

Influence of Social Media in Interpersonal Communication

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SYNOPSIS: *Social media has impacted various facets of modern life and it has a profound influence in inter-personal communication. The present day is characterized by acute lack of time for individuals and families due to the need for husband and wife to be employed for meeting the needs of a satisfactory life style. Time has become the most precious resource, and people are finding means of saving time because of their fast paced life style. People need interaction for fulfilling their social needs and social media has become a preferred medium for communication with the proliferation of digital and mobile technologies. Digitalization has reduced the face to face interaction of human beings whether it is for marketing or promoting a product or a personal communication. The mobile phone has created a social situation whereby people are getting used to avoidance of person to person communication by switching over to mobile. The present day life styles and lack of time have made the usage of mobiles and other communication aids more useful for social contact. The present research paper would analyze the impact of social media and in the way people communicate with each other or lack of it!*

Key words: *Social media and interpersonal communication, change in life styles and communication media, lack of time and its impact on communication methods.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Life has become fast paced. Everybody seems to be in a hurry to reach office or school or any other destination. There seems to be no time for people to even pause and greet each other when they come across friends or acquaintances. Everyone wonders as to what has happened or is happening. But heart of heart the fact is we are all aware of the reasons. Social media is steadily but surely impacting the way we live and communicate with one another. All of us very much aware that communication is the life blood of our existence and realize how important it is in our lives. Over a period of a decade or more, we are become addicted to the social media and mobile communication. Digital devices have made our lives apparently easy but actually complicating it perhaps beyond control. Today our social interactions have been reduced to impersonal; mobile contacts or through other electronic media available. What has happened to our conversation with friendly neighbors when we meet them outside our house or in the market or school when we go to leave our children? Even our children contact their friends in the neighborhood through mobiles only. They have also become victims of the digital revolution and the lazy life styles they have been inflicted!

Some protagonists say that there is no going back. So if you happen to glance around a restaurant you will be hard-pressed to find people who don't have their heads down using their cell phones to text, Tweet, or update their Facebook statuses—all while sharing a meal with others at their table. Social media's effect on our ability to interact and communicate is visible throughout all areas of society, so what does this mean for interpersonal communication? According to Paul Booth, PhD, an assistant professor of media and cinema studies in the College of Communication at DePaul University in Chicago, social media certainly affects how we engage with one another across all venues and ages. "There has been a shift in the way we communicate; rather than face-to-face interaction, we're tending to prefer mediated communication," he says. "We'd rather e-mail than meet; we'd rather text than talk on the phone."

Three key issues are surfacing regarding the role social media now plays in people's communication styles. First, when we communicate through social media, we tend to trust the people on the other end of the communication, so our messages tend to be more open. Second, our social connections are not strengthened as much through social media as they are face-to-face, so we don't tend to deepen our relationships—they tend to exist in the status quo. Last, we tend to follow and interact with people who agree with our points of view, so we aren't getting the same diversity of viewpoints as we've gotten in the past. Experts agree that those who have a keen sense of observation must be aware that people are changing the way they communicate. What does the future hold for social media and its potential continuous effect on interpersonal communication within society? Social media will continue to become increasingly integrated into the normal human experience like most of the communication technologies that preceded it. They will continue to increase the volume of the human communication process, and we will continue to learn how to use them for good and for bad.

II. METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

The present research paper is an attempt to assess and highlight the growing influence of social media in the Communication process between individuals. Communication as we know is the life blood of our activities as individuals and communities and is an essential requirement for social interaction. To analyze the

growing influence of the digital devices and the social media on the interpersonal relationship, more specifically the following Objectives have been identified for the purpose of this research paper.

1. A review if the progress of social media in communication
2. A critical analysis of growth of this media in interpersonal communication
3. The proliferation, impact and influence of mobile devices in communication
4. The impact, pros and cons of such developments
5. Review and Recommendations

On a preliminary review of literature it was found that adequate literature is available in the print and electronic media, particularly the web pages. Hence it was decided that there was no need for a separate questionnaire survey as the analysis and compilation of the available data would be adequate. A comprehensive review of literature and conclusions thereof is given below.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Far-Reaching Effects of social media includes cyber bullying. Nicholas David Bowman, PhD, an assistant professor of communication studies in the Beverly College of Arts and Sciences at West Virginia University, says actions that trigger a bad online relationship likely are the same ones that trigger a bad relationship in real life—only the modality has changed.



