

SOCIAL MEDIA: A SOURCE OF NEWS & TOOL TO GENERATE AWARENESS ON VARIOUS ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

Today, we live in a time, when all information is just a few seconds away from us. We are eager to know many things at a time and that's the reason, today we have social media. It makes our life so easy and evolving platform for people who want to communicate, express and share content and news stories at a faster speed. Social media has grown enormously at an unexpectedly fast rate and has captured millions of users worldwide. It has affected our mind and different aspects of our life like social, cultural, political, economical etc. and also influence our thinking and feelings. It disseminates information, knowledge and created awareness among people on different issues. This digital information age gives us more breaking news than ever before. In this research paper, an extensive review of the literature has been carried on to analyze and to get an effective understanding of the impact of social media as a source of news. This study will reveal how people use social networking sites, as a source of news to generate awareness among masses.

Keywords : Social Media, Communication, Awareness, Information

INTRODUCTION

Communication is dynamic in nature. It relies on the nature of human perception which can change over time. Communication journey is so long it started with smoke signals to carrier pigeons, printing press to Social Media. The internet has modified the way we communicate and receive information. The traditional route of receiving news through a printed newspaper has transformed into digital pocket form. Former research says new media technologies have changed the habit of receiving information, entertainment, and education. Experts say 'user- friendliness', 'convenience', 'interactivity', 'personalization', 'easy to reach', 'instant news service' are the main features which attract people towards social media rather than conventional media. Print media is highly affected by social media. Social media is not limited to only blogging and sharing pictures and videos, it is more than that. There are numerous things which we are performing on a social media platform that is it enables us to share or create content and also help us to participate in social networking. But today, social media is a topic of controversy also, some people

believe that it is a boon and many believe that it is a curse. Some people are saying it is destroying the mind, human interaction and time with fake and inappropriate news content. On the other side, some are saying it is a blessing which connected us to every part of the world, we can meet our loved ones that are far, and we spread news awareness through it. Social media can do many things. But it is an indisputable fact that the existence of social media made our lives more convenient, easier and much faster.

The questions that emerged to deal with the social media as a news source were as follows:

- Why more people are turning to social media these days?
- How it becomes the social networking site to news source?
- How much trustworthy it is? Can we trust the news which social media delivers?
- How much accurate and factual it is?
- What are benefits which offered by social media to us?

- And how this social media is useful in updating and generating awareness among the masses?

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

The Investopedia describes “Social media is computer-based technology which facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities.” It facilitates electronic communication which means personal information, documents, videos and photographs (“Social Media”, 2019). Social media originated as a way to interact with friends and family but later it was adopted by business companies to reach their target customers. Now it's a platform of sharing news also. Kaplan & Haenlein define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). We use social media sites for interaction, promotion, marketing, education, politics, games, entertainment and many more. Companies for business purpose use it for trading and commerce, marketing, business deals, promotion of goods etc.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SOURCE OF NEWS

Nowadays, getting breaking news is so simple and faster. It is a platform which offers lots of benefits which easily attracts youth. There is no need to wait for 24 hours or no need to sit in front of the television for news. Trending topics are easily available on smart phone and according to choice everyone sorts the content whichever they liked and cater as per preferences. Print media is highly affected by online media. Now, it's a time of analyzing different online newspapers as well as different apps because it is a matter of research in many ways (Franco, 2004).

As per the reports of FICCI, Indian Media and entertainment industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in India. Digitization has played a stronger role in informing, empowering and inspiring the nation. Access to content and participation in media is too much. The number of users on the internet in India is expected to cross 500 million this year. As per this report, India is become the second largest smart phone market by 2017, data consumption has grown to an

average of 3.9GB per month. In urban areas, online newspaper is growing but in the rural area, it is declining because of the digital divide. Online newspapers are gaining popularity recently but in metros only. As per FICCI latest report, less than 5% of print industries total revenue is driven from digital on an industry level. Consumers can consume news as per their choice and comfort. Experts say “It is easy to observe that people of a particular age group choose offline over online media, and people belonging to another age group will choose vice versa. This choice is driven by their habits as has been observed by in their research” (Angela, Michael & Carpini, 2010).

NOW, TRADITIONAL PLAYERS HAVE DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS

The latest 2018 FICCI report says Traditional newspapers are facing competition from domestic digital-born start-ups. As per some of the experts of the print industry, now journalism works on a 24x7 cycle, and the Journalists and print industry have multi-platform to publish their work. Many of them already have their digital presence and some of them recently launched their own apps and online websites. TV news companies have also planned to launch themselves in an application form. Local and regional news consumption is continues growing, with significant traffic coming from rural and semi-urban regions. This has given rise to several digital media companies focused on key regional and vernacular markets and 84% of India's total digital population consumed news digitally in April 2017.³³ (Re-imagining India's M&E sector, 2018).

SOCIAL MEDIA GIVES NEW DIMENSION TO NEWS

We cannot ignore the immense power of Journalism. Social media and smart phone are becoming the best source of news because:

- **It is a Fast medium of news sharing :** Social media is a popular means of news for us these days because it provides news immediately, that we called us 'breaking news'. Experts say, it is the fastest medium of news source, so most of the journalists all over the world rely on social media websites and network apps for collecting news stories. Facebook, Twitter and You Tube are considered as the best source of

“breaking news”. These sites are popular among people because their 'interactive' and the 'multimedia' features are amazing (Hasan, 2014). At every second there are multiple news channels on all various social networking sites providing instant news service to users.

