

Role of Facebook in Creating Social Awareness

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Abstract

Evolution of Facebook has suggested the richness of new media for effective communications to engage users. This paper presents the results of a literature review that focuses on the usage of Facebook in increasing social awareness among users. This study also showcases literature on how Facebook is effectively used for creating environmental awareness like climate change and environmental degradation etc. Some of the findings suggest that students and teachers rely on Facebook in order to conduct classes and to attend sessions. Another finding is that Facebook has become a medium to mobilize and organize people for cause and social awareness campaigns run by Non-governmental organisations and governmental organisations as a part of their social corporate responsibility.

Keywords: Facebook, Social Media, Social Awareness, Environmental Awareness

Introduction

The introduction and rise of the social network site Facebook has been one of the most important social trends of the past decade. Facebook is the new planet where people spend most of their time gratifying themselves actively and passively. Earlier people were reading newspaper, listening to radio, watching television, seeing movies on those appropriate available mediums. Facebook broke these traditional methods and brought the whole entertainment package in one platform, allowing people to spend their time as much as possible virtually. People always want to know what is happening around them, so they either physically talked or they called and hanged out with their loved ones. Now, that is not the scenario as they are busily tracking their friend's activities through Facebook. The users have now become more self-aware of what their friends are doing and have become very intrusive on what their friends are posting. The level of virtual interaction is so high that the connectivity of people is so easy to gather and share information.

Facebook has become the new medium where all the media, government, non-government organizations and freelancers have started their own official page allowing the users to know and getting updates about their latest interest. They like sharing their personal information, eager to know what their friends have commented and also they

like to get high when they get more likes for the things that they post. Earlier the information was mainly accessed through media houses, which is now reversed and media has now started to use information from netizens. As every individual has, now turned as a media house the level of sharing information is so high which has substantially increased the awareness among the people. This study is a collection of review of literature and documents on how Facebook has created awareness and public engagement on various issues.

Results and Discussion

Social Media and Social Awareness

Kaplan and Haenlein, (2010) defined the term of social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". According to Ahlqvist and Toni (2008) social media is the social interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.

Saikia (2017) found over 2600 global media channels operate with the support of about 3000 satellites, reaching nearly 1.5 billion people across the globe. It can be argued that the majority of global citizens learn about environmental

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issues, beyond their immediate surroundings, through the global media.

According to Parkyn (2017) social media was instrumental to the uprisings because it provided a means to transform individualised, localised and community-specific dissent into a collective consciousness and shared opportunity for action. As one Egyptian protestor put it at the time: "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate and YouTube to tell the world".

Wilson (2012) stated that social media technologies provide to their users equal freedom of what they do with them. As social media platforms are many, so also their functions and uses. Social networks are classified based on how people use them. For instance, Social Networking Sites such as Whatsapp, Facebook are used to share and update message. Osatuyi (2013) stated that Microblogs such as Twitter is used for short messages, Wikis are mainly used for educational and informational purposes, and Blogs are usually personal or collaborative online publishing diary, while Online Forums are interactive space where participants discuss issues which are posted on a discussion board.

Social media or social networking sites is one of the most intriguing and interesting phenomena of our current times. Its rapid growth has been the subject of numerous discussions, literatures, and research studies. As technology advances, online communities grow in both strength and number. This period has been described as the era of social networking, collective intelligence, participation, collaborative creation, and borderless distribution. Social media is the perfect and impeccable tool for mobilizing our friends and colleagues to take action on a cause we can care about sending a letter to a legislator, signing up to attend a rally, or spreading the word through their own social channels.

Social media activism or social action involves raising or educating awareness and visibility for certain issues by using various tools sites like Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, such as posting, liking, sharing information, news and photos, videos, reblogging, commenting and sparking discussions and debates. Facebook platforms have made mobilizing, coming together, discussing, organizing and protesting much easier than it used to be, especially through the effectiveness and rapidity of online communications, and the accessibility for both disabled and able-bodied people of different ages, genders, financial states, religions, and sexualities from around the world.

Social Media has the power to mobilize mass movement. For example, Tunisia and Egypt saw an increasing use of the social media platforms, i.e., social media networking sites like Facebook and Twitter in order to help the citizens in organizing, communicate and ultimately initiating street

action and civil-disobedience campaigns. Also, during the year 2009, the Iranian "Green Revolution" was closely followed by the Western media channels via the following social media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube, and the latter even gave Moldova's 2009 revolution its moniker, the "Twitter Revolution."

