Short Communication

Social networking sites: Instrument of social change

Jha Vinit Kumar Utpal

Rashtriya Sahara C-2,3,4, Sector-11, NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh, India. E-mail: vinitutpal@gmail.com. Tel: +91-9911364316.

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Online availability of information creates new ways of communication. This provides a variety of ways for users to interact, though chat, messaging email, video, voice chat, file sharing, blogging and discussing groups. The social networking sites have become one of the dominant cultural phenomena in this digital age. It enables us to communicate anywhere in this world and to anyone who shares interests and activities across political, social, economic and geographical borders. This paper analysed how new media specially social networking sites change the ways of communication, allows the public to critique and discuss fearlessly social and political issues and share the news information as well as message and leading to active participation in social movements and social revolutions.

Key words: Internet, mass communication, social networking sites, social media, social movements.

INTRODUCTION

The internet was the result of some visionary thinking by people in the early 1960s, who saw great political value in allowing computers to share information on research and development in different fields. But today user of the internet has gone beyond its limits. It provides a virtual platform in which different social groups can produce a pressure that might have been observed denied. Social networking sites are becoming part of our lives and it is affecting public. It opens up a two way discourse, allowing for organic, leaderless movements to reset zeitgeists (Michael, 2011).

These days, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter etc. become the new weapons of mass mobilization, geeks have taken on dictators, bloggers are dissidents and social networks have become rallying force for social justice (Social networks, social revolution, 2011). BBC news producer Keneeth Payne said that the media in the modern era, in indisputable an instrument of war. This is because winning modern war is as much dependent on carrying domestic and international public opinion as it is on defeating the enemy in the battlefield (Kenneth, 2005).

It can be mentioned that the speed of social networking sites has emphasized the need for real time reporting and has spurred a rise in news providers. It is also said that without this medium, the Egyptian revolution as well as Anna Hazare's crusade in India could not have happened in that way as it happened. This as a matter of fact from the beginning of the internet, digital sphere affects the news system as well as public in different circumstances.

WAR TIME TO SOCIAL REVOLUTION

During Kosovo war in 1999, the internet had made pressure wartime. This war is called the first internet war. On the first day of the NATO air strikes, CNN's website had 31 million page views (the site had attracted 34 million page views in 1998 on the day the Star report about the Clinton-Lewinsky sex scandal was released) (Seib, 2004).

The Oklahoma city bombing, the TWA 800 explosion, the Heaven's Gate mass suicide, prince Diana's car crash and the Drudge report's posting war highlighted from a respective vantage point of the evolving dynamic of online journalism (Stuart, 2003). On 9/11, 30 million people went online especially for news coverage. During each day of the week following the attack, there were almost 12 million unique visitors to websites (Seib, 2004).

The historic transformation that have taken place in Egypt and Tuniesa showed that the digital sphere, which cannot be wholly regulated or shut down, has become the platform for protests (Thirani, 2011). Tweets from Tahir square was a highly originaly taken on one of the most important and democratic events in recent world politics. The result was as gripping as any thriller, but it was all real.
In Yemen, as the Egypt revolution was going steam, 24 years old, Al-Razaq Al-Azazi started a Facebook group called 'Let's Change the President', which he later renamed 'Revolution against ignorance' in preparation for per-democracy demonstrations. More than 1200 people defined the government and accepted the site's invitation - 'Yemeni People Uprising', challenging the three decade long reign of their government (Michael, 2011). @jkrums was the first to break the news that an American plane had crashed in the Hudson River (Deborah, 2011).

When Japanese journalist Kosuke Tsuneoka was kidnapped in Afghanistan, he used Twitter to sink out the message. Tsuneoka had been held for five months by Islamic militants but was able to access his Twitter account when his kidnappers asked him to show how to use their mobile phones. He was released two days after the tweet was sent (Deborah, 2011).

Before the media had even a sniff off the news about Osama Bin Laden's death, on Twitter an unknown user breaks the news to the world. Sohaib Athar, an information technology (IT) consultant living in Abottabad, started twitting when he noticed some unusual events (Deborah, 2011).

