THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES IN 21ST CENTURY: AN OVERVIEW OF CYBER CRIMES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Social Networking Sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Share it, What Sapp, Instagram, Pinterest, Google +, Micro blogging services like Twitter, and content-sharing sites like YouTube and Flicker have created a wide scale online social participation. The attention and visibility to powerful social issues like Terrorism, Outbreak of Diseases, Public Health, Sports, Elections, Accidents, Disasters, Conflicts and Crisis, Environment has increased humongous. According to a new study from Pew Research Center with respect to the ongoing election campaign in the United States U.S. adults are now getting news and information about the presidential elections from the candidates' social media channels than any other mediums of communication like Newspaper, Magazine, Television, Radio, or Films. Hence, Social Media has become the Primary Point Of contact with voters. Yet we know little about the benefits and challenges of engaging in participatory communication through social media. This paper aims at discussing both the positive and negative outcomes of such participation. Media Theories and approaches to Participatory Communication with case studies. Most people might agree that social participation raises awareness of, if not knowledge about, social issues; however, it is less clear whether raising awareness translates into more meaningful and tangible societal benefits. Technology mediated social participation has been harnessed itself in the past for many social welfare activities in a number of novel ways. One recent example to quote is the use of Facebook and Twitter during Chennai Floods to gather and distribute timely, relevant information, creating a platform for guidance which resulted in saving the lives thousands people.

KEYWORDS: Social Networking Sites, Participatory Communication, Media Theories.

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental purpose of human communication is to allow people to generate and share thoughts, feelings and experiences. Social Media or Social Networking Sites (SNS) is contributing in a big way in fulfilling and achieving goals and purposes of communication

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which is to mainly Inform Imagine and Influence. Thus, mutual understanding is fundamental to the process of Communication itself. According to IAMAI (The Internet and Mobile Association of India), India is the third biggest country of internet users in the world. In recent times with the world and India going digital, every second eight users are joining the web community.

In the past decade the country witnessed the onset of SNS, which saw transition from Mono or Bidirectional exchange of information, one-to-many to many –to- many. This is bridging the gap created by the mainstream media. These new technologies or Social Networking Platforms has networked the whole world together, with the constraints of time and distance disappearing. These SNS have been very successful in integrating the society at Social, economic, cultural and emotional and political levels, by exchanging and sharing a global wealth of information resources. The concept of global village by Marshall McLuhan has become a reality with new media defining the way we look at the world and ushering a new era of Participatory Communication. The Gutenberg era is over. The SNS like Facebook, Whats App, Twitter, Telegram are used to connect, inform, educate and create general awareness of various on current affairs as well as programmes and initiatives of the government. Facebook has several features and tools that can be effectively used for a variety of 'engaging' content and people interaction. Tools like 'Live' and 'Q&A' offer instant connect with masses, and is instrumental in 'informed' opinion. Studies have shown that at times it is as pervasive as to change a decision or initiate an action by the Government, NGO or a Corporate House. These factors have influenced these agencies to increasingly adapt to social technologies in their transactions. These technologies are gradually reengineering the old model of public sector as they offer numerous opportunities to increase government transparency and trust, create new forms for

Citizen participation and engagement in public issues, and enhance inter and intra - organizational collaboration. Today, citizens extensively use ICT not only for professional purposes and social life but are interacting with government with similar tools. Therefore, citizens' expectations for a modern, open, and effective government sector are rising.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A global phenomenon in today's society is the unlimited access to and the massive use of ICT services, which together comprise the new media. As Len Manovichin in his book, "The New Media Theory Reader" says that this new media revolution can be likened to the printing press revolution in the fourteenth century and the photography revolution in the nineteenth century; which prompted all forms of Culture to computer mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication.

He also remarks that the previous revolutions had impacted only one form of culture, for example the printing revolution has affected only the distribution of media, and the photography revolution has affected the culture of still images; but in contrast, the computer media revolution affects all stages of communication, including acquisition, manipulation, storage, and distribution; it also affects all types of media texts, still images, moving images, sound, and spatial constructions. As these services are created, distributed, integrated, used and manipulated, it has become a significant Social economic, political and cultural activity all over the world, thus entering into a new era of information society.

