User Needs : A Study of Politicians of Manipur

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Abstract

Politicians constitute a particular group of users whose information need and information seeking behaviour is quite specific. In our paper an attempt is being made to ascertain the information needs of politicians who belong to different parties in Manipur. The channels and sources of information they use and their involvement in information activities are some of the parameters on which emphasis has been given. The barriers encountered by the politicians have also been chalked out to draw solutions.

Keywords : User needs, Political Parties, Manipur.

0.   Introduction

It is necessary to know the users need so as to create information awareness and promote the use of information by the information providers. By user needs we mean the needs of the information users to meet their purpose. Both information need and use are directly concerned with users. The users are the ultimate recipient of information in any communication cycle, information system, information network, etc. The information needs of the users differ form one group to other. The user groups also differ each other in their use of information channels, sources, behaviour and their involvement in different information activities. Collection, storage, dissemination, retrieval and transfer of information depend on particular characteristics of the user groups to be served by the Agencies/Centres/Institutions/Libraries. Therefore, the study of users need is very important to the providers of information. Considering politicians as a particular group of users, whose information needs, use, use behaviour, etc. are supposed to be specific unlike other group of academic users, a critical study is being made here.

1.   Political Parties in Manipur

Party politics began in the state since early thirties. Jannaneta Hijam Irabot Singh, who is regarded as a national leader today was a pioneer and prominent leader who took active part in the formation of political party in Manipur. Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha which became a political party in 1938 is claimed to be the first political party in the true sense, in Manipur. Today we have a number of political parties in the state including national and regional like, BJP, CPI, CPM, FPM, INC, JD(S), MNC, MPP, RSP, NTC, MSCP, etc. These parties and their members are active at all kinds (from Parliament to Rural Panchayat). There is, therefore, no dearth of political leaders in the state. They need information to establish themselves as knowledgeable leaders. Well informed and knowledgeable leaders are required for the development of the people and the state. In this backdrop, such studies are necessary to ascertain the information needs of politicians for the welfare of the society.

2.   Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of present study are to:

- ascertain the information needs of the various politicians of Manipur;
- find out information channels and sources they use;
- study their involvement in information activities;
- chalk out their information barriers;

- ✍ measure their level of satisfaction as users of information;
- ✍ examine the present library environment of the state as information provider to the politicians; and
- ✍ suggest a model of an effective information system in the state.

3. Methodology

Structured Questionnaire is used to collect data from the politicians who belong to different parties. Altogether, 150 questionnaires were distributed during June – August, 2004 and could receive 115 dully filled in questionnaires. The collected data is analysed using simple statistical methods like, mean, deviations, and standard deviation. In some cases 3-point scales have also been used to calculate scores.

4. Analysis of Data

The collected data is analysed in the following sections.

4.1 Personal Bio-data of Politicians

Table-1 shows the personal bio-data of politicians of various parties, highlighting their affiliation, status in the party, etc. INC has largest representation followed by CPI, FPM, BJP, respectively. The number of executive members is less than the ordinary members in most of the parties. Male Representative from each party is more than the Female Representative. In case of MPP, no female politicians have been responded.

Table 1: Personal Bio-data of politicians (N=115)

Sl. No.	Party Affiliation	Total	Male	Female	Status in the Party		
					Executive Member	Other	Member
1.	BJP	12	9	3	4	4	4
2.	CPI	20	17	3	5	8	7
3.	CPM	7	5	2	1	4	2
4.	FPM	15	10	5	4	6	5
5.	INC	23	15	8	4	14	5
6.	IND	10	7	3	4	3	3
7.	MPP	11	11	-	2	6	3
8.	MSCP	9	7	2	1	2	6
9.	JD(S)	8	7	1	3	2	3

Source: Questionnaire

4.2 Purpose of Information Needs

There are different purposes why politicians need information as shown in Table-2.

Table 2 : Propose of Information Need (N-115)

Sl. No	Purpose	Party								
		INC	FPM	CPI	IND	BJP	MPP	CPM	MSCP	JD(S)
1	Party matter	18	5	12	5	6	8	4	3	3
2	Debate in Assembly/Parliament Others	8	13	4	-	2	3	-	2	2
3	Development in political scenario	14	13	9	2	5	3	4	4	4
4	Public Talk	22	2	14	10	11	10	7	7	6
5	Assignment given by the party	5	10	3	3	-	3	2	1	2
6	Others	5	8	4	1	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Questionnaire

Their purpose is quite different among different parties. Public talk is found to be the most important purpose of the Politicians of all party for which they search for information. However, it is quite contradictory in case of FPM. Party matter is also another important purpose.

