

# SOCIAL MEDIA AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Ankita Khare<sup>1</sup>, Kumar Saurabh<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*Social marketing can deliberately be used for social cause. Indian youth are high users of social networking websites and instant Messenger. College going student are among the most prolific users of social networking websites and instant messengers. Emerging studies find that youth spend a considerable portion of their daily life interacting through social media. The purpose of this research is to investigate reasons that influence college going students to use social networking websites and instant messengers. Data is gathered from the students of B. Tech, MBA and MCA programme of MNNIT Allahabad. The authors have borrowed and modified scales from literature to create a questionnaire. Principal Component Analysis was conducted to determine the factors which affect the usage of social networking websites and instant messengers among college students. College students use social networking websites for different usages like collection of information, self satisfaction and to portray their image in a group. This research is an attempt to develop a framework for usage of social media by college going students. With the help of this research framework the policy makers and managers can better prepare their marketing strategies to target the above mentioned class.*

**Keywords:** Social Marketing, Social Networking Websites, Instant Messenger, Principal Component Analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

Communication is an important pillar on which society stands. One cannot imagine a society without communication; it is an integral part of a society. Even the formation of society depends on the communication among its members. Communication is constituted of knowledge sharing, entertainment, socialization and gaining control through persuasion (Chan & Fang, 2007; Schramm, 1977). As per old traditional theories parents used to be the primary socializing agents with friends and peers being the secondary socializing agents. But in changing scenario mass media is playing the equivalent role of primary socializing agent by socializing the new member in a modern society (Chang & Fang, 2007; Strasburger & Wilson, 2002; Comstock, 1991; Schramm, 1977). The invention of internet had opened a

fantastic opportunity for mass media to grow. Social media can be defined as any online service through which users can create and share variety of content (Bolton et al, 2013).

Social media is defined as “a group of internet-based applications and technological foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content” (Kaplan and Haenlein; 2010). According to Ellison (2007), social networking websites are web based services which allows individuals to construct virtual profile within bounded system on which one user can be connected with others (Gong et al., 2014). Social networking websites have provided a pathway to bridge online and offline contacts of college students by allowing them to form online friends (Park et al, 2009).

## INDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

There are more than 180 million urban internet users in India of which 66 per cent regularly access their social media accounts (Social media in India, 2016). Usage of social

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<sup>1,2</sup> Research Scholar, School of Management Studies, Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology Allahabad, Teliarganj, Allahabad - 211004

<sup>1</sup> [cse.ankita@gmail.com](mailto:cse.ankita@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> [kr.saurabh07@gmail.com](mailto:kr.saurabh07@gmail.com)

media is highly diverse as few of the consumers focus on exchange among friends and family while others focus on rapid communication in the form of microblogs. While maintaining the virtual profile on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, posting or sharing updates in life events and replying to the post of friends are the most preferred activities on social media.

According to statistics, by 2018 it is estimated that there will be around 283 million social media users in India. Approximately there are 2 billion internet users who are using social media; these figures are expected to grow with increase in mobile device usage (Statista, 2016). Due to the continuous presence in the users' life social networks have a strong social influence. As per one estimate more than 33 percent of the users of social media are the college students.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA AND COLLEGE STUDENTS**

Online behaviour of college students exerts an unusual attraction on corporate managers and academicians. The college students of India are the first generation to have spent their lives in the digital environment. Media has profoundly affected their life and work (Bolton et al., 2013; Bennet et al., 2008; Wesner & Miller, 2008). College students actively use social media to share the content. In this study an attempt is being made to analyze behavior of college students belonging to Generation Y towards their usage of social media. In this study, we consider Generation Y as the people born between 1981 and 1999. According to Brodahl and Carpenter (2011), generations could be categorized on the basis of birth dates as: individual born between 1925 and 1945 are from Silent generation; between 1946 and 1960 are baby boomers; between 1961 and 1981 are generation X and born after 1981 are generation Y. Though Generation Y has experienced social media since birth but it was widely adopted only after 2003. According to Palfrey and Gasser (2008), Generation Y mainly uses social

media to interact with friends and family (Valkenburg et al., 2006; Lenhart & Madden, 2007); they also give value to opinions of others and do give their feedback (eMarketer, 2011). Apart from socializing, according to Park et al. (2009), Generation Y also uses social media for information and entertainment.

Usage of social media is influenced by various other factors like environmental factor and individual factors. Environmental factors comprise of technological, political, economical and cultural factors. While individual factors represents the demographic, socio-economic status and emotions of individual (Bolton et al., 2013)

The usage of social networking sites and instant messengers by individuals depend on the purpose of use of social media. This research examines the purpose of use of social media among college students and tries to establish linkage between usage of social media and purpose of use. According to Kaye & Johnson (2002), individual join social networking sites on the basis of shared interests but motivation to join social networking sites depends on their demographic characteristics (Park et al, 2009).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **DATA COLLECTION**

Data for the present study being conducted through field survey as it is a kind of positivist research design meant for theory testing and seeking generalized patterns based on an objective view of reality. Field surveys help to capture snapshots of practices, beliefs, or situations from a random sample of subjects mostly through the use of carefully constructed structured questionnaires. This study uses a cross-sectional field survey design wherein the identified variables related with purpose for usage of social media are measured at the same point in time, using a single questionnaire. The survey is conducted using a self administered questionnaire, designed on a Likert five point scale.