The importance of new media and their role in creating information societies through Different forms of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), has been discussed in many works such as the post -industrial society (Bell,

1973), knowledge industry (Machlup, 1962) or network society (Castells, 1996; van Dijk, 1999).

ICT's are regarded as having effects or "impacts" on individual users, groups or society. The book by Wilbur Schramm "Big. Media, Little. Media" (Schramm l977) in which new media technologies are classified according to their technological attributes, features or Channel characteristics (e.g., Durlak 1987; Pool 1983;Steuer 1995),with the assumption That those features or characteristics affect user behavior.

According to a United Nations report (1999) ICTs cover Internet service provision, telecommunications equipment and services, information technology equipment and services, media and broadcasting, libraries and documentation centers, commercial information providers, network -based information services, and other related information and communication activities. The methodological approach is used in this paper is to discuss the initiatives of ICT in elections in India reported in the surveyed literature and then draw on the limitations and challenges faced on account of these new media tools.

USES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Geoff Walshum (2010) grouped the role of ICT's in four broad development categories:

a. Better lives for the poor
b. Improved Government services
c. Enhanced internal economic activity
d. Improved civil society.

According to another classification (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2010) social media can be grouped in two broad categories depending on their main purpose:

a. Expressive social media where users express themselves by sharing text, video, picture, music, and blog.

b. Collaborative social media where users share knowledge and content, in general, and work together for a common goal.

WEB 2.0

Tim O' Really described Web 2.0 as a platform spanning all connected devices (O' Reilly, 2005). Web 2.0 can be seen as a meaningful movement from the static web pages of Web 1.0 towards an environment with easy-to-use web tools that enable creative and collaborative use of the Web. The Web 2.0 has an "architecture of participation" as it offers data and services from multiple sources, including individual users, and these data and services can be updated, consumed and remixed by others (O' Reilly, 2005). Creation and sharing are fundamental aspects of Web 2.0 service. Web 2.0 has the potential to mutually maximize the collective intelligence of the participants. Social media can be generally understood as Internet-based applications that carry consumer-generated content which encompasses "media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers" (Blackshaw, 2006).

SOCIAL MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT

The new media have been rightly considered as a key instrument of development by many scholars. It is even called fifth estate by many scholars. Social media offers a unique opportunity in reforming the relationship between government and citizens. Government agencies are trying to become citizen-centric and social media represent powerful tools to enhance public engagement (Kutsikos, 2007). Actually, "digital citizens are all over social media" (Accenture, 2012) and there must governments go if they wish to connect with them. An overview of E-Government shows applications were designed to provide only information from

government to citizens in a mono-directional manner and consequently without any reflexive feedback mechanisms. (The World Bank, 2011) defines e-government as "the use by government agencies of information technologies that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry ultimately Citizen empowerment.

The power of Social Media as a highly effective medium to connect with the masses ahas been amply demonstrated by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the last two years since taking office. He was one of the early politicians to recognize the power of SNS for connecting instantly with people. He has been using both Twitter and Facebook to very good effect and what's pleasing to note is that his ministers have taken cue from him and have been actively using social media, especially Facebook, to inform, educate and create general awareness of various programmes and initiatives of the government.

If we look at the response received by the PM's post on his mother's first visit to his official residence, 7 Race Course Road. PM Modi uploaded a picture of him taking his mother around the garden and captioned the picture "My mother returns from Gujarat. Spent quality time with her after a long time & that too on her visit to RCR". The post received an overwhelming 34,047,024 likes. Another post with reference to his meeting with Facebook CEO Mark Zucker berg thanking him for his support to the 'Digital India' initiative, received 34,047,070 likes. But that's not all. In the run up to almost all elections, the central government, and especially BJP, has been very active in creating engaging content to establish a 'personal' connect with the masses. Success of these initiatives can be gauged by the number of responses in the form of 'comments' or 'likes' received.