4.3   Ways of Fulfilling the Information Needs

The politicians adopt different ways and means to meet their needs. As described in Table 3, watching TV and listening Radio are found to be rated highest by politicians irrespective of their party affiliation. Discussion among the colleagues also rates high. Attending Party class, meeting and reading of related literature are also important means through which the politicians collect information to meet their needs.

Table-3 : Ways of Fulfilling Information Needs (N=115)

Sl.	Ways	INC	FPM	CPI	IND	BJP	MPP	CPM	MSCP	JD(S)
1.	By reading related literature	11	10	13	5	7	8	7	3	4
2.	By attending party class	10	9	11	5	8	6	7	4	4
3.	By attending party meeting	18	12	10	8	7	6	4	6	5
4.	By discussing with colleagues	20	16	15	10	11	9	9	8	7
5.	By watching T.V.	22	18	15	10	11	11	9	8	7
6.	By listening Radio	22	19	15	10	11	11	9	8	7
7.	Others	5	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-

Source: Questionnaire

4.4 Factors Influencing Information Needs

Purpose of information is considered to be the most important factor which influences the need of the politicians of all parties. Resource available is also an important factor as seen in Table 4. Time available and other factors seem not influence their information search.

Table 4: Factors Influencing Information Search (N=115)

Sl. No.	Factors	Score	Deviation
1	Purpose of Information	95.50	+ 45.88
2	Resource Available	65.00	+15.38
3	Time available	27.50	-22.12
4	Others	10.50	-39.12

Source: Questionnaire   X = 49.62

4.5 Use of Information Channels

Personal collection/ libraries built up by the politicians are found to be the only effective information channel used by them. Library also forms an important channel for them. As shown in Table 5, through DIPR and State Information Centre, they also collect information. Use of other channels is relatively low.

Table 5: Use of Information Channels (N=115)

Sl. No.	Channels	Party									Occurance	R/N
		BJP	CPI	CPM	FPM	INC	IND	MPP	MSCP	JD(S)		
1.	Library	-	8	4	6	4	-	7	3	5	64	2nd
2.	Personal Collection/ Library	5	16	7	5	10	2	10	5	5	70	1st
3.	Information centre	-	5	6	5	7	2	4	-	-	29	7th
4.	Community Information Centre	6	11	2	-	13	5	2	-	-	45	5th
5.	DIPR	2	8	5	10	16	4	8	3	6	62	3rd
6.	StateInformation Centre	6	5	-	7	9	-	2	-	-	31	6th
7.	State Information Centre(Secretariat)	2	12	2	12	11	2	4	7	5	57	4th
8.	Others	2	-	-	-	5	2	1	-	-	10	8th

Source: Questionnaire

R/N = Rank Number

4.6   Preference in the use of Library

It is quite obvious that the politicians (mostly elected members to Assembly) prefer mostly to their personal library followed by Assembly and Secretariat Library respectively as seen in Table-6.

Table-6: Most preferred Library (N=115)

Sl. No.	Most	BJP	CPI	CPM	FPM	INC	IND	MPP	MSCP	JD(S)	Occurance	R/N
1	State Central Library	7	10	6	4	9	4	8	5	4	57	4th
2.	Personal Library	8	11	4	11	11	4	6	4	3	62	1st
3	Secretariat	9	12	3	7	10	6	4	4	3	58	3rd
4	Assembly Library	7	13	3	8	13	5	4	3	4	60	2nd
5	Academic Library	-	0	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	6th
6	Other	3	9	-	3	4	3	-	-	-	22	5th

Source: Questionnaire

4.7   Periodicity

It is found that only 10.43% of the politicians of the state visit library on weekly basis and 55.65% of them sometimes. While 33.91% hardly visit the same, no politician is found to visit library daily as shown by Table –7.

Table-7: Periodicity of Visiting the library (N=115)

Sl. No.	Periodicity	No. of Respondent	Percentage (%)
1	Daily	-	-
2	Weekly	12	10.43
3	Sometimes	64	55.65
4	Hardly	39	33.91
	Total	115	100.00

Source: Questionnaire

4.8   Dependency on Information Sources

As Table 8 highlights, newspaper is the main source of information through which politicians collect information, followed by books, reports and journals. Uses of other sources are almost negligible.