- **Customized News for the audience :** Now, people are independent in terms of what they consume. The News is available like a cafeteria. We have a menu to choose and decide what to consume. Websites like Facebook, Twitter, different news apps like daily hunt, Insta, TOI etc. have completely changed the news media world.
- **Every second is “Breaking News”:** the concept of getting breaking news is completely changed. Everyone has a phone with camera facility; they clicked the photograph or capture video of a particular incident, write a few lines on that issue and upload it online. Within seconds this story goes on a worldwide level. Newman finds that on social media news is broken hours ahead of. He gives the examples of Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, Hurricane Katrina in the USA, the death of Osama Bin Laden, the death of Muammar Gaddafi and so on traditional news organizations (Newman, 2009). Morijon's findings say that over 50% of American people heard breaking news via social media rather than official news sources further drives the point home (Morejon's, 2012).
- **The Rise of Citizen Journalism:** Nowadays, readers are no longer just recipient but are critical thinker also. This digital era and the interactive nature of the internet have given birth to the new term “Citizen Journalism”. The other name of citizen journalism is public or participatory journalism and democratic journalism (Baase, 2013). They are non-professionals, playing an active role in collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating information and news like real reporters or journalists. The aim of this participation is to provide independence, reliability, accuracy and relevant information that a democracy requires (Bowman, Willis, 2003).
- **User-friendly:** The popularity of social networking sites as a news source has rapidly increased over the past few years because it is easy to navigate and

require very less knowledge of the internet to access. As per early research, people always want a platform where they can express themselves without much technological knowledge. Most conventional media offers one-way communication and feedback are delayed.'

- **Voice' of the people:** People love to receive and see feedback from friends and others sometimes unknown people. With the help of a social media platforms like Twitter and YouTube, citizens can produce and circulate their own news stories. Sometimes these news stories are picked up by conventional news sources like CNN. Citizens can share information among their group which has led to a decline in consumption of conventional media (Squires, 2019). Social media has given the power to citizens.
- **Multimedia as an attractive feature:** News which is available in visual and infographic form, easily grab the attention of viewers because of the human brain processes visual information much more quickly as compared to text information and multimedia content is the best way to attract target customers (Ahmad, 2019). Detailed links are provided with every news story.
- **They are free to use :** Most of the highly popular social networking sites like Face book, twitter, Google+ are available free to access. These sites are making money through advertisements. Anybody can openly access these sites (Fita, 2019).

HOW MUCH TRUSTWORTHY IT IS?

Research scholars believe today anyone with a Smart phone and laptop can spread information and video around the world immediately. This newfound immense power of influencing can play a vital role in people's understanding of events in places that have been cut off from traditional journalism. In this digital age, it is nearly impossible for anyone to mask their cruelty and anyone can speak about oppression to a global audience. But this digitization has a dark side also. Social media like twitter and Facebook often release information to the public that has not been verified most of the time. So, it is possible for the wrong information to spread quickly. Unlike traditional journalism, social media does not have any responsibility to the truth and

the reporters (Citizen Journalists) are not accountable to anyone (Acemoglu, Ozdaglar & Parandeh Gheibi, 2010). Many scholars believe that independent content developers, citizen Journalists never replace mainstream journalists because mainstream journalist have knowledge of basic journalism, laws, and ethics of the news industry and they are properly trained. The Journalist knows the importance of credibility, objectivity, fairness and the news values and they are accountable towards their profession and society.

SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATES AND GENERATES AWARENESS AMONG MASSES

The news environment and the news consumption environment are rapidly changing. Social media not only facilitate access to news but also it provides opportunities to engage in the news process through commenting, sharing and posting online (Holton et al. 2015). As per the latest research report, conducted by Pew Research centre, in the U.S, adults get their news from social media and it is the preferred source of news for American adults. This recent survey was conducted on 30 July 2018 ("Pew: Social media for the first time tops newspapers as a news source for US adults", 2019). Interactivity, rapidity, and selectivity are the main pillars of social media which grab attention. Social media updates and bring current affairs for us and automatically by "likes" or "follows" it networked themselves. Here, fellow networkers share news stories and generates awareness. Social media is growing as a news source because in this trend the persons who involve in the news story influence others in news-gathering. Already in the 1960s, Katz and Lazarsfeld identified the importance of others, so-called 'opinion leaders', in the distribution of information from media and public sources. This concept fits very well into the overall idea of social media building on people passing on information of various kinds (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1960). This new dynamic between leaders and followers, however, is relatively unexplored in mediated interpersonal settings (Turcotte et al. 2015).

CONCLUSION

Social media is a double-edged sword; while it has many benefits but have many drawbacks also. (Newman, 2009) who states that: "Social media, blogs and user-generated content (UCG) are not replacing

journalism, but they are creating an important extra layer of information and diverse opinion." This is possible because social media has improved the aspect of communication making it two-way and interactive". Yes social media has impacted a lot, people like to consume news in their own customized way with the user-friendly feature, affordability, and instant news service features can easily draw attention and in future, it will upgrade in a more advanced way.

Social media has opened many new opportunities for traditional journalists. Before writing or preparing any news report, journalists have the advantage of using vast available resources and facts related to that content, which will only polish their skills. Change is expected in every profession. As technology changes, the way of writing, presentation, and style all will upgrade. That doesn't mean it is a threat for them. When broadcast medium came, many people started believing that print media would die but has not happened. The same thing happened when news went online people started thinking that nobody would read the printed version of a newspaper but in reality still, newspapers are selling.

A smart news user is always aware of this discrepancy between conventional and social media.

As a result, it is too early to draw any perfect conclusion from the available literature review; furthermore, research is required to understand the constantly changing media landscape.

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