



## AN ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS - AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The use of Social Media Networks – such as Facebook.com and Twitter.com has become a popular and integral part of everyday communication in India. Young people in India are particularly enthusiastic users: the vast majority is engaging on a daily basis with social media via a computer or mobile phone. Research in this area is an emerging field and studies identifying the negative impacts have tended to dominate the popular media and much policy development.*

*Drawing on a range of sources this summary encompasses a variety of disciplines including education, sociology, political science, cultural studies and health. Whilst the report draws upon an international literature, the focus is on the Indian context.*

*In one word social media usage in India is more visual. People share images because images do not need any language proficiency on people's part for comprehension. Text-based or say opinion-based social media participation in India is still very low because of lack of everyday English proficiency in the larger section of population.*

**Keywords: Facebook, Networking, Digital World, Revolution, Social Thinking.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

With the emergence of many new social network platforms in the first decade of this century the online networking opportunities have massively increased and can be used for many different objectives such as personal, hobby or business. It is astonishing that the average individual has 634 ties in their overall network. However, such a magnitude of social contacts bring along new challenges.

Although people have been using the internet to connect with others since the early 1980s, it is only in the last decade that social networking services have proliferated and their use has become a widespread practice – particularly amongst young people (Horizon, 2009).

We are living in the digital era and social media is undoubtedly integrated to our daily life, so much so that, seeing this trend from a funny perspective, one can say that people check their personals profiles and share content on these networks before they brush their teeth and have a shower in the morning.

Social networking is more powerful when focusing on a common theme. The basis on what people connect is changing. Instead of connecting only to people who we knew, both professional and personal contacts, we now form networks based on shared themes, interests, passions, beliefs, and ideologies.

Facts and figures on the use of social media around the world can have practical applications for today's businesses. If you are thinking of selling your products overseas, it would be beneficial to know which social platforms dominate the specific market you're interested in. Modern technology and the development of social networks are likely to have a big impact on demographic segmentation by giving people access to more services for longer. The promise of long term connectivity and with it independence is evidently encouraging more senior members of society to be part of the digital era, get involved and keep abreast of the frequent progress in information and communication technology.

The growing penetration of cheap smartphones and Chinese mobile phones coupled with decreasing data usage rate in India are the prime factors causing the boost of social media usage – particularly the rise of “Facebook enabled phones”, or so they say it in the advertisement – in Tier II and III cities in India as well as in villages.

Social Samosa is a one stop shop for all the social media info in the Indian context. Social Samosa hopes to become a repository of thoughts, ideas, case studies, how to's and dialogue about/on the social media scenario in India. The portal aims to be an enabler of growth of an individual, a brand or an organization within the industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Research indicates that the use of social networking services can support the development of media literacy. The creation and sharing of content on services such as MySpace has been seen to increase both young people's “technical literacy, as they learn to use code to create their profiles, and “creative content and visual literacy as they draw from and re-use media in appropriate ways for communication and self-expression (Perkel 2008). Given written text, photos, animation, sounds, music, video clips are core components of social networking, young people develop a deeper understanding of the production, nature and use of various forms of content, which is otherwise missing from school curricula (Skaar 2008).

Rapid uptake of digital technologies have opened up unprecedented possibilities for amateur users to create and distribute content (Burgess, 2006) such that media users have become producers (Bruns, 2008). User-generated content describes both the generation of original creative content and “remixed content that creatively reworks or repurposes existing content. The interrelationship between social networking and social media has provided a key impetus (via platforms such as youtube.com and flickr.com) for the sharing of this self-generated content with broader networks. Young people in particular are more immersed in this participatory media environment than any other age-group. They now create and share their own 'small media' in their everyday communicative, creative and social activities.

In hindsight, the 2008 US Election might well be considered a turning point in social media research. Social networks were showcased, and their use is almost universally recognized as critical in the campaign's outcome. Books by Harfoush (2009), Libert and Faulk (2009) and Plouffe (2009) has studied the campaign's communication strategy principles. Chris Hughes, one of Facebook co-founders, had a critical role in designing the web *mybarackobama.com* that used social media to connect. According to McGirt (2009), the results were impressive: two million personal profiles were created in the website; 200,000 events were planned and 35,000 groups established; and the campaign raised \$30 million online. The campaign has often been considered as paradigm in strategic campaigns based in social media. Political strategies are increasingly based in social media principles: dialogue and participation. A Harvard Business School case has also already been looking into this subject (Piskorski, 2009).

