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Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University

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MA JMC 09

SEM-03

Social Media Content and Marketing

MASTER OF ARTS - JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University
(Established by Government of Gujarat)

MAJMC-09
Social Media Content and Marketing

Paper

09

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UNIT : 1 SOCIAL MEDIA: DEFINITION, CONCEPTS AND HISTORY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The term 'social media' has gained such widespread currency now that it is difficult to imagine, especially for its young users, that there was ever a time without it. The internet seems synonymous with this term, with different social media platforms and apps vying for the user's attention within this space rather than competing with other forms of the internet, like websites, blogs, digital archives, chat engines, P2P platforms, etc.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

In this chapter, we will study how the idea of social media emerged and captured the imagination of individual user and big businesses alike, the definition of the term and the associated concepts that have come to define this space. Though the social media landscape is changing rapidly and it is difficult to predict if its next phase will have any resemblance to how it exists today, we will identify certain patterns in its evolution from being a simple profile-sharing platform to an indispensable tool of communication.

On the Completion of This Unit, You Will be Able to:

- Identify the essential features of a social media platform
- Understand what services the first social media platforms offered
- Who coined the term 'social media'
- How social media is important to individuals and businesses in different ways
- How a social media entity is structured

Index of Unit Contents

This unit is divided into the following sections:

- The Need for Social Media
- Who Coined the Term 'Social Media'?
- What Is Social Media, and What Is Not
- Evolution of the Concept of Social Media
- Structural Constituents of a Social Media Entity
- The Individuals and Social Media
- Concepts and Architectural Framework in Social Media
- Social Impact and Consequences

1.2 THE NEED FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Humanity lives in the times of technology-enabled and mediated communications. Such has been the impact of intervention ushered in by social media that the very existence of humans has been influenced along multitudinous proportions, bringing about a fundamental change in the way a human views and interacts with fellow human beings. Be it individuals discussing their daily chores, the billion-dollar-grossing corporate behemoths wooing newer customers, powerful governments trying to popularise their developmental agendas or non-governmental stakeholders, all harp upon the social media's inherent mass following to get across their agendas and messages effortlessly.

The popularity and ubiquitous nature of social media is most evident in the cause-and-effect relationships it has with most important trigger points in contemporary history, which are sometimes positive and on other occasions entirely negative. If one traces the growth path of social media networks, they seem to have become one of the indispensable platforms for humans to express themselves without any effort. In this unit, we will look at different aspects of these platforms comprehensively, which include (a) how the concept of social media originated; (b) if and how social media has changed its form; (c) how its meaning and concept as a whole evolved historically; (d) what major factors have propelled social media to the position that it is found to be in today; and (e) why, more than the Facebooks and LinkedIns of today, it is important to understand how the concept of social media emerged from yesteryears to better appreciate the relevance of today's social media platforms according to contemporary society's needs and aspirations for a connected world.

As social media has evolved, it has changed the way people interact and communicate with each other, be they part of organisations, online and offline communities and societies or just individuals interacting among themselves. Contrary to popular perception, such social media interactions between virtual communities can take more than one form and happen over websites, chatting apps or over a particular app suite. Based on what you view as a social medium or

the features which you consider as enabling a socialising feature, a website may be considered under the ambit of social media or excluded from it. What is common though for all social media platforms is that they allow a common platform for the audience to interact and share emotions, and create user-generated content in one form or another.

1.3 WHO COINED THE TERM 'SOCIAL MEDIA'?

Though it is hard to point out exactly at what point and where the term 'social media' originated, there have been many claimants. The earliest reference to the term can be traced back to 1997, when the American entrepreneur, filmmaker and former politician Ted Leonsis, then an executive at American Online (AOL), showed interest on the need for a social media where users could 'entertain, communicate, and participate in a social environment'. He holds the view that social media concept came out of AOL as AOL Instant Messenger. He said, 'We started to talk about "social media", this idea that AOL was this mashup of technology and communications and media itself.'

Another person who claims the term's usage earlier than Leonsis is the photographer and researcher Darell Berry, who claims that he began using the term as early as in 1994 as he was developing a hybrid media environment called Cafe Matisse. Berry conceptualised a physical space in Tokyo where participants engaged with computers, cameras, barcode scanners, etc. to engage with virtual reality. He wrote a paper in 1995 on 'social media spaces', detailing how the internet and real world could interact in a hybrid space and how the internet could go beyond simply being a repository of static files.

The technology writer and analyst Chris Shipley is another person who makes claims to have invented the term 'social media. She organised the first-ever social media conference BlogOn at the University of California at Berkeley in 2005. Without making a definitive claim of being the originator of the term, she told a *Forbes* reporter that she started using the term in 2004 while popularising the BlogOn event. She said: 'I don't claim [the] first use necessarily, although I don't recall the phrase in use prior to that time.'

Tina Sharkey, entrepreneur and investor based out of US, and a former executive at iVillage and AOL, is also credited popularising the term so much so that she claims in her bio-data that 'in 1995, [she] coined the phrase "Social Media" as co-founder and Chief Community Architect of iVillage.com.' Sharkey says that she owns the domain www.socialmedia.com, which she registered in 1999. In some tech circles, she is considered as one of the first ones who used the term refers to the newly emerging 'social' forms of online media.

1.4 WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA, AND WHAT IS NOT

With the availability of smartphones to a wide audience, dialogic transmission systems have allowed many-to-many communication systems to thrive under the ambit of social networking platforms. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, social media includes 'forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social

networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)'. Creating, sharing and exchanging information in virtual communities and networks comes across as one of the major characteristics of a social-networking platform. This often involves cultivation of a productive relationship among the communicating individuals in order to meet a common goal. At the core of all social media interactions is the element of collaboration to meet common ends. The platforms on which these activities are carried out include microblogging sites, online forums, wikis, bookmarking sites and social-curation sites. With the advent of data networks and ease of accessibility across the globe, social media has spread its reach far and wide and has come to occupy the widest possible connotations. Social media has kept pace with the ever-evolving society and its need to provide personalised content based on one's preferences and needs. With the emergence of artificial intelligence being used in social media, the visibility of social media has literally spanned everywhere with real-time impact.

