB Knockout Controversy- www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com
- [3]. Soundcloud, All India backchod- www.soundcloud.com/allindiabakchod
- [4]. Firstpost, Technology widening scope musicians- Amit Trivedi - www.firstpost.com
- [5]. Forbes India, Coke Studio brings people together- <http://forbesindia.com/article/recliner/coke-studio-brings-people-together/26072/1>
- [6]. Firstpost- MTVs Coke Studio, season-3 to feature A R Rahman- <http://www.firstpost.com/bollywood/mtvs-coke-studio-season-3-to-feature-ar-rahman-1004069.html>
- [7]. Firstpost- Coke Studio India, season 2 to focus on originality and diversity- <http://www.firstpost.com/bollywood/coke-studio-india-season-2-to-focus-on-originality-diversity-355332.html>
- [8]. Firstpost- Coke Studio a sound India has never heard before- <http://www.firstpost.com/living/coke-studio-a-sound-india-has-never-heard-before-27462.html>
- [9]. Quora, What is Gursimran Khamba like in real life - www.quora.com
- [10]. India Today- AIB controversy: Karan Johar says his silence signifies dignity -<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/aib-controversy-karan-johar-says-his-silence-signifies-dignity/1/418332.html>
- [11]. IB Times, 'AIB Knockout' Controversy: Bollywood Stars to Face Jail Term? -<http://www.ibtimes.co.in/aib-knockout-controversy-fir-against-ranveer-arjun-karan-deepika-others-bollywood-stars-622642>

ⁱ Season 4, Episode 6- Featuring Babul Supriyo, Anupam Roy and Jeet Gannguli

ⁱⁱ Season 3, Episode 1- Featuring AR Rahman, Ani Choying and Farah Siraj

ⁱⁱⁱ COKE STUDIO, SEASON 3, EPISODE 1-ZARIYA - BTM - A.R RAHMAN, ANI CHOYING, FARAH SIRAJ

iv AIB: Royal Turds

v AIB: Rape- It's your fault

vi AIB: Save the Internet

vii YouTube, Roast Charlie Sheen- William Shatner

viii Indiatoday.intoday.in-News/India/West/AIB Roast: Comedy group apologises to Christian Community

ix Ibtimes.co.in/ 'AIB Knockout' Controversy: FIR against Ranveer, Arjun, Karan, Deepika and Others; Bollywood Stars to Face Jail Term?