The best part is, 'negative' feedback can also be turned into an opportunity by correcting decision, a statement, or even issuing a timely regret, if need arises, only to gain more acceptance from followers.

PM Modi can take credit for leading the way in adopting and adapting technology to his personal and his government's advantage. Today, Narendra Modi stands second only to President Obama in popularity on social media, and ahead of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

MODI'S MINISTERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

While he has taken the lead in leveraging social media, he has ensured that his team at the PMO, too, is actively using Facebook and Twitter. He has been exhorting his ministers to increase their social media presence and interaction with the PMO closely involved in monitoring which ministers are active and which are not. The PMO has taken upon itself to educate and encourage all ministers to use social media to the fullest. In fact, it even arranged for a workshop at the India Habitat Centre, which was followed up with another one earlier this month. PMO has compiled its own list of ministers who have been most active on social media between January and March this year and shared this data with all ministers. The purpose was to recognize those who were most active and encourage those who were laggards in using Facebook and Twitter to connect with people. 'MyGov' is the platform through which the government is connecting with people and has been actively used for creating awareness of government's several initiatives and also to collect feedback from the people. Its success is best seen when it directly connected with over 1.5 lakh village panchayats and took their feedback before drafting the New Education Policy. An exercise of this scale undertaken in real time was a first and has encouraged the government to increase usage of this medium for other similar initiatives. The PMO has since been pushing its ministers to increase their social

media interaction in connecting with people for their respective ministries.

MINISTERS MOST ACTIVE ON FACEBOOK

In fact, Facebook analytics, too, has compiled a list of 10 most active ministers in the NDA government, based on the number of posts, their size, likes received, comments shared, etc. The list is headed by Home Minister Rajnath Singh, closely followed by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, Textile Minister Smriti Irani, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu. Defence and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, Home Minister Rajnath Singh and Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

But the surprise is in finding Minister for Food Processing Harsimrat Kaur Badal's name among the leaders, ahead of the likes of Piyush Goyal and Ravi Shankar Prasad. Ministries, too, have shed their reticence and are now actively uploading announcements, developments, actions and events, on a daily basis, and the list is headed by the Ministry of External Affairs which has been most active. As per Facebook, MEA has recorded a total of 5,706,891 interactions and is followed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Meanwhile, some ministries in the NDA government have gone a step ahead to follow the Modi's social media plan as they recently issued tenders to set up team that would drive their social media outreach 24 X 7 X 365 round the year 24 hours a day.

For instance two such ministries are, the Union ministry of external affairs and ministry of women and child development, few weeks ago issued tenders inviting firms who would not just regularly update government work on these platforms but would also run at least 12 social media campaigns every year along with contests and promotions to encourage interaction with public.

INCREASING RESPONSE FROM PUBLIC

The Ministers who are using these social media tools are taking public participation to a new level which is the real essence of democracy. We haves instances of simple Tweet getting Visas sorted, rescuing Indians from abroad to Ministry of Railways helping a passenger with a wheel chair. Furthermore, we have citizens increasingly following and responding to what ministers are saying and they are quick to reject or endorse such statements. Take the case of Minister of Fertilizers Ananth Kumar, when he extended his support to 'Digital India'. While all he did was endorse it, he received 581,727 likes! This only confirms the presence and acceptability of social media as a powerful tool to connect and one that is being fully adopted by the existing government.. India is on the cusp of rapid development and social media is set to play an important role in that process. This public engagement has opened the gates of communication

PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION OR ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA IS THE TRUE KEY TO SUCCESS

The combination of social media and politics has worked well for BJP and AAP. Successfully driven social media campaign was one of the key highlights of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election strategy in run up to 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Almost all political parties have since woken up to its potential . AAP used all the tricks and tools to a roaring success in Delhi Elections, which was fought on Social Media by Arvind Kejriwal and his team.

The public perception was very negative when Kejriwal walked out of the government in 49 days when he was first elected. However when he decided to renew his campaigned he first offered apology to people through his Facebook and Twitter pages. The apologies were widely shared

and retweeted, and Arvind and AAP were back in the race.