Table 8: Dependency on Information source(N=115)

Sl. No.	Sources	Score	Deviation
1	Books	80.00	+ 41.00
2	Journals	43.5	+ 4.50
3	Newspaper	107.5	+ 68.50
4	Reports	24.00	+ 15.00
5	Patents	10.00	- 29.00
6	Govt. Publication	27.5	- 11.50
7	Publication Related to Party	38.00	- 1.00
8	Research Paper	12.00	- 27.00
9	Manual	8.50	- 37.50

$X = 39.00$ Source: Questionnaire

4.9   Access to Information Sources

Among the various sources of information, documentary sources are the main sources through which the politicians of Manipur access to collect information. As Table-9 shows, Institutional and Human Resources are also important sources for them. Even though use of electronics sources is very less, access to internet by the politicians is rated high.

Table 9: Access to Information Sources (N=115)

Sl. No.	Sources	BJP	CPI	CPM	FPM	INC	IND	MPP	MSCP	JD(S)	Occurrence	R/N
1	Documentary Sources	8	16	7	10	18	10	9	7	5	90	1st
2	Institutional Sources	6	15	4	8	16	4	7	3	4	67	2nd
3	Human resources	4	9	5	7	9	5	8	5	4	56	3rd
4	CD-ROMs	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	6th
5	Floppy	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5th
6	DVDs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	Internet	1	6	-	3	4	1	2	-	-	17	4th
8	Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	—	-

R/N=Rank Number   Source: Questionnaire

4.10   Involvement in Information Activities

Regarding their involvement in information activities politicians are found to be involved more in meeting/conference. As table-10 indicates, they also write articles to publish in newspapers. They also give emphasis on party report. A few of them also involve in writing books.

Table 10: Involvement in Information Activity (N = 115)

Sl. No.	Sources	Party									Occurrence	R/N
		BJP	CPI	CPM	FPM	INC	IND	MPP	MSCP	JD(S)		
1	Documentary Sources	8	16	7	10	18	10	9	7	5	90	1st
2	Institutional Sources	6	15	4	8	16	4	7	3	4	67	2nd
3	Human resources	4	9	5	7	9	5	8	5	4	56	3rd
4	CD-ROMs	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	6th
5	Floppy	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5th
6	DVDs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	Internet	1	6	-	3	4	1	2	-	-	17	4th
8	Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	—	-

Source: Questionnaire   R/N=Rank Number

4.11 Problems

Majority of the politicians (66.09%) have problems in accessing to information resources. The time limitation is the most problem encountered by them. As shown in Table 11, non-availability of related materials is also another major problem. The library hour is also found not be suitable for them.

Table 11: Problems (N=115)

Sl. No.	Problems	Occurrence	Rank No.
1	Time limitation on any part	60	1st
2	Non-availability of related material in the library	52	2nd
3	Library hour is not suitable for me	35	3rd
4	Other	1	4th

Source: Questionnaire

4.12 Suggestions

The politicians have also suggested ways to solve the problems they encountered as well as to be developed in the existing library and information systems of the state. Some of such important suggestions include:

- ✍ The existing library and information system of the state should enrich with sufficient collection to be developed to meet the requirements of the reading community. The collections are also required to be organized in a systematic way.

- ✍ Regular power supply, provision of online service, free access to internet service, applications of IT in library and information activities, computerization of library operations, proper reading room facility, extension of library hours, etc. are some of the areas which require to be more emphasized..

- ✍ Current information on the activities of the State Government department should be properly disseminated to the public through DIPR. The DIPR itself requires to be improved in many points.

- ✍ Libraries run by local club/NGOs mostly located in remote areas should be given possible assistance from the Government side to serve the community of the respective areas.

5. Conclusion

Above analysis has given us indication that politicians of Manipur as a group of users need information for different purposes. To meet the same this take up different ways and means. Their need is highly influenced by the factor, purpose of information. Most of the politicians have the habit of building up of personal collection which is the most important channel for collection of information. Functioning of other libraries in the state require to be studied. In this digital information era, the present day politicians have to be familiar with the digital sources. Documentary, Institutional and Human Resources still dominate the other sources of information for meeting the needs of the politicians. Majority of them still have problem in accessing information resources due to various factors. The overall scenario of general reading habit of the politicians of the state is not upto the mark and below the expectation. The study calls for establishing a new effective model of a library and information system which can serve the information need of the users.

6.   References

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Appendix

Abbreviations Used :

BJP = Bharatiya Janata Party; CPI = Communist Party of India; CPM = Communist Party of India (Marxist); DIPR = Directorate of Information and Public Relations; FPM = Federal Party of Manipur; INC = Indian National Congress; IND = Independent; JD(S) = Janata Dal (Secular); MNC = Manipur National Conference; MPP = Manipur Peoples Party; MSCP = Manipur State Congress Party; NTC = Nationalist Trinamool Congress RSP = Revolutionary Socialist Party.