In this background, it is important to understand and distinguish between what is social media and what is not. A sweeping generalisation notwithstanding, many forms of communication are often misunderstood to be forms of social media, which needs clarification. Social media needs to include the following components: online communication through the medium of internet and user-generated multimedia content. What this means is the typical websites and blogs which are often considered as social media stand excluded, as only some users interact in it.

Various scholar and practitioners have made attempts to define what constitutes social media and what does not, and, in this endeavour, the following 13 entities have been identified as falling within the broad ambit of a social media platform:

- Blogs (Examples: Boing Boing @ www.boingboing.net, Medium @ www.medium.net)
- Business networks (LinkedIn @ www.linkedin.com, Xing @ www.xing.com)
- Collaborative projects (Wikipedia @ www.wikipedia.org, Mozilla @ www.mozilla.org)
- Enterprise social networks (Yammer @ www.yammer.com, Socialcast @ www.socialcast.com)
- Forums (Gaia Online @ www.gaiaonline.com, IGN Boards @ www.ign.com/boards)
- Microblogs (Twitter @ www.twitter.com, Tumblr @ www.tumblr.com)
- Photo sharing (Flickr @ www.flickr.com, Photobucket @ www.photobucket.com)
- Products/services review (Amazon @ www.amazon.com, Elance @ www.elance.com)

- Social bookmarking (Delicious @ www.delicious.com, Pinterest @ www.pinterest.com)
- Social gaming (World of Warcraft @ www.warcarft.com, Mafia Wars @ www.mafiawars.com)
- Social networks (Facebook @ www.facebook.com, Google Plus @ www.plus.google.com
- Video sharing (YouTube @ www.youtube.com, Vimeo @ www.vimeo.com)
- Virtual worlds (Second Life @ www.secondlife.com, Twinity @ www.twinity.com)

In all these platforms, there are characteristics which commonly feature prominently and include:

1. User-generated content, which acts as the life-breath of a social media organism
2. The platform is generally maintained by an organisation, in which users register, create their profiles and connect with their peer groups based on like-mindedness and common interest areas
3. With such interconnected webs, networks are established over the platform in which users can share information, enjoy entertainment, using a full suite of multimedia, ideate and form opinions over trending topics.

1.5 EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Technology historians believe that the first, albeit rudimentary, example of social media was created by the US-government body Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET), which is also credited with developing the internet. In the late 1970s, it compiled a cultural exchange modicum of business ideas and communication around the principles of openness, collaboration, sharing, trust and ethics, commonly known as netiquettes. Soon, message forums started appearing with the development of bulletin board systems (BBS), with Compuserve, Prodigy and AOL emerging as the three biggest service providers in the domain of BBS. The ability of multiple users to be online simultaneously was boosted with the advent of the internet and modem technology. GeoCities, Classmates and Six Degrees figured among the earliest social-networking websites in the 1990s with profile creation and friend lists as features used by registered users. Though it is tempting to assume that likes, shares and filters features existed from time immemorial, it is intuitive to have a look at the social networks of the late 1990s to see their featureless platforms.

The real history of social media hence coincided with the emergence of the internet in the late 1990s. The emergence of blogging in 1990s also aided ushering in the age of social media. The remarkable idea that any commoner could go to the internet and express their emotions in words for the world to know became the remarkable spark that social media needed to bloom. Everybody having access to the

internet could write about what they were thinking, feeling and doing; more importantly, this was broadcasted to every other person in their network and know-how almost instantaneously. Though primitive social media did not involve two-way communication, later collaboration features, like responding to posts and sharing their experiences, started generating massive interest among like-minded people, and user started realising the great potential of the internet through collaborative platforms.

Let us take a look at major social-media platforms over the years.

Six Degrees, created by the serial American entrepreneur Andrew Weinreich, is often credited to be the first fully formed social media platform and is intelligently named after the 'six degrees of separation' theory, which states that no two persons in the world are separated by more than six degrees. The platform allowed people to create their profiles and personalise their experience through invites to their closed network of friends and colleagues. Officially launched in 1997, it was shut down in the early 2000s when it had a base of three million users.

The next big social media platform to capture the imagination of users and investors alike was **Friendster,** which was launched in 2002 and allowed users to establish contacts and save them as part of their network, much like Six Degrees. The differentiating aspect of Friendster was that it allowed users to share multimedia content, like photos, videos, leave messages and comment on their contacts' profiles. It became a huge success with 100 million active user base and evolved to become a gaming platform also to stay relevant in the multi-tasking environment in which it was present. It suspended all its services in 2015 and was officially closed in January 2019.

Concurrently, **Ryze,** which was founded in early 2001 by the investor and entrepreneur Adrian Scott to connect entrepreneurs and business professionals, gained prominence with over five lakh members registering on this platform all over the world. Though it lost out to LinkedIn in popularity and investment, it continues to be operational and offers both paid as well as free social-networking facilities. Ryze had a heavy influence on Friendster's operations, and found mentions in notable publications and journals, like Newsday, *Forbes, New York Times,* etc. on this count.

Hi5, founded in 2004, was one of the largest social media platforms during its heyday and figured third in the list of largest social platforms behind Facebook and MySpace in 2008. It came with many typical social platform features, like photo tagging, friend requests, user groups and status updates and evolved itself through many redeigns to cater to gaming and entertainment-oriented audiences. Due to its emphasis on social gaming, it has now been tagged as an online gaming site. Hi5 became one of the first social portals to give users the control of what others can see – users could opt to make their profiles public or restricted to only those who are in their networks. It also brought along Sociopath, a set of tools meant exclusively for game developers to bring their games to Hi5 platform. Hi5 also provided the facility for users to play games on the platform anonymously without having to register.

