



Efficiency of Social-Media as a tool of Communication

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Abstract:

With the social media revolution taking place in the world, it is obvious that social media like Facebook, YouTube, Skype etc. are widely used for communication purposes. One of the important benefits of using social media is the online sharing of knowledge and information among different groups of people. This online exchange of information promotes communication skills among people especially learners/students in educational institutions. Online tools and technologies have not only transformed communication in countless ways, but are also changing the way we communicate and the way we talk and think about communication. Social media has the potential to fundamentally change the nature of our social lives on an interpersonal and community level.

Keywords: Social Media, Online tools for Communication, Community

Introduction:

The term social media refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to transform communication into interactive communication. Social media takes many different forms, including magazines, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, videos, ratings, and social bookmarking. With the social media revolution going on in the world, it is obvious that social media like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Skype etc. are widely used for communication purposes. This type of communication can be with an individual or a group of individuals. Today most of the people especially the youth are addicted to different social media to stay in touch with their peers.

Social media is a medium of social communication as a superset beyond social communication. There are advantages and disadvantages to using social media. One of the most



important benefits is the online exchange of knowledge and information among different groups of people. This online exchange of information promotes communication skills among people especially learners/students in educational institutions. There is also a flip side to the use of social media tools. Sometimes, such tools are misused by people which interfere with one's privacy. Considering the ethical aspects of the use of such media, such incidents can lead to dangerous proportions.

Social media tools have virtually brought people closer to each other, especially those living far away. However, these days it has been observed that most of the business houses are also engaged in social networking while promoting their products and services. Often, heads of business groups strive to maintain healthy relationships with their valued customers. Social networking sites are now seen as a promising medium of publicity, which every brand should embrace. Social media as an advertising medium, through its immediacy, contributes to a healthy and direct relationship between brands and their people in the online environment. This immediacy gives people the ability to be present, interact, influence and maintain a strong position towards brands. In addition to using social platforms to monitor conversations about their industry, competitors, and products, companies are reaching out to their customers through the social web to communicate messages about what they have to offer. In fact, social media is changing the way organizations communicate that many of the social tools available today are highly cost-effective compared to traditional methods like email and online advertising. Blog posts and tweets enable businesses to build communities, offer instant feedback or assistance, and promote their products and services.

Classification of Social-Media:

Social-Media's can be classified in the following categories:

1. **Social Networking Sites:** A social networking site provides a social network or web-based platform for creating social connections between people, eg, shared interests or activities. They provide means of communication through the Internet, e-mail, and now even mobile phones. The most popular websites that currently offer social networking are



MySpace (launched in 2003), LinkedIn (launched in 2003), Facebook (launched in 2004) and Twitter (launched in 2006). A social networking site will allow a user to create an online profile or personal homepage and create a social network. The profile page thus created is like a personalized webpage of the user and contains the user's profile information such as gender, religion, orientation, interests, birthplace, current location, marital status, favorite books, etc. The page can be customized as the user wants to include video clips, music files or photos on their page. The page also includes a list of friends that make up the user's network. Usually, these friends are real friends, acquaintances and even strangers, who may have sent a friend request and the user added them to his/her list.

- 2. Generation of Content and Sharing Sites:** These sites serve as sources of information on various topics. Photo-sharing sites like flickr.com, picasaweb.google.com, video sharing sites like youtube.com, slide sharing sites like slideshare.com, document sharing sites like docstoc.com etc. all fall into this category. These sites serve as free content for all users of the Internet. Users can search, download and use the content available on these sites without any charge. Content is also generated by users. This type of user-generated content is also known as crowdsourcing. Videos and PowerPoint presentations can be shared and uploaded to YouTube and SlideShare. This is a huge advantage for most people who do not have access to educational resources.
- 3. User Appraisal Sites:**User rating sites serve as a platform for rating various products and services. While consumers can express their opinions in any medium, user review sites primarily deal with such reviews. Sites like www.mouthshut.com are prime examples of such websites. These websites serve as the starting point of a decision-making model for consumers to gather information about the products or services they are considering purchasing. Thus, these sites serve as a source for word of mouth and post-purchase feedback for customers.



4. **Blog:** A blog (derived from the word weblog) is an online journal where an individual, group, or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts, or beliefs. There are many websites that allow users to create blogs for free such as Wordpress.com, Blogspot.com and blogger.com. Anyone can create blogs on these websites and anyone can access these blogs by typing the web address or URL (Uniform Resource Locator). Another popular subcategory of blogs is microblogging. A microblogging site is like any blog, except that it limits the number of words that can be published in a single message. Twitter.com is an example of microblogging.

Social Media Tool of Communication:

Social media provides a variety of ways through which we can interact with people. In fact, social media is known to be widely used in education as well. The nature of communication has changed significantly in the last 30 years and is still changing. Email has had a profound impact on the way people stay in touch. Communications are less frequent and less frequent than letters used to be, and response times are greatly reduced. Instant messaging has created another mode of interaction, one where messages are shorter and the communication style is more conversational. Broadcast technologies like Twitter transform these short bursts of communication from one-on-one conversations into short news (or trivia) events: we can 'tune in' when we want an update or something to say.