Having positive interpersonal relationships is an important predictor of wellbeing (Hartup & Stevens, 1999) and can buffer individuals from many of the key stressors that characterize the transition from childhood to adulthood (Bukowski, 2001; Hartup, 2000). Internet use, generally, has been found to strengthen young people's existing interpersonal relationships (Valentine & Holloway, 2002; ACMA 2009:8; Besley 2008; Gross, 2004; Subrahmanyam, Valkenburg & Peter, 2006). Email, instant messaging and social networking can address new barriers young people may face to forming and maintaining positive social relationships.

In the past five years social media has grown exponentially. Though both Facebook and Google+ have more than a billion registered users, Twitter beats out both networks in terms of growth, with a 44% increase in its user base from 2012 to 2013.

These growth trends are something to keep an eye on, but for now Facebook is still the king of social networks. According to the Pew Research Center's Internet Project, 71% of internet users are on Facebook and 84% of internet users who use only one social network use Facebook as their network of choice. Google+ has a lot of

growing to do to match those numbers. Also, if statistics on Google+ could more clearly break down ‘Google+’ users into Gmail, YouTube and Google+ social network users, they would present a much clearer picture of the true state of affairs at Google+.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA – LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA**

It has been often said that India is one of the youngest countries in the world, perhaps the youngest – 50% of Indians are below the age of 25 and 65% of us are below 35. It means that there are more potential social media users in India than are anywhere else in the world. And to understand where we stand, all we need to do is to see the data of four biggest social media websites – Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Google+.

As the penetration of Internet is increasing so does the number of Facebook users in India. It is expected by the end of 2014 India will leave the US behind in terms of number of Facebook users. From 93 million the number will go beyond the 150 million mark. In August 2013, India overtook Japan and became the 3rd largest Internet population after US and China.

In terms of Facebook usage, India is the second largest country in the world, just below the United States. There are **45,796,460 Facebook users** in the India, which is equal to 3.90% percent of total population and 56.54% of total online population.

India has the second largest base of **LinkedIn** users as well. India has a **total 13,352,622 users** which is equal to 1.14% of total population, and 16.48% of the online population. Google+, a very new social media outlet, has accumulated 50 million users since its launch this past summer and India has become the second biggest market in Asia to utilize the Google+ social outlet. Also, Twitter usage in India has increased by 100 percent recently.

When talking of the present condition of social media in India, we should also talk of two other dominant social media sites: **Orkut** and **ibibo**, which have **15.5 million and 5 million users**, respectively.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS - INDIAN POLITICS**

Social media has brought about an interesting paradigm shift – we can now question the vote seekers, interact with them via Twitter, influence minds of millions via our views, among other advantages. Indians now have a voice, and we can elect our political leaders after a thorough round of background checks, due diligence and awareness.

The Electoral Commission of India has asked social media providers to monitor their sites for fraud in the run-up to the general elections in April 2014. That would be helpful. But Indian voters must also demand that their government bring transparency and accountability to electronic surveillance. The **Election Commission** for the first time keeps a watch on the spending on **social media** by the **political parties** in the **Lok Sabha elections**.

According to Twitter India Blog, the Indian General Elections of 2014 witnessed more than 56 million elected related tweets between 1 Jan and 12 May 2014 when the polls ended. Each poll day saw between 5.4 lakh and 8.2 lakh election-related tweets. Similarly, LinkedIn gets a daily average of 15 million profile views, 1.45 million job views and 44,000 job applications via mobile.

Now **politicians** are also taking part in Google+ **Hangouts**, **televised interviews** organised by **Facebook** and using the Facebook- owned smart phone messaging app WhatsApp to connect with millions of tech-savvy urban voters.

There are 62 million Indians on the social media, and that may ramp up to 80 million by the next elections. Some 97 per cent of them are on Facebook. And they are spread beyond the big metros. One-third of social media users live in towns with a population of less than 5 million; 25 per cent of the total users live in towns with less than 2 million inhabitants.

The number of social media users in India has now reached a ‘critical mass’. It is not the number of likes and tweets that are going to determine the probability of winning of a certain candidate but the ability of a candidate

to engage with the electorate, by rising above the media clutter, and by trying to get his or her message across to the voter directly.

While the impact of these social media on the elections could be known only after May 16 when the results are declared or could be a matter of another academic research, all the three major players have seen substantial increase in their India traffic and usage.

After the 7th round of polling, there were 49 million Indian elections-related conversations on Twitter -- more than double the 20 million Indian elections-related conversations on Twitter for all of 2013.