Figure 1; The Rise of visuals in social media

“For example, cyber bullying has largely the same antecedents and behavioral, emotional, and affective consequences as does a non-cyber bullying,” Bowman says. “Yet the difference is the ‘more’—that is, social media allows for more contact, more communication, and in a more public manner.” In a bullying event, often the person being bullied can remove himself or herself from the environment, at least temporarily. For example, a child being bullied at school can escape the playground when he or she goes home each night. “However, cyber bullying is marked by its persistence,” Bowman says. “The bullying

messages don’t stay in a particular space, such as a playground, but can follow the child home. If we consider that bullying effects on an individual can build over time, then there is a real concern that increasing contact between bullies and their targets in persistent and digital interactions might exacerbate the problem.”

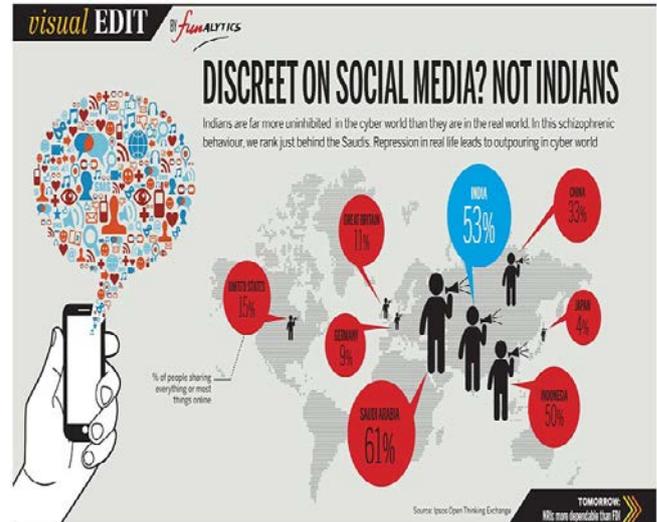


Figure 2: Discretion needed in digital media communication

One big concern surrounding social media’s impact is communication overload—learning how to handle and make sense of this “more” information we now have. We are getting more information about more people than ever before, and we feel a need to process and perhaps even respond to it all. In fact, there has been some very early recent data suggesting that teens are perhaps pulling away from Face book because it’s just too much for them to handle. Another concern lies in technology addiction, when individuals spend more time with their smart phone than interacting with the people around them, to the detriment of those face-to-face relationships. For these people, they likely feel such a strong sense of identity online that they have some difficulty separating their virtual actions from their actual ones. Internet addiction now will be listed as a mental illness marked by emotional shutdown, lack of concentration, and withdrawal symptoms, so we may be closer to diagnosing and understanding socially detrimental human-technology relationships. However, many have cautioned that Internet addiction might be an inaccurate portrayal, if social media is designed to connect people with people, then is it really a human-technology relationship or is it a human-human relationship mediated by technology?

One potentially negative consequence of social media is a lack of privacy. Because interpersonal communication is changing, we are likely to share on social media the sort of information we might have previously shared privately face-to-face. We always have to keep in mind that our

social networks are searchable—even when privacy settings are set extremely high, it is always possible to find out personal information.

Of course, the negativity surrounding social media is countered by positive influences, including the ability to communicate with more people across greater distances and with increased speed. Messages can be shared and spread farther and faster than at any other time in human history and a lot of good can be done by spreading positive messages in this way. As communication and information travel faster and faster, the world seems to get smaller and smaller. As a result, this changes how the world communicates, especially with today’s obsession with social media networks. Before social media, we were extremely limited in our means to interact with others and we were limited largely to the people that we knew in-person. There were things we (those my age and older) had to deal with that millennials do not have to, your significant other’s parent answering the phone when you called, waiting for a letter in the mail, waiting a week to get your pictures that you sent off to be developed, and so on. The internet and social media has drastically changed the way people all over the world, interact and communicate.

One of the biggest positive changes in the way that we interact, due to social media networks, is the sheer number of people that we can interact with. Because of social media networks, we are now able to interact with thousands of people all over the world – this is why we see people who have thousands of Face book friends or tens of thousands of Twitter followers. Without social media, that would be impossible. Social media networks allow us the opportunity to share opinions with a far wider audience. Another big change that has occurred is that there is now no filter on the way we speak. In the past, unless you spoke to people directly, you had no way to get your message across regardless of your freedom of speech. Now we can use social media to get our messages out to thousands or even millions of people uncensored.