Online communication tools also have the potential to increase awareness of the movements of our professional or social contacts. Twitter, for example, we know provides updates on what people are doing at a particular time. The physical quality of proprioception that tells an animal where its extremities are by receiving stimuli generated in the organism. Social proprioception tells us where the nodes of our community are and provides a sense of connectedness and awareness to others without direct interaction. The Internet is a third place where people connect with friends, creating a sense of togetherness.

Increasingly, a computer with an Internet connection is the locus of a range of interactions across media and the gateway to a range of social spaces for work and play. Social



networking sites like Facebook and MySpace and virtual environments like Second Life and World of Warcraft have become online meeting spaces where users—members, residents, or players—can interact and express themselves. They provide a way for users to stay in touch with existing communities that are offline, such as social and professional groups. People who don't normally communicate a few times a year can keep in touch — colleagues met at a conference, for example, or friends met through an online community.

Sites such as YouTube and Flickr represent another forum for online communication focused on sharing, preference, and popular culture. Visitors can browse movies (in the case of YouTube) or photos (in the case of Flickr), express personal preferences, add commentary, and upload their own creative work. YouTube is also a repository of popular culture in the form of newscasts, television shows, movies or music videos of current interest. The types of interaction that take place on these sites focus on shared interests and include not only verbal commentary but also commentary in the form of original or derivative works based on popular episodes. One of the reasons why people prefer this form of media is that they can interact there both socially and professionally. Whether it's as simple as seeing what other comments have been added to you, or as easy as attending a workshop or presenting in a virtual world, the nature of the attraction lies in the connections between people that afford these online spaces.

In the business sector, social media is used as an important crisis communication tool and customer communication tool. The growth of social media has brought out the following advantages and disadvantages.

- **Sharing Ideas:** Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their personal networks. Web-based social networking services make it possible to connect people who share interests and activities across political, economic, and geographic boundaries.
- **Communication tool:** Social networks are increasingly being used by teachers and students as a means of communication. Teachers expand classroom discussions to post assignments, tests, and quizzes, create chat rooms, forums, and groups to help with



homework outside of the classroom setting. Students can create groups on social networking sites and discuss various topics.

- **Bridge Communication Gap:**social media bridges the gap between different people. It offers a platform for online users to find others with similar interests and create virtual communities based on those shared interests. With the availability of social mediatechnology and services, content sharing and user interaction have become relatively simple and efficient.
- **Source of Information:** Content creation and sharing sites serve as sources of information on various topics. Users can search, download and use the content available on these sites for free.
- **Important Marketing Tool:**social media is widely used by most of the companies/organizations to market their products/services to the society. Companies resort to social networking sites to generate opinions on existing and future products available in the market. It is a great marketing strategy undertaken by most companies to attract customers and gain public opinion. Such comments or opinions help the organization to redesign their products. Such social networking and user rating sites are an important way to promote products and generate opinions.
- **Important Crisis Communication Tool:** When major forms of public relations tools fail, social media can be used extensively to communicate with the general public regarding any crisis situation besetting a nation or any organization. But it is important to remember that while social media has a positive impact during natural disasters, it can have a less favourable impact during business crises, in which case, the corporate communication team needs to understand how they can use social media to their advantage. Social media has changed the communication landscape, especially during times of crisis. For example, after the March 2011 earthquake in Japan, millions of people logged on to YouTube and Twitter to post messages and videos and check for updates about the devastating natural disaster.
- **Low Cost / Cost Effective:** Using online social networking for both personal and business use is cheap as most of it is free. Unlike other media like electronic or print, one



has to pay a certain amount to publish news. One can find potential customers and target markets with just a few clicks and keystrokes.

- **Less time consuming:** social media is an effective time management medium of communication for business as well as educational purposes. One can post a message or browse any information at the click of a button. This is an added advantage compared to print and other electronic media like television and radio, although one can get updates in television, social media channels provide instant information and contact with the most important people.

However, despite being an important tool of communication, social media has its own disadvantages which are given below –

- **Invasion of privacy:** Social networking is part of everyday life and for many of us it is a primary way in which we stay in touch with friends and family. Privacy is a major issue in such networks. This becomes a serious problem when users are targeted based on their location, age etc. leading to kidnapping and murder. It has often been observed that most of the people who have opened accounts on social networking sites do not reveal their real identity which leads to false personal information and misleads people. There is a serious danger of youth being misled by such people. Harassment, cyber stalking and online scams are frequent issues in daily life.
- **Disruption in family relations:** When people get addicted to social networking sites, there is a discontinuity in family relations. This is because a person sticks to the sites to communicate with friends. Young people in particular discuss their problems openly and share stories with their peers rather than with their parents or close relatives. Hence, in the long run, close ties with the immediate family are broken.
- **Decrease in worker productivity:** Frequent use of social media can affect worker productivity. Employees can waste valuable time using social media networking.
- **Slightly Impersonal:** social media will never beat the advantage of dealing with customers face-to-face, yet many organizations use things like auto DM on Twitter to pretend they don't really care about their followers. This is what happens when an



organization auto DMs a new followerlike they don't have time to take a quick look at followers' profiles for a few seconds. It's better to say nothing than to send an automatic, mindless message to a potential practice.

Conclusion:

Social media can be effective in building social rights; Individuals or organizations can establish themselves as experts in their fields and then influence these fields. Thus, one of the fundamental concepts in social media is that, with social media, one cannot fully control one's message, but can contribute to discourses. Social media technology is capable of reaching a worldwide audience.

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