In India, news of shooting and bombing in Mumbai in 2008 was first reported via Twitter and Flickr, before any of the mainstream media. The Telegraph reported that during the attacks, there were approximately 70 eyewitness tweets every 5 seconds (Deborah, 2011).

The campaigns such as Batti Bandh, Justice for Jessica, the 2008 Gateway of India rally, after the Mumbai attack and most recently the group, it is my Arunachal: Dream on China have leveraged the existing network on social media websites (Thirani, 2011).

Anna Hazare has gone on 'Fast unto death' campaign many times in his life, but the reach, publicity and fame that Jan Lokpal Bill against corruption had given to him was unbelievable (Prabhudesai, 2011). There is no doubt that without the social networking sites, the Anna Crusade could not have happened the way it did.

The second fortnight of August, 2011 witnessed one of the largest mobilization of people in recent years against corruption in India (Viswanathan, 2011). The struggle led by Anna Hazare dominated the media all through the fortnight. A new feature during the movement was the participation of the people from the social networking sites, which helped people to mobilize in different corners of the country to come in support of the team Anna (Viswanathan, 2011). Twitter, Facebook and other social networking sites and blogs have also played a significant part in bringing people together in peaceful demonstration, candle protests and so on. Team Anna may have been the first major beneficiary of this technology (Viswanathan, 2011). Some aspects of this movement are:

i. More than 150 Facebook pages related to 'Anna Hazare' and 'India Against Corruption' had emerged (Ohri, 2011).
ii. The official 'India Against Corruption' page (Facebook) has managed to rope in more than 3.2 lakh fans so far (Ohri, 2011).
iii. According to Buzzref.com, 'The IAC Facebook page received over 71,000 'likes' and 13,000 comments for mere 170 posts upload in the month of August, 2011 (Ohri, 2011).
iv. April 14, 2011, when India Against Corruption post on Facebook, 'Aage Bado Anna Hazare, Ham Tumhare Sath Hain!!!' 1,27,396 people liked this group (Prabhudesai, 2011).
v. Not only Facebook, but Twitter was also abuzz with message showing support for Anna Hazare's campaign.
vi. Topics related to 'Anna Hazare' and 'Jan Lokpal' has become the most discussed subject on Twitter in India, at that point of time (Kapil, 2011).

vii. The hash tag #isupportannahazare remained the most discussed topic on August 17, 2011 with over 8000 tweets mentioned or used this hash tag (Kapil, 2011).

ix. According to Topsy.com, 'about 15,000 tweets with the mention of Anna Hazare have been published on Twitter (Kapil, 2011).'

x. According to trendsmap.com, majority of the tweets published mentioned or related to Anna Hazare, Janlokpal, parliament, Arun Jately, Shantoi Bhushan, Ramdev and Manmohan Singh on August, 2011 (Kapil, 2011)

It is also mentioned that You Tube was not far behind. Hundreds of videos were uploaded in support of Anna Hazare's campaign, when the campaign was on full swing (Prabhudesai, 2011).

**DISCUSSION**

These events which happened time-to-time shows how social networking sites change the world. Reason behind their success were many but the instant and widespread nature of social media spread it like a fire in the forest. Raw emotions of the people burst from message through Twitter, You Tube, Facebook, Blogs, SMSs etc, (Prabhudesai, 2011). Posting a message on these sites takes very little time and effort, but if it is collectively put across in one voice, it could become an unstoppable force (Seib, 2004).

**Conclusion**

From Kosovo war to Anna's crusade, several moments came in the social networking sites that change the world. It has altered global society even more than information but to connect with one another. Social
television because people use it not just to receive scientists regard the internet as a political equalize for organizational activities, because it offers a low cost, controllable communication channel that can create linkage with the like-minded stakeholders.

To conclude the study on social networking sites, information as well as social movements found that the development of the social networking sites as a news provider is often described as a series of information vantage point of formative moments, each of which highlights from a respective vantage point of the evolving dynamic of online journalism. This alternative image of the social networking sites identify itself with information sharing societies is based on the social promotion and practices of the exchanging and sharing knowledge originating from many different societies and help to rise social revolution.

REFERENCES