Orkut, a social-networking website founded in 2004, was designed to help users meet new and old friends and maintain existing relationships. Founded by a Google employee by the same name, it was one of the most widely used websites in India and Brazil in the 2000s, and its rich user interface significantly changed over time to provide value addition and impart positive user experience. Initially the platform allowed everyone to see every other person's profile and mark them a set of features (trustworthy, sexy, cool, etc.) on a scale of one to three, which then aggregated to mean certain behaviour analytics. A standout feature was the concept of communities in which like-minded people could join to share information. It have users the had option to share video links from YouTube, like any thread, start polls to evince interest topics, etc. Its competitors were Facebook, MySpace and Ning. The option to customise the look and feel of the website from a wide range of templates, along with easier navigation and video chats, enabled the user community to adopt the platform as one of their daily chores. It was shut down in 2014 due to lower user turnout, with Facebook outpacing Orkut as the preferred social media platform.

Bebo is a social-networking website launched in 2005, which was among the few platforms that allowed users to share their thoughts and media with their friends. Twitch, the streaming video platform owned by Amazon, bought Bebo in June 2019 and is still going strong. Starting out as a market leader in the UK and Ireland, first AOL bought Bebo, but it could not capitalise on its early growth trajectory. After coming out with Blab (a video messaging service), which quickly gathered millions of users but which also withered away equally quickly due to stagnancy, Bebo re-invented itself as a sports social platform but faced tough competition from dominant players like XSplit and OBS. Leagues and games based on a social platform turned out to be a lottery of sorts for Bebo, which then allowed Twitch to buy it in a strategic buyout.

MySpace was perhaps the most popular and influential in the earliest lot of social-networking websites. Launched on 1 August 2003, MySpace became the largest social media site in the world. Though it started as a mere file-storage platform, it transitioned to a social network platform in phases. Such a transformation ultimately contributed to its meteoric rise in popularity. Many conglomerates evinced interest in acquiring MySpace. Ultimately, it was bought by News Corp, the UK-based media conglomerate. After the sale, MySpace continued to grow and by 2009 became one of the most profitable social media sites to have ever been founded. But, Facebook's reach started to expand beyond its initial audience of college students and resultantly MySpace began to decline, and Facebook replaced it as the top-visited site sometime in 2008. Moreover, its site beame overloaded with ads due to its model of on-site advertisements as a result of an agreement with Google in 2010. This acted as a nuisance for visiting users, which made it difficult to be used effortlessly and resultantly its user base declined. Though it has declined to 4,153 rank in Alexa's most visited websites ranking, it is still up and running as a social media choice of some people.

1.6 STRUCTURAL CONSTITUENTS OF A SOCIAL MEDIA ENTITY

The evolution of large social networks online derives its success mostly from the power of people interacting with their peers in an online setting. Apart from providing a social setting for easy communication to private individuals, social networks have become a favourite ground of start-up companies as well as large organisations, offering their user base the promise of managing their own networks in a customised manner. Organisations often employ social media to leverage the entirety of knowledge contributions made by individual employees, who, in turn, foster and develop complex social interactions through online activities, such as blogging, discussion forums, knowledge-based wikis, etc. in the specific context of the sector their organisation operates in. Thus, one can deduce that social media has become an indispensable tool for individuals as well as organisations to establish a thriving and productive online community.

Though there have been numerous studies which discuss the contribution at the level of the individual who are the main drivers of social media networks (often called nodes), we investigate different dimensions of these dyadic interactions. In the whole networked approach, researchers and entrepreneurs characterise each peer-to-peer interaction as an edge in the complex network, which then adds on across multiple interactions to form a social network. The content of each such relationship may vary, but to understand the magnitude of different online social interactions, it is important to understand their contexts and behaviour patterns under certain buckets to derive what actually constitutes social media.

At the base of social media is its information system, called social media information system (SMIS), which supports the sharing of content among networks of stakeholders, which consists of social media providers, users and communities. Broadly, SMIS comprises of following components:

1. Hardware: cloud-based servers and racks, with end-user computing devices, like desktops, laptops, smartphones, tablets, etc.;
2. Software: web applications hosting the social media platform, database containing all user data and business logic codebase; for users, native application browsers and apps and host operating system configurations;
3. Data: content provided by the social platforms in terms of profiles, users, networks, communities, feeds, etc.; user-generated content, like posts, pictures and videos;
4. Procedures: protocols that run the social media platform as an integrated platform with best performance, usability, navigability and accessibility to a wide range of audience; and
5. People: individuals who network, collaborate and work on topics of key concern to the community as a whole.

The deficiencies of a static, non-interactive knowledge management systems (KMS), which was used to before social media became popular, led many firms to leverage the strength of social media in their organisation so as to facilitate cross-organisational interactions and knowledge exchange in a fluid environment. These prove to be effective in providing a collaborative space to provide the enterprise applications in a social-collaboration platform applicable for enterprise settings, such as blogs, communities, wikis, social bookmarking, etc. These have been adopted by diverse organisations. Emergence of such organisational micro-communities are maximally driven by individual contributions, and thus it is important to note what factors contribute towards the establishment of a thriving community. As a primary component of their social media strategy, many organisations implement some variation of an employee forum where employees may post their queries detailing their concerns or some sort of information which they require. The fellow employees can then respond to such queries which can be considered a microcosm of a social media platform at work.

The functional building blocks of social media help it sustain and propel itself to occupy the mainstream discussion. This framework constitute seven main building blocks which define a platform as social media. These blocks are explained below:

1. *Identity:* it is the most basic functional block of social media. It refers to the identity-related information provided by users, such as name, age, gender, profession and location, which helps portray users in certain ways to other users or the software backbone of the medium.
2. Conversations: this relates to how different users and communities converse with each other and incorporates the patterns generated out of such data. These conversations happen for certain reasons – such as professional bonds, to gather knowledge, have personal development, etc.
3. *Sharing:* social media as a platform facilitates informed communication among people and exchange through sharing. Humans now distribute and receive more content in less time than all of humanity has done previously. Sharing content conspicuously, which is intended at certain groups of people either explicitly, though tagging, or implicitly is an essential feature of social media.
4. *Presence:* through various social media features, the presence block refers to the accessibility of which you can know where others are, virtually and/or physically, through status updates, check-ins or even by interpreting patterns in timeline feeds. This social media building block has benefited from the world's hyper-connectivity and bridged the gap between virtual and physical realities.
5. *Relationships:* this represents connection between users in a social network through establishment of networks, communities and groups among friends for performing various actions.