*"There can be no words
without pictures"*

Aristotle

www.sociallysorted.com.au



Figure 3: A Picture Really Does Paint 1000 Words.
Photo Courtesy istockphoto.com

Social media has also changed the way that we interact, mainly the way we have lost some of our social skills. Some people are completely incapable of carrying on a normal conversation or interacting with people in person because of the dependency of social media. Social networks are becoming one of the dominant ways we communicate. People are more obsessed with checking their smart phone every 2 minutes than engaging in meaningful conversation with their child or spouse. Social media and technology are double-edged swords. It’s awesome to have and can really help us, but it also distracts us to the point of being blind and deaf to everything else going on.

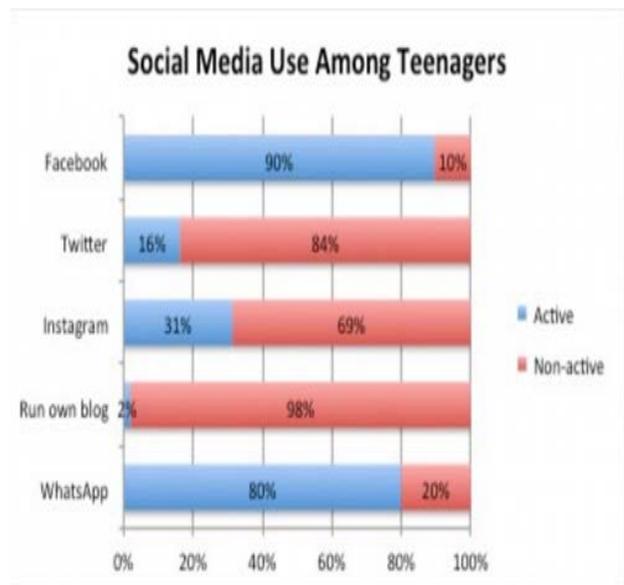


Figure 4: Social media usage is on the rise!

It can also be argued that social networks have affected our communication by the way we converse and in our writing techniques. The social web has changed the written word in a couple of crucial ways: Writing is more summarized: However, this has allowed for shorter sentences or paragraphs and made way for neglecting correct grammar use. Abbreviations are more prevalent: People who communicate via social media or text message aren’t necessarily spelling things incorrectly; they are speaking a new language entirely. “TTYL” (Talk to You Later) is commonly used to let someone know you will talk to them later. In today’s world, abbreviations are now so common that we do not even have to think twice about what they stand for. There is not a right or wrong way to communicate and/or adapt social language into our lives. However, we are all becoming engulfed in this new world of communication due to technology—and if we haven’t done so already, will be forced to learn this new form of language, especially if you are a parent of a teen. The Figure 5 given below really sums up the internet. As illustrated in the cartoon ‘On the internet, nobody knows you’re a dog, (published by The New Yorker in 1993), the

anonymity afforded by online communication raises interesting questions about authenticity and trust

As more and more Social media interaction now dominates both online and offline conversations (Example: A Diwali Greetings – Figure 6). In a society where interacting and over-sharing online is the norm, you're probably more likely to speak to friends and family through electronic devices than face-to-face. But are social media and modern technology destroying our interpersonal social skills? Generations are born into the social age; social media will continue to be the favored communication form among young people. However, this shift may begin to affect their ability to properly communicate in person with peers.



Figure 5: On anonymity of internet usage!



Figure 6: A Diwali Greetings through social media

Marketing has been around for a lot more time than we may be tempted to believe. Social media is relatively new when compared with it but there is no way to deny the fact that it is the one medium that had the highest influence ever on marketing. When communicating with the target audience, gaining access to a two-way communication is really important. Social networks like Face book and

Twitter allow the target audience to respond to marketing messages. This offers instant feedback and marketers automatically know that they are doing something right as responses are positive. Alternatively, modifications can be done if responses are negative. Social media marketing is practically a gold mine for smaller firms since they can be heard. Social media had a huge impact on public relations, marketing and advertising. Companies actually manage to save thousands every year, some every month, thanks to the fact that they manage to move away from the regular channels used: TV, radio and print.

Social networks help the businesses in a variety of ways. Traditional marketing mediums such as the radio, TV commercials and print ads are completely obsolete now and demand for thousands of dollars. However, with social media the businesses can connect with their targeted customers for free, the only cost is energy and time. Through Face book, Twitter, LinkedIn or any other social site you can lower your marketing cost to a significant level.