A WAR WITH SOCIAL MEDIA WEAPONS

Arvind Kejriwal and the AAP openly declared war against the other parties on social media, and used social media features such as Twitter hashtags and Selfies to great effect as weapons. The #muffler man hash tag, created to mock Arvind was used by his team to put pro-AAP tweets and turned into a weapon which trended for over 14 days. However, BJP's other hash tags such as #crazy kejaria failed to impress and trended from 2 hours to a few days. AAP was able to create new hashtags depending upon the situation on the ground and make them trend.A true sentiment analysis was conducted by 10 students from IIT Bombay. They studied thousands of Twitter and Facebook accounts of AAP followers, BJP followers and Neutrals to keep the tone of messaging right, and keep modifying it. They were able to understand that positive and pro-party messaging was working better than mocking and hate politics, and the same was used for Kejriwal's campaign, and was loved by people because they were getting what they wanted. A simple reach analysis of the hashtags #CleanPolitics and #CrazyKejaria. #Clean Politics had a reach of over 450,000 whereas #CrazyKejaria barely made it to about 10,000.

These ministries are also explicitly seeking from the interested companies a promise to "double the followers (on platforms like Twitter) and likes (on Facebook) from the date of starting of their contract every six months". The Government of India has formulated the new media policy to facilitate expansion, decentralization and democratization of new media in the Indian Republic. The policy makers must realize that active participation of underprivileged, marginalized, underserved and under-represented segments of society, including women and weaker sections is very crucial from the point of view of inclusive development. India

is heading in the right direction with the development of new media in modern society.

CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

The media, of late, has been full of stories about the stunning act of hacking by online vigilant group Legion into the twitter accounts of Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi, industrialist Vijay Mallya, and journalists Barkha Dutt and Ravish Kumar. While the victims know the extent of damage to their reputation and embarrassment in public, what is worrying what if a similar group indulges in criminal hacking with a view to weaken the cyber architecture and damages the faith of users in the security of online transactions.

India has a long way to go in its preparedness from moving from cash to cash less society. There are serious concerns raised by National Information Infrastructure about our lack of sophisticated defense systems which may be prone to attacks that could trigger public chaos.

According to the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-IN),there have been 1.75 cyber security incidents between January 2013-October 2016.This includes Cyber-phishing, Stalking, Scanning, Probing, Virus Infiltration, denial of service attacks, attacks on websites etc. However this does not include 26907 cases reported by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) between 2013-2015.

According to Cyber security specialist James lyne, Global Head, SOPHOS, Cyber Security and Research Company says with every second, 8 new users are joining the web community and 250000 individual new computer viruses are trying to effect the computer systems. We also have evidence of 30000 new infected websites. Contrary to the popular thinking that only when one visit pornographic sites it is not so, one can even get hacked by receiving a simple spam

email. For naïve users some time we have virus pretending to look like free antivirus software, when down loaded hacks our data.

Telecom expert Ravi Visvesvaraya Prasad says: "There are many concerns and the environment in which our transactions take place isn't secure. The SMSes we get as one-time passwords, for example, are not encrypted. Networks cannot be trusted, which means there are chances of losing money in transition."

CONCLUSION

In the context of Digital India where the focus is on Digital Literacy, Digital Society, Digital Economy and Digital Governance as a media researcher I strongly urge the cyber laws and E – Security which comes under ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to develop strong a cyber-security strategy which can forecast the possibilities of Cyber-attacks and threats.

Hence it is imminent to constitute a Cyber Media Commission to look after the policy implication which can reduce cyber threats and Digital frauds to a large extent. To conclude, any individual involved in any of such cybercrimes to be convicted with same seriousness in attempting to disturb the law order of the society like traditional criminals.

Another intriguing finding is there is a dearth of skilled manpower and research. According to a survey by National Information Infrasturcture, we have only couple of hundreds of employable security engineers in the country, whereas the need of the hour is at least a few lakhs people with domain expertise and engage in research to be ahead of cyber criminals.

Finally, I&B - the nodal ministry in the NDA government should impart training- to officials, Individuals to follow basic safetly measures when operating , engaging in social media accounts.

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