6. *Reputation:* at the core, it is a sense of identifying the status of others and yourself in a social network. It is defined by trust users have in their networks of friends.

7. *Groups:* this refers to the communities and sub-communities that exist on a social media platform. As your network becomes bigger with friends, followers and contacts, it becomes necessary to sort them into different groups or communities. This is exemplified in Twitter's lists and Facebook's public, private and secret groups.

1.7 THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

From the perspective of people-to-people relationships, social media platforms facilitate certain interaction patterns. These need to be understood in order to fully realise the impact that such platforms can have in an individual's life and how they win over newer audiences from newer population groups. These patterns include:

1. *Ease of Connectivity:* the reason why social media emerged was to connect distant people connect with each other, thus bringing internet users together. Before this idea developed, the internet was just a platform to browse and access information individually, with not much collaboration happening at a significant scale. This internet model was antithetical to the innate need for humans to connect. Social media provides a platform for users to keep in touch with friends, family, brands, groups and influencers all around the world. The ease of connectivity figures among the core features of top social media platforms, be it Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Instagram, though the mode of getting connected could be different. The express need for seamless navigation, with little effort required for sign up, using latest technology features like single sign on (SSO), mobile number validation using in-app OTP, etc. have resulted in an enormous user group getting signed up, logging in and beginning to form their friend circles to start processes of online socialisation. No wonder that the ease of access features among the bare minimum features in all social media behemoths, with users requiring very little effort to register and start connecting.

2. *Profile Customisation:* the power of need-based customisation is one of the biggest lures social media offers to its large user base. This is facilitated using memes, filters, lenses, etc. and generally attracts a younger audience. Moving away from the avatar-only profile images, social media platforms now revolve around user-generated content wherein users can post their images, videos, memes, etc. This covers a wide range of topics from their personal and professional lives, achievements, travels, eating habits, etc. Though this has privacy as one of the core concerns, that takes a backseat when we talk social media. The contemporary trend on this line is live videos, with each platform providing arena for users to live-stream their videos and connect with friends and followers instantly and simultaneously. Facebook Live,

Instagram Live, Snapchat and Twitter Periscope are some of the cases in point. More a social platform gives users the power to customise, more are they attracted by its charm. Text, images, videos and other forms of content need to be seen through these special filters for users to have an exciting time while using the platform.

3. *Followers:* when users follow groups, pages and lists, it provides an indicative list of their interests, habit patterns and psychology of likes and dislikes. Platforms like Instagram revel in creating such a scenario, giving easy access to millions of people all over the world. Social media has made it easy to build a strong network on the platform by allowing users to follow each other or communities. With user-generated content being the ultimate bedrock of any platform, it is users and their relationships which act as building blocks for creating a robust platform, facilitating interactions, information exchange and maintaining seamless connectivity. In fact, most social media platforms have become news aggregating platforms, thus allowing organisations and brands to create dedicated followers.

4. *Multi-Device Scenario:* with users using more than one device to access social media platforms, the social media app as well as the content in them are formatted in a way which resembles the choices and user interaction patterns through each device type. Intelligent social media networks put to use the features of underlying operating system and device to good use and not be platform specific. Networking platforms understand user requirements and serve features and content according to their needs, desires, search history and interest topics.

5. *Collaborative Spaces:* no social media platform can be as powerful as a melange of connected applications. Social media platforms prefer organic user growth through both inbound and outbound content sharing, which is that social media apps offer APIs for websites and other apps so that content could be shared socially from where the user is reading the content and at the same time content could be shared across social media apps. It enhances a social media app's popularity and increases user adoption. With artificial intelligence and machine learning increasing in popularity, social media platforms use algorithms to serve content intelligently, with more deep searches and drill down content precision using in-built as well as third-party apps.

6. *Privacy and Security:* as much as social media revolves around interaction, without the proper level of privacy and security, lines can be crossed. If privacy settings are not configured properly, users may end up losing their personal information to snoopers and other users with wrong motives. Social media is thus vying to provide advanced levels of privacy and security to maintain user trust and prevent its breach at all cost. This is a critical factor in becoming a platform of repute: even a small breach can destroy reputation and gaining that back becomes a Herculean task afterwards.

7. *Notifications and Feeds:* keeping the individual user at the centre of its activity, a social media platform tries to find effective ways in which it can capture the activities of the user and their networks to create a feed of content. The timeline feed can be called the most defining feature of a social media platform, whose effectiveness and acceptability of whose logic decide the future of the platform. It allows for an easy discovery of other users' content. Nowadays, all social media apps generate a constant flow of relevant content, including photos, videos and articles to enhance discovery and interaction among users. This gives users a sense of purpose to connect with fellow users and express their opinions and views.

Social media is a great adaptive machine – in the sense that it is quick to respond to the end-user's expectations. With big-tech companies involved in running the show, the individual user is the focus of consistent application updates with respect to fresh user interface, additional functionalities, seamless integration with other platforms, etc. One could conclude that the individual is the producer as well as the consumer of social media. Even where the footprint of large organisations in producing and pushing content is becoming overwhelming, the individual continues to play a significant role in the success of a social media platform.

Concepts and Architectural Framework in Social Media

Analytics lie at the heart of every major social media platform, through which businesses and firms closely monitor the performance of social media posts and accordingly adjust their strategy. With the advent of individuals as social media influencers, the world of analytics has opened up to them as well. This has come in handy to improve other areas of business operations as well, such as response rates, bounce rates, session duration, etc. Through using the right tools provided by social media companies as well as third-party developers, analytical tools help corporates to quickly identify customer-service issues and take action and individual influencers to measure the impact of their interventions. The corporates and influencers, thus, can find inefficiencies in their strategies and shift resources to make sure all target areas and audience segments are covered comprehensively.

Organisations try to ensure that there is a presence of a dedicated online community that simply develops in a manner which is both direct as well as organic. This enables real-time interaction systems getting populated with the desired user base. This ability to perform iterative querying for information, especially when the user is unsure of where to search for the answer for his/her queries. The additional ability to have purely social interactions that may not be directly related to work within an organisation's network is also provided for in a social media platform of an organisation. Its examples include information on weather, sports, etc.