On the other hand, Google provided platforms to politicians to reach out to their supporters through hangouts. Google is helping all political parties with their online strategy by organizing weekly hangouts with politicians.

Google also created a Google Elections Hub for elections-related news and information created to help 800 million Indian voters stay informed and updated about the elections. The site also includes features such as elections related News Videos, Search Trends, G+ Hangout Series, and an interactive Pledge to Vote campaign.

Google aims to encourage people to be more participative and engage with candidates. It also allows voters to have a deeper understanding of politics and governance through engagement with the candidates. There are mixed views among politicians about social media's impact. In an interaction organized by Google in the capital a few weeks ago, politicians active on social media had expressed their skepticism at the ability of the medium to influence elections.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA IN 2020**

Facebook had been trying hard to acquire Snapchat, a mobile messaging app that lets users send self-destructing messages. But the buyout talks came to nought. Meanwhile, Yahoo has just acquired Blink, an app similar to Snapchat. Blink is a product of Meh Labs, a startup set up by ex-Googler Kevin Stephens.

The self-destructing messaging app space is getting crowded now with new players such as Confide and Frankly. Apparently, Facebook is also readying its own self-destructing messaging app, Slingshot.

By the time 2020 comes around, a new wave of social media will come around that might integrate all of the capabilities of today's social media. Or maybe the next big thing on the playground will be apps that break down social media into specifics. Social media will be nothing like what it is today. It won't be recognizable. For all we know, it won't be known as social media.

Over the next 8 years we may recognize that Social Media is not just another piece of technology that changes the world but a new era very similar to the industrial revolution. While the industrial revolution changed the way we produce (the first half of a business) the social revolution is changing the way we sell, market, service and deliver our solutions (the second half of a business).

### **TOP 5 SOCIAL NETWORKS IN INDIA**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Network</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Page Views</b>
1	Orkut	18 Million	65.1 Million
2	Facebook	17 Million	3,945 Million
3	LinkedIn	8 Million	72 Million
4	Ibibo	5 Million	102 Million
5	Twitter	4.5 Million	16.4 Million

## FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

1. The fastest growing demographic on Twitter is the 55–64 year age bracket.
2. YouTube reaches more U.S. adults aged 18–34 than any cable network
3. Every second two new members join LinkedIn
4. 60% of the social networking traffic come from Non Metro-Cities but the highest traffic generating city still remains to be a Metro i.e. Mumbai
5. Social media in India reaches out to 60 per cent of the online Indian audience
6. Facebook and Orkut, together cater to about 90 per cent of the users in the social media space.
7. 70 percent of India's businesses use social media for not only gaining new customers, but for new hires. The rate of India's use of social media in businesses is only beat by the U.S. (71%) and China (88%).
8. LinkedIn has a lower percentage of active users than Pinterest, Google+, Twitter and Facebook
9. Even though 62% of marketers blog or plan to blog in 2013, only 9% of Indian marketing companies employ a full-time blogger
10. The maximum users come from the 'less than 2 lakhs p.a.' income category. This is because social networks are primarily driven by the youth
11. More than 45% of the users on Social Networks return during the day. Facebook tops the list with users re-visiting more than 3 times during a day
12. Majority of the time spent by the Indian audience on Facebook is on Interactive Games/Applications and then on viewing Photo
13. The male-female ratio shows consistency with the overall population break-up by gender i.e. 80:20 in favor of males

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

The future looks bright for social media in India, but there are a lot many variables that will determine the actual usage of social media in years to come. One of the things that is slowing down the progress is the comprehension level of English, which, as we know, is the language of web.

The total penetration of the Internet is 10.2% only, which leaves ample space for the Internet to grow and consecutively social media to spread its wing. When we mix it with the demographic data, we can safely say that in the years to come, a sharp rise in the social media usage in India can be expected.

As India moves into the future, the intergenerational divide is likely to become a key social issue. It is widely acknowledged that India needs a comprehensive plan for dealing with the effects of an ageing population. This planning needs to address intergenerational communication practices. The rise of social networking has led to the emergence of new patterns of communication and social connection between young people. If we don't act to enhance intergenerational communication, we risk generating a culture structured by a digital/communication divide between young people, their parents and older members of the community. It is vital that that we harness the potential for intergenerational communication facilitated by social networking services. This will require a concerted effort to educate older Indians about social media and enable them to understand how young people identify and respond to the risks and opportunities they present.

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