The increasing popularity of social sites like Twitter, Face book and LinkedIn, social networks has gained attention as the most viable communication choice for the bloggers, article writers and content creators. These social networking sites have opened the opportunity for all the writers and bloggers to connect with their tech savvy clients to share your expertise and articles. Your audience will further share your articles, blog or expertise in their social circle which further enhance your networks of the followers.



Figure 7: Positive effects of social media

Social networks have removed all the communication and interaction barriers, and now one can communicate his/her perception and thoughts over a variety of topics. Students and experts are able to share and communicate with like-minded people and can ask for the input and opinion on a particular topic. Another positive impact of social networking sites is to unite people on a huge platform for the achievement of some specific objective. This is very important to bring the positive change in society.

Social media brings in so much information about the target audience that a marketing campaign has. It is not that difficult to learn what people love and you can use all the information that is freely available about those individuals you are interested in. Social media is something that you have to use these days because it offers a lot of data. Use that information in order to be successful on the long run. Although social media is incredibly useful in helping all marketing communication efforts become more effective, it is really important that you use all channels properly. All companies have to be consistent and use social media in a proper way. One thing that many do not know is that when you use social media channels, you cannot do it sparingly. Have patience and always use your channels in order to improve your marketing channels.

IV. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

It is hard to contain or restrict youngsters from using social media platforms, which offer a variety of conveniences. Social media has changed the way in which people communicate – the face to face interactions have reduced. The reasons may be many, but the reality is same! In a society which is on the run and is hard pressed for time short and easy communications will replace the long drawn written communications. This is a natural development. What we need to understand is whether this has created positive or negative consequences. Basically because of the need for people to be socially associated and social interactions are needed; but due to paucity of time in the current environment social media has taken the center stage.

A review of Literature has shown that social media has shown significant growth as the preferred medium of communication. Face book and What's App have captured the fancy of youngsters and together they have conquered 80-90% of the social media usage. The benefits offered by this media, is instant contact anywhere in the world and easy accessibility as communications become faster and faster the world seems to shrink. This medium offers the advantage of contacting several people at the same time through groups and if needed messages can be dispersed to a large number of people, as is done by Advertisement and Promotion of various products and services. One of the great advantages is that smaller size companies can reach out to a large number of customers at a reasonable budget for promoting their wares. The impact of the new social media is tremendous. More and more companies are finding newer means of reaching out to people through this medium. A more recent example is the new wave of election campaigns by all parties!

There are positive and negative impacts due to the proliferation of this medium. While social media has definitely helped marketing and marketers, it has brought along with it a new perspective about how things get done

and has impressed the youngsters in the impressionable age group. While appreciating the speed of disseminating information, the consequences of such actions to making the youngsters more lackadaisical and lazy has to be considered. Youngsters seem to prefer isolation and they seem to be in their own imaginary world rather than the real life friends and interaction with neighbors and elders in the family. Lack of respect towards elders in the family and friends circle is a development which needs to be taken with caution! But progress cannot be stopped. It has to stand the test of times!

Information overload and lack of privacy are two major issues in social media. There is no control over the information that you will get through social media for example through what's App. Getting more information before people are ready to receive and process the same for useful consumption makes them confused. The continuous bombarding of messages through hand held devices leaves no time for reflection and analysis and leads to some kind of addiction and resignation to the situation. This leads progressively to avoidance of face to face communication. There is difficulty in separating virtual reality from reality and loss of privacy. Since massive information is spread through social media, there is no room for privacy – everybody knows everything about the other person. This is a dangerous situation leading to herd mentality and the individual loses his discretion. Humans are progressively made into robots processing commands. And these commands can originate from anti-social elements including terrorists!

V. RECOMMENDATION

We must remember that social media is really only a decade old. That's very young in the history of communication technology, it has been influential, but it hasn't really settled into a routine yet. As social media becomes more normalized, we'll stop seeing it as changing things and start seeing it as the way things are. As a society we'll be OK—we've always adjusted to new technology. So whether it's wearable communication media, such as Google glasses, or more cloud computing, we'll change and adapt. Communication is constantly evolving. Some people are as used to seeing their friends' online avatar as they are their face. People increasingly prefer quick and frequent engagement with instant updates on news than a prolonged chat and are also finding new ways to catch up with friends from the comfort of their sofa (can we call them couch potatoes!)

At the end of the day, nothing can replace face-to-face conversation and interactions. Despite the explosion of online endorsements and social media dialogue between individuals and brands, researchers have found word-of-mouth exchanges and in-depth conversation are still most influential.