Researchers have seen how structural network theories of embedded relationships in society apply also for online communities because of similarities between both the contextual settings. More specifically,

there are implications of the 19th-century German sociologist Georg Simmel's theory of micro-communities, where triadic embedding is known to influence dyadic relationships in organisational social media as well as community interactions in personal settings. In his theory on social geometry, Simmel argued that in a relationship between two people (dyadic), both retain their individuality. However, in a relationship among three people (triadic), two people tend to make a dyad within the triad and edge out one individual. He argued that the larger the group, the better are the chances of an individual to retain their individuality even if the individual grows isolated and segmented. Researchers have found these trends to be present among online communities, especially those within organisations.

Social media is used by companies widely today to capture a greater market share and dedicated audiences. Internet bots have been developed, which facilitate social media marketing. Bots are automated programs that run over the internet to identify human behaviour and take decisions accordingly. Chatbots and social bots are programmed to mimic natural human interactions, such as liking, commenting, following and unfollowing on social media platforms. This has resultantly created a new industry of bot providers, which has caused analytical crisis in the marketing industry so much so that it is often difficult to differentiate between human interactions and automated bot interactions on social media. This has resulted in a digital cannibalism, with some bots violating the terms of use on many social mediums, which can result in wrong profiles being taken down and banned.

1.8 SOCIAL IMPACT AND CONSEQUENCES

Social media is used the world over by different organisations, entities individuals for their own specific purposes, each deriving their purposes from social media interactions. Businesses use social media widely to establish communication with clients about sales and promotions and embracing change as per the trend in the market as exemplified by social media behaviour. These reactions come in handy in monitoring how the online population actually receives products and helps organisations get critical feedback about their products. This also helps them measure return on investment and improvement areas as far as public engagement is concerned.

Social media mining is a technique used by corporates to extract data from the social media behaviour, analyse it for determining patterns based on data collected from people's activities on different platforms. This primarily involves analysing and extracting actionable patterns from data collected from people's activities on social media. A prime example for this adaptability by companies is the customised email templates that Gmail provides as autocomplete when you write emails, which is based on the actions that Google has noticed over a period of time. Google tacks your online behaviour and mines such data to serve you targeted advertisements in Google suite of products, like Google Search, Gmail, YouTube, etc. However, this practice typically involves the question of ethics and law as to how much user data a social media behemoth can track. This leads to greater questions of privacy and surveillance. Some social media outlets have added capture time and geotagging that helps provide information

about the context of the data as well as making their data more accurate. These practices have led to debates on the ethical use of big data by corporates.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Social media has come to occupy a major portion of our lives, and with the kind of evolution sphere that it has undertaken, it is no surprise that it is already ruling the roost. According to the *Global Digital Report 2019* from the social media agency We Are Social, the total number of active social media users worldwide in 2019 has hit approximately 3.5 billion, which is up nine per cent year-on-year.

For many more years to come, it will continue to revolutionise the ways humans interact with one another. Though the source of the concept of social media is always a matter of discussion, it has been dependent heavily on the way the internet and smartphones have evolved. With the next technological disruption just round the corner due to the maturing of artificial intelligence, machine learning and robotics, social media has intelligently stormed the initial hiccups and provides a customised, flexible version, all for free.

Social media has panned out in ways seldom imagined even by its founders. Sensing the huge user base, it opened its doors for businesses to tap on the power of huge audience, turning it into a potential demand aggregation platform. Businesses have started including social media as one of their core components in digital branding and paid marketing. Social media's list of algorithms scan the platform for trends, serve content dynamically based on users' interests and use user-generated content to build on a large repository of information for further big data analytics and predictive analysis, which can be used by businesses to market their products and services. According to PricewaterhouseCooper, social networks have emerged as the biggest source of inspiration for consumer purchases with 37 per cent of consumers finding purchase inspiration through these channels. Global social media advertising spending was projected to hit $333.25 billion in 2019. Google, Facebook and Alibaba are the top three platforms accounting for almost 45 per cent of this advertising market.

Social media, thus, continues to be an undeniable part of our existence and continues to evolve and disrupt our lives in ways nobody ever imagined.

1.10 FURTHER READING

Web Resources

1. *Global Digital Report 2019:* https://wearesocial.com/global-digital-report-2019.
2. 'Digital Ad Spending': https://www.emarketer.com/content/global-digital-ad-spending-2019.
3. 'A Brief History of Facebook': https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2007/jul/25/media.newmedia.

4. ‘Social Media Use in 2018’: https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018.
5. ‘How Facebook has Changed Computing’: https://www.wired.com/story/how-facebook-has-changed-computing.
6. ‘Inside the Weird, and Booming, Industry of Online Influence’: https://www.wired.com/story/inside-the-industry-social-media-influence.
7. *Social Media Spaces:* http://www.ku24.com/~darrell/hybrid1.html.

Books

1. *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* Author: José van DijckPublisher: Oxford University Press
2. *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* Authors: Asa Briggs and Peter BurkePublisher: Polity
3. Social Media in the Digital Age: History, Ethics, and Professional Uses Author: Rebecca Coates NeePublisher: Cognella Academic Publishing

UNIT : 2 SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE WORLD AND INDIA

:: STRUCTURE::

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Objectives

2.2 Market Size and Global Outlook

2.3 Regional Variations

2.4 Future of Social Media Marketing

2.5 Impact on Human Behaviour

2.6 Vernacular Works in India

2.7 Russia and China: The Major Outliers

2.8 Social Media and Democratic Digitalisation

2.9 Conclusion

2.10 Reference

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media has become so ubiquitous today that it seems impossible to imagine life without it. It has become part and parcel of an average human's life, so much so that it is now a part of their daily routine to browse through Facebook feeds and read trending tweets without which their day seems incomplete and unaccomplished. The hegemony of social-networking platforms in the internet ecosystem is so well established that virtually the top five social platforms (by usage) do not change much year-on-year, though there is considerable variation across nations and demographics. Therefore, it becomes essential to study how social networks are targeted at specific group of users and how they influence these users in their daily lives.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

This chapter explains major trends in the social media landscape in the major global regions, with a particular emphasis on India. We will study how regional variations in demographics and user preferences drive social media platforms and content marketing agencies to change their strategies. Since social media has stabilised as a concept and is no more a new idea, major territories in the world have developed their own peculiar features, allowing for the accommodation of the preferences of regional users. In this unit, we will identify these patterns and the reasons for the occurrence of these patterns.