Facebook and Social Awareness

Facebook is often depicted as a platform to see and to be seen (Pempek et al., 2009). Facebook play an important role in increasing public or social awareness and formation of their views and attitudes toward certain issues like environmental issues and political issues. There is no denial that social media like Facebook is playing a very significant role in making the world smaller. Facebook means many things to different people. Since 2005, the use of social networking sites has risen rapidly and the major services, particularly Facebook, continue to attract new users at an astounding rate. Lipsman (2011), in 2004, a Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook to connect with fellow students. But, at present, it is the most promising of all social media. While it took mobile phone 14 years to gather 150 million users, it only took Facebook 5 years to gather the same number of users. The most popular of the SNSs, Facebook, now totals more than 500 million registered users (Facebook, 2011). Based on a recent comScore report, Facebook is the number one social networking site as of May 2011 with 157.2 million visitors per month.

Through various applications of social media whether it is Facebook, Whatsapp, or internet, we are able to connect with large number of people around us. Especially Facebook has truly become the need of every individual both for our work and to connect with our friends and well-wishers.

The use of Facebook as a business tool, however, does come with a risk it may detract from productivity. This was found to be a common position among employers (Survey, AON Consulting, 2009). While the debate continues, the benefits of using Facebook continue to be recognized by countless organizations, especially its relevance in employee communication and engagement strategies. Not only that, Facebook is also reshaping employee communication.

Bryson et al. (2010), investigate what the union movement, facing precipitous membership decline, can learn from Facebook's capability to attract millions of active members in a short period of time. Social media is expanding its reach in every strata of the society in India day by day and today in 2016, we have 195.16 million users of Facebook while USA, the home country is lagging behind with 191.3 million active users (Singh 2016). Twitter is also here to stay, we have 23.2 million Indians actively twitting. In contemporary world social networking sites like Facebook has also become a medium to mobilize and organise people for a cause and several social awareness campaigns run

by Non-governmental organisations and governmental organisations as part of their social corporate responsibility leveraged social media to spread the word.

Facebook has several advantages, benefits and possibilities allowing thoughts, ideas to spread faster than in the old-fashioned Internet. For the purposes of promotion of certain slogans, content and ideas are created even separate websites. But the main mechanism working in social media like Facebook is of viral nature, so if one person performs an action - the whole group of people will immediately know about it. Any provision of content, following action on the profile of another person and depending on privacy settings and platform options and it is immediately visible, noticeable and observable to others. The existence of social service agencies profiles creates communities centered around provided service oriented-oriented content.

Facebook is made up of six principal working components, such as personal profiles, status updates, networks (geographic regions, schools, and companies), groups, applications, and fan pages. People all over the world, regardless of their age level, are very keen to use Facebook for different purposes. Currently most of the teaching faculties are using Facebook for creating subject awareness among students. Kumar (2013), stated that more than 200 young people met at the third Global Youth Anti-Corruption Forum last year to talk about how their use of social media can play a significant role in the global fight against corruption. Around the world, youth are using social media to monitor the effectiveness of public service. In countries such as Paraguay and Brazil, they are using Facebook and Twitter to make official data available publicly to inform and mobilize their peers.

Gaitho (2018) found out that students and teachers rely on Facebook in order to conduct classes and to attend sessions. Nearly quarter of the world's population is now on Facebook. In the USA about 80% of all internet users are on this platform. Because social networks feed off interactions among people, they become more powerful as they grow.

Facebook is a great opportunity to drive traffic any kind of awareness campaign. In fact, after email, Facebook is the most powerful 'sharing' tool and is responsible for eliciting more contributions to awareness campaigns than any other social networking tool. Our generation thankful to the Facebook and other social media sites, each individual with minimal views can see that he has not alone. And when these people find one another via social media like Facebook, they can do things and create memes, publications and entire online worlds that bolster and encourage their worldview, and then break into the mainstream. Deprived of social media, social, ethical, environmental awareness and political problems would have minimal visibility. Increased visibility of issues has

shifted the balance of power from the hands of a few to the masses. The areas where role of Facebook is important are,

- **Facebook in Current Affairs**

The Facebook users cover all aspects of our interest like weather, politics, war, health, finance, science, fashion, music, etc. Today one of major duty of Facebook platform serves as a mass media to inform the people about the latest happening around them and the world. As when the natural disasters takes place the role of Facebook become very important, because it pass the message to rest of world.