The respondents were given a set of edited close-ended questionnaires in English. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents and to maintain the confidentiality of their responses names were not asked.

It took about three weeks to collect the data. Like studies in the past (Nandan & Saurabh, 2016; Nga & Yien, 2013; Park et al., 2009), the survey was conducted on a group of students belong to Generation Y. The survey included students of B. Tech, MBA, MCA and Ph D Scholars of MNNIT Allahabad from age group of less than 18 years to more than 28 years of age. Of all the questionnaires distributed, 160 filled up questionnaires were collected. Out of these, 14 questionnaires were summarily removed on account of missing values and respondent biasness, leaving us with 146 valid responses which were included in final analysis, thus registering with fairly good response rate of 91.25%. The sample size is more than the minimum requirement of 5:1 participants-to-item ratio as proposed by Hair et al (2006). The valid questionnaires were then coded and the raw data keyed into the statistical

software, SPSS 20.0 version, for further analysis. Principal Component Analysis is used for factor identification.

Purposive-convenience sampling has been used for this study to ensure that the sampling parameters are accurate and consistent.

### MEASURES

A fifteen item five point scale was adopted from Park et al. (2009) for the purpose of study of use of social networking websites and instant messengers by respondents. The statements were used to measure various dimensions like socializing, entertainment, self status seeking and information seeking dimensions of usage.

The demographic variables included gender, age and course pursuing.

### RESULTS

Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation (*KMO measure of sampling adequacy*= 0.777, *Chi square value for Bartlett's test of sphericity* = 869.429, significant at  $p<0.05$ ) revealed the following three usages for social networking websites and instant

**Table 1: Rotated Component Score, Eigen Value, Variance Explained, Cronbach's  $\alpha$**

Usage of Social Networking Websites and Instant Messengers	Factors		
	Information and work	Entertainment	Self and socializing
Information about events	0.864		
On campus events	0.857		
Information about products	0.794		
Assignments done	0.659		
Stay in touch	0.593		
Entertaining		0.869	
Funny		0.798	
Exciting		0.783	
Lonely		0.510	
Peer pressure			0.798
Cool image			0.764
Meet interesting people			0.600
Belong to community			0.548
Eigen Value	4.385	2.785	1.539
Variance Explained	31.323	19.896	10.990
Cronbach's $\alpha$	0.828	0.796	0.733

messengers: self and socializing, entertaining, and information and work. Each factor had an eigen value of at least 1 (information and work, 4.385; entertainment, 2.785; self and socializing, 1.539), account for 62.209% of the variance. Two of the 15 statements '*social media helps in career advancement*' and '*to talk about any issues with others*' had factor loading of less than 0.5 and thus were not included in any of the factor. Respondents participate in social networking websites and instant messengers primarily for information seeking purpose to get to know about on campus and off campus events as well as to know about products and services along with support in projects and assignments to be done. Respondents use social networking websites and instant messengers for entertainment and also due to peer pressure and to be part of a group.

## RELIABILITY

For consistency of scale reliability test is to be performed, and in the present study Cronbach's alpha has been calculated for this purpose. According to Hair (2006), values above 0.7 are acceptable. From the Table 1, it is evident that the Cronbach's alpha in the scale is found to be in the range of 0.733 to 0.828, which lies within acceptable limits. It can therefore be inferred that the scale is consistent.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the usage of social networking websites and instant messengers by college students of India. The results show that individuals join social networking websites and use instant messengers primarily for information seeking purposes and for assistance in their assignment and projects followed by entertainment and their self image and socialization. Socialization and portraying the image be the least concerned of college students when they are using social networking websites and instant messengers. Reason for this may be because at this stage of life cycle individuals did not feel

importance of socializing especially with alumni of institute or others who may help them in their career advancement or even if they are socializing the role of social media is low, we can infer that college students generally socialize with their friends and reaching to them did not require any social media.

## MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study may be used by policy makers and managers to understand the need of college students in India which would be useful in promoting any event or product. The youth of India is using social media mainly for information seeking. Therefore, if a corporate manager wants to create awareness about its product then one may opt for promotion using social media. Second concern for college students using social media is entertainment so one manager can capitalize on this aspect by promoting the products with gaming or online videos or other possible avenues of entertainment.

## LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study suffers from some inherent shortcomings despite of care and caution being taken while conducting this research. The first shortcoming is that the research is conducted in just one single city with small sample size hence the results could not be generalized to different geographical location and also with different culture. A self-reported questionnaire was used in this study which has its own limitations; an experiment based study might have produced different pattern. Finally, data collected did not consider cultural aspects, which could be an interesting area for future research.

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