On the Completion of This Unit, You Will be Able to:

- Understand the vast expanse of the social media paradigm and revenue it commands

- Decipher how the world is divided into three major regions in this paradigm
- Understand the peculiarities of the Indian social media scene
- Understand how stakeholders try to influence public opinion using social media
- Contemplate on the future of social media marketing

Index of Unit Contents

- **Market Size and Global Outlook**
- **2.3 REGIONAL VARIATIONS**
- **2.4 FUTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**
- **2.5 IMPACT ON HUMAN BEHAVIOUR**
- **Indian Scenario**
- **Vernacular Works in India**
- **2.7 RUSSIA AND CHINA: THE MAJOR OUTLIERS**
- **2.8 SOCIAL MEDIA AND DEMOCRATIC DIGITALISATION**

2.2 MARKET SIZE AND GLOBAL OUTLOOK

In the world of social media, the pace of change has always been hectic. Privacy and integrity concerns aside, social media is forever offering huge advantages and better meaningful ways of engagement. New formats have arisen in contemporary times to get connected and share content from Instagram stories and tweets to one-to-one messaging. This has resulted in a completely new social paradigm, re-inventing itself every few years, with leading corporates already finding ways to adapt to such brisk changes. With customers demanding more value in exchange for time and information they provide to brands on social media, they are ready to part ways with some of their privacy to obtain an authentic and 'social' experience. With corporates also looking at such interactions as new prospects for business, they try to evolve newer and clever social marketing exercises and plans within the available time and budgetary constraints. This also involves taking the huge customer base into confidence and convincing them about the return on investment as a result of social media's marketing platform. Based on how the trust factor in social media pans out, the stories and content platforms developed around social media is a huge opportunity for corporates and individuals alike to gauge the revolution based on digital information. Using the huge opportunities provided by the advent of technologies, customers have started demanding more one-to-one social experiences, personalised according to their taste and behaviour. New formats, challenges and ways of engaging make the contemporary era an exciting time to work in social media, which is filled with both pitfalls and opportunities.

In order to understand how important social media has become, it is important to know a few facts about it to fully appreciate the breadth and depth of its reach globally and by regions specifically. We discuss

a synoptic view of the latest trends which make social media the 'in-thing' and consider what makes it click, especially when there is a deluge of newer social media ventures all over the world. These trends also make it specific as well as actionable for corporates to see how banking on social media for their businesses is a winning proposition: they realise that the greater they engage their end users through social media, the better their business prospects become. These then become guidelines for other followers in the corporate sectors to adopt and correspondingly benefit.

The size and reach of social media globally tells a story of dominance and high impact. Out of the estimated 4.39 billion internet users in 2019, a whopping 3.48 billion are social media users. With 288 million users getting added over and above the 2018 figures, this strong social media community has reached almost 45 per cent of the global population. However, the real story lies in the fact that out of this figure of social media users, a staggering 3.26 billion follow social media on mobile devices, indicating how the smartphone boom of the 2000s has translated into a social media thrust that was never seen before.

This huge number has obviously attracted big money as well. The global social media market was valued around $33.8 billion in 2017, with North America sharing the largest pie in it as almost one-third of value accruing from this geographical region. Though sponsored media content have started to be in vogue globally as well as in India, paid ads as the support structure for making free content available on social media is likely to be the next big thing in the social media business. Facebook and Google are the pioneers of this type of advertising-business model. They have already started reaping benefits in terms of meeting their ever-increasing revenue targets. Hence, the reach of social media is now proportional to the funds it attracts as investment and revenue. At the same time, the brand or the promoter can invest in their social media content and be assured to reach out to the most appropriate audience, from which they are most likely to get maximum business.

2.3 REGIONAL VARIATIONS

It should be noted that the numbers behind the stupendous growth of social media after mobile devices became popular do not capture the entire story. The social media reach is still uneven, with North and South Americas, Oceania and Asia providing the maximum share of social media users, and the penetration rates in Africa still being low. This indicates that a major chunk of global populace is out of the reach of social media, thus negating the very aspect of democratisation once popularised by social media itself. Another factor one should consider while capturing global trends in the popularity of social media is that there an increase in time spent by people online. The 2019 Global Web Index report on social media shows that an average social person spends two hours and 15 minutes everyday on social media, which roughly is one-third of their total internet time. This is a significant percentage. Predictably, this figure too shows regional variations, indicating that users in Japan spend only 36 minutes on social media daily while Filipinos spend an

astonishing four hours. Moreover, Facebook continues to be the most preferred social media platform among users in spite of many newer challenges emerging to its supremacy. YouTube, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger come next in the list with an equally impressive user base. Twitter and Instagram also feature among the robust performing social media platforms, with both posting impressive revenue figures as well as monthly active users (MAU), indicating that both these platforms have not lost any vigour despite existing for many years now. Snapchat's 306.5 million user base, though slightly declining in 2019, is strong enough to post a positive revenue model for the booming niche segment that it still holds among a section of social media users.

According to Pew Research Centre's 2018 report on social media outlook, social networking websites continue to rise stupendously in developing regions of the world, whereas its adoption has plateaued in developed countries. The report notes that given the proliferation of smartphones and cheap internet being made available in developing nations, especially India, the social media use is fast approaching the number as noticed in the developed regions of the world and upper bounds of internet penetrations as well. This, in turn, has reduced the digital divide which was apparent a decade earlier. Interestingly, the report notes that people in developing nations are more likely to use social media platforms to connect with each other than those in developed nations.

Even within countries, the digital divide exists: it is not necessary that a country which is well connected to the internet needs to be connected socially too. Gender, age, income and education are the biggest qualifying criteria when it comes to people using social media effectively to network and share information with their peers. Sub-Saharan Africa and India still lag far behind, with only one in four citizens reporting internet use. This is largely an economic story, with richer countries more likely to be connected with the internet and hence to social media than the poor countries, whose basic necessities itself have remained unfulfilled. The Pew report notes that Germany though is an exception to all these rules. In an economy where almost 87 per cent populace uses the internet, less than half actively use social media.

2.4 FUTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Many analysts argue that global social media behemoths have already reached a growth plateau, with many even starting to falter from their peak positions in terms of revenue generation targets and MAUs figures. This could result in consolidation in the social media industry through mergers and acquisitions. Analysts expect big innovation in the information revolution brought about by the presence of such behemoths and the emerging consolidation, especially in the fields of big data analytics and data science. Already companies like Facebook and Google have made big data analysis a big part of real-time intervention they make on their platforms to provide users the best experience customised according to their search behaviour and online activities. Social media companies realise that changes in the experience of people in social media need to be captured impromptu,

with a new series of features made available to users in a short span of time.

This expectation requires them to decide how they look at change fundamentally and make adaptations and quick adjustments and cater to branding companies which treat marketing as a core service to keep their businesses viable to their end customers. Given that almost all of the marketing community is continually invested in search traffic behaviour analysis, social media analysis offers them new challenges given the multiplicity of platforms available. With multimedia content hitting the peak in terms of acceptability among end users, Instagram and Pinterest have slowly but surely started taking away the market share enjoyed by Facebook as a monopoly. Users should always have content aplenty to view, share and link from a brand's websites. Multimedia content is going to drive the future, and for a content marketeer it becomes advantageous to invest in the platforms which are more likely to drive the internet traffic in near future. This becomes a useful predictor of how much traffic comes to a brand's website from social media and helps in changing the strategy accordingly.

Being responsive to users' needs and offering them relevant promotions and content usually are the top parameters which influence a social media platform's standing among the audience in a highly competitive arena. These parameters, which are driven by big-data analysis, influence in a deterministic manner the way social users engage with the platform and businesses there, thus increasing the chances of lead conversion for brands. This is especially true of small businesses, which can focus on one social media platform that suits them best and then follow their objectives in the platform rigorously for positive results.

Video content marketing and users' preference for customisable features, which leave power in their hands, are going to determine the future of social media. With voice based control becoming the next big thing on the internet, social media players are moving in big way to integrate technology with their platforms' capabilities to make such features seamlessly available to users. This will allow a further refining in the content served to individual users. Augmented reality is also going to become popular in future, with companies becoming ready to acquire and serve future customers.

A brand's personality defines its image and the way it projects itself on social media among its direct and organic audience groups belonging to different segments. The basic strategy for corporates is that the portrayal their brands on social media should convert into effective business with acquisition of new customers. On the other hand, potential customers' basic expectation from the brands on social media is that they should be honest, friendly and helpful. A company unbeknownst to such parameters is considered socially illiterate in today's parlance and can never vie for its customer base to expand beyond a certain organic limit.

2.5 IMPACT ON HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Social media has brought about a revolution of sorts when it comes to interpersonal communication, having made a huge impact in the lives of millions and how they interact with each other. Social media has brought together people from far and wide around the globe, and expanded the horizon of ideas and the responses to them. It, surely, has made an impact – positive or negative – on every social media user. This technology-enabled intervention in human life has now gripped about 45 per cent of the global populace under its charm and left a lasting impression on their lives.

Observers see that social media has instilled creativity in many users and allowed even the most introvert to come out of their comfort zones by providing them a platform to interact and share experiences. It has, thus, brought about the concept of global village in the truest sense of the term. Psychologists believe that online social connections have become the most effective way to develop a person's personality and give everybody a platform to put forth their ideas without any fear or favour. Overriding the need for face-to-face interactions, social media has made it possible for people to bridge the physical boundaries to stay connected in real time and helped innumerable businesses to manage and maintain their clients better.

Corporates have also come to realise the power of social media as an aggregator of user demands and, thus, used it to full advantage to congregate and influence user behaviour, especially in scenarios of competing interests. For corporates to be successful, social media have emerged as a quintessential tool to influence users to buy and follow brands and their activities. Digital marketing strategy is an important indicator of the brand's personality and potential to generate a ripple effect. Real-time interactions between potential customers and brands on social media has resulted in a win-win situation. Posting relevant and interesting content on social media has become sine qua non for corporates to keep their end audience engaged, thus resonating with the interests of the target audience. Else, they risk losing customers more than gaining them.

It should also be noted that cyberbullying and overuse of social media and their resultant side effects – such as insomnia, violent social games, rumour mongering and the rise of overall negative environment through the propagation of fake news – have become a menace. Even then, this should not stop people from exploring social media's capabilities further in order to benefit from its controlled usage.

Indian Scenario

India has traditionally been seen by social media ventures as a market full of huge opportunities. Around 462 million of India's 1.3 billion people have access to the internet, marking almost 35 per cent of the population connected with the online world. Though this makes India the second largest population having internet access (behind China), cheaper mobile data plans and affordable pricing of smartphones have brought about a revolution in internet reach and access, which has further propelled the social media storm in the country. Indian market has been growing by more than 30 per cent year-on-year in terms of internet access, which is only slated to increase with more and more of the Indian population wanting to catch onto the social media

bandwagon. Most of the social media behemoths, including Facebook and Google, are targeting rural India's new mobile users as well, as they form a ripe customer base for social media and 'agents' for further propagation of their platforms. Hence, they have been quite aggressive in luring this segment of India relentlessly through various campaigns, so as to be sure to increase the social media population from the current 260 million to a sizeable number in years to come.

According to PricewaterhouseCooper's report 'Perspectives from the Global Entertainment and Media Outlook 2019–2023', strong growth in digital segments is primarily driven by huge spending undertaken by India's growing middle class and young population, which is still smaller compared to other Asian giants, like China and Japan. But, with the spending in entertainment and media sectors slated to grow at the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10 per cent annually in the defined period, India is set to narrow the gap with China and thee rest of the world, which is likely to grow at a CAGR of five per cent. Explosive growth in the internet advertising (21 per cent), video games (17 per cent) and internet access (15 per cent) are quoted as the major resource spending sectors in an increasingly digitally driven economy in India, which in turn will contribute with more people using social media to propel their business and personal interests. Thus, essentially India is slated to outpace both its peer Asia-Pacific region as well as the global scenario in years to come, with its spending share in entertainment and media sector increasing from 4.9 per cent in 2013 to 6.5 per cent in 2018.