- **Facebook in Political Awareness**

The Facebook users updates and informs all details of all major and foremost political situations, decisions and current scenarios. Hence the people and users can restored and better understand their rights and make better decisions and choices. Facebook is the base of the political system in current world. If it performance and plays its role honestly, it will be a great force in construct the nation. It has a great role in bringing common man close to their leaders. Lagos et al. (2013) observed that digital technologies provide a vital aid for individuals political expressions because of cost economy, user friendliness and enormous social network reach. Thus, importance of social media in organizing and sustaining the social movement is inevitable. The Marina or Jallicutu protest was mainly coordinated using social media apps like Facebook and Whatsapp. The use of memes has been another feature to spread the message through Facebook and can create awareness about the protest, example Chennai rain, Jallicutu Protest, Varda cyclone, Kerala flood and so on.

- **Face book in Educational Functions**

According to Sreeja et al., (2015) students can make use of the interaction services, blogging services, and group services in their studies and also use Social Media effectively for search for colleges and career opportunities. The influence of Facebook is so widespread and huge, it can be used to educate general users and specific students groups with very little cost. We can create a page for a subject and update about the subject related videos and text materials. Imagine a classroom in every city with thousands of students being taught by just one teacher. But unfortunately, because of money - making approach of social media like Facebook and lack of interest by government, very less work is done in spreading the education.

All over the world over Facebook has continued to play a creative role in keeping the strong social relationship. Apart from bringing fresh news from several sources, it is also seen as a sources of news and order. Facebook role is not

limited to just that but it is also recognized for its creative input into the making of a civil society. Facebook is also credited for serving an important role in the collective war against anti-social activities and other evils that are known as the biggest plagues for the civil society.

Facebook needs to be mentioned and discussed decoratively and elaborately. The social network giants Facebook has been revolutionary in many ways. Iskander (2011) observed that the results of the constitutional referendum showed that the views and discourses that dominate Egyptian Facebook spaces do not necessarily represent the political voice of the majority of Egyptians. They played major role in the protests that happened at Tahir square, Egypt, Marina Revolution and environmental protection movement and several other such movements gained a lot of public attention particularly among the youth. This is not the first time the Chennai youth have actively taken to social media for a cause. Aiyappan (2018) states that the floods in Chennai were a clear example and so was cyclone Vardah. The trend resurfaced with the Jallikattu protests - only bigger and fiercer. It helped not just in creating awareness but also in mobilizing them to stand up for the cause.

• Facebook in Environmental awareness

The role of Facebook is one of the most important factors underlying the knowledge of environmental problems: this can only be true on the conditions that first, Facebook are accessible to large proportions of the population, second, are spending some time on environmental issues and third, people are interested in information on ecological issues provided by the social media so that they view or listen to the corresponding programs as well as read update the articles, pictures, cartoons, memes or other written publications dealing with environmental issues.

About 60% of the population on social media are using Facebook. This makes up a very hefty number of users more than 1 billion sharing information on daily basis. As per the survey conducted by CMS ENVIS centre among social networks Facebook has largest number of groups or pages related to environment. This is in comparison with Twitter and LinkedIn. Also, the number of active people talking about environment is also largest on Facebook in comparison to these two other favourite social sites.

Facebook for very long has been the choice of youth or digital natives and also older generations to meet fellow counterparts in the world wide at the single platform. Digital natives have been using this platform to discuss many important social and political issues. This kind of platform is very useful and convenient to generate more public or social awareness and involvement into the environmental protection together. Curtis et al. (2010) found female non-profit public relations practitioners considered and deliberated Facebook more beneficial and favourable than

men, but the later were more confident in actively using it. Facebook also appeared more often used by non-profit organizations with formal public relations departments.

Conclusion

This study documents many previous researches done on Facebook. Digital era is witnessing rise of the more than thousand online social networking sites. Facebook is the more renowned social sites that has been discussed above. However, other social networks like Wikipedia, You Tube, WhatsApp etc., that offers sharing of pictures, videos, text content has to be studied further. Twitter is also one of the social networking sites which is famous for microblogs and sharing of trending topics. Day by day many more social networking sites which have world-wide presence or are doing well in particular area or locality are coming up. These social media offer brilliant opportunity to even create social awareness like environmental issues, political awareness which is critical to preserve the environment and in turn ensure our future. Facebook is has also introduced lots of services and resources to its users for their benefits.

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