We should note the rise and importance of over-the-top (OTT) video segment both globally as well in India, which is led by giants like Netflix and Amazon Prime. It is growing rapidly and is likely to shake up the media industry the world over. It should be noted that the OTT segment has a symbiotic relationship with social media, where small players have tapped social media first and then moved to established OTT platforms and bigger players always use social media to convert its audience to their OTT platforms.

Within the social media space in India, Facebook continues to be the biggest and most rapidly growing network in India with approximately 300 million users. In addition, there are more than 30 million Twitter accounts. In such a rapidly evolving digital landscape, social media platforms also seek to evolve further in order to serve such a huge opportunity market that India is. Analysts believe that established social media players and content marketing agencies are working on the following ideas to consolidate their hold in India further:

1. One size does not fit all. Social media behemoths have realised that they should have different strategy for each market, so that both individuals and their individual geographical markets make sense to present different options within their global business models. For example, they divide users into tiers within a territory and offer matching services accordingly in terms of affordability and need. When it comes to consolidation within these identified territories and tiers within

them, social media companies expect differential rates of growth.

2. The number of consumer touch points is rapidly expanding along multiple verticals. With social media experiences becoming more and more personal, consumer gratification is becoming increasingly instantaneous and far-reaching in impact. Content creators and distributors have to come up with new ways of engaging the audience using technology-enabled solutions, so that consumers are pointed towards the purchase avenues as quickly and as intuitively as possible. Influencers are being heavily used to convince the general mass in adopting the unknown realm. Voice is increasingly becoming the next big thing in the social media segment, with smart speakers being pushed by different platforms, like Alexa, Echo, etc.

3. Technological innovations have facilitated the introduction of a new era of personalised computing, with all major companies leveraging artificial intelligence and machine learning's ability to understand and intelligently predict people's individual taste and consumption patterns to offer personalised content suitable according to their browsing habits. With 5G and 6G in the horizon, data-intensive applications, ultra-HD video streaming and online gaming platforms are no longer only accessible to the elite in the internet club. Virtual- and augmented-reality segments are also being viewed as one of the fastest growing sectors which is going to catch people's attention very quickly in terms of both growth and scale. Social media players are likely to use these innovations before anyone else does that.

4. Trust in the social media's data and privacy regulations is going to be a pivotal consideration for their future growth. The European Union has already implemented the strict General Data Protection Regulation. Privacy laws are being tightened all around the globe. In the race to be at the top, collecting personal data for customised experience becomes a standard practice of social media platforms. With consumers themselves being at the centre of this mammoth data-collection exercise – which is then analysed using big-data algorithms, churning out beautiful workflows, each adapted according to the customer's needs and requirements – maintaining a fool-proof mechanism to store all the critical personal information away from the prying eyes of the hacker community is going to be an enviable challenge for most of the social tech giants, including the likes of Google and Facebook.

2.6 VERNACULAR WORKS IN INDIA

Indian social media habits have certain unique trends seldom found in other parts of the world. In India, social media is constantly in a state of flux, with a number of variables like the size of population, varied user interests and their online behaviour, requirements of Indian businesses and the size of the economy contextualised in the country-

specific scenario. Users and corporates are tapping into the power of social media to reap huge benefits. Even the social media behemoths have tailored their offerings according to Indian market and audience and come to dominate the everyday life of Indians.

The growth of vernacular user-generated content is a significant contributory factor to the huge demand for social media platforms in the Indian market. With people preferring to access and share content in the language they understand, social media has become a centralised platform for people to read and share content in their own language. These platforms have intelligently adapted by catering to specific needs and desires of regional audiences by establishing personalised feeds in vernacular languages. Though a late entrant in the social media space in India, this has catapulted Facebook to reach out to a large section of the Indian populace, including first-time, young internet users.

If Facebook is a case in point for witnessing unprecedented growth, Orkut is an example of failure. In fact, Facebook's rise to the top in India coincided with the fall of Google-owned Orkut. The growth of low-cost internet and smartphone boom was anticipated by by Facebook with precision, which made its platform mobile friendly right from the start. In terms of features, Facebook has evolved and adapted itself to Indian community much better than Orkut could do. The latter's unimpressive user interface and less powerful customisation options made Orkut users to to move to Facebook as soon as it arrived in India. Personalised newsfeeds, like options and notification feature of Facebook captured the public imagination like no other social platform had been able to do in India. In this sense, Facebook can be considered the moving force behind popularising the concept of social media in the country.

Once Facebook opened up the space, it was much easier for other start-ups and established players to find their nook in India. For example, Twitter took no time to arrive in India. Recognising the powerful user base it built up so quickly its power of influencing user behaviour, the Indian government also started employing this platform to reach out to a large section of users instantly. The popularity of social media, especially Twitter, hit the peak when various government ministries and departments started reaching out to their target audiences over Twitter, Google Hangouts session, Facebook and YouTube, live streaming the government's initiatives and, thus, bringing a digitally empowered citizenry at par with its counterpart in the West.

YouTube has also joined the bandwagon of Indianising its content by investing in regional language content creation, networking and community building. With incredible viewership from Tier II and Tier III cities forming a major chunk of its 265-million monthly active users on YouTube, the platform serves video content customised according to local demands, based on user preferences and choices. The user-generated English-speaking courses, educational material on science and maths, preparatory material for government examinations garnering most views, YouTube has emerged as one of the largest supplementary learning platform for users across India.

On the other hand, OTT apps – like Hotstar, Amazon Prime and Netflix – sensing the insatiable demand for video content among Indians, have established a notable presence. In November 2018, Hotstar occupied more than one-third (40 per cent) of market share among active users, with Netflix and Amazon Prime lagging behind in single digits. However, with aggressive marketing and clever use of social media to promote their content, both Netflix and Amazon Prime improved their market share considerably in 2019. One of the major reasons for Hotstar's stupendous success is the low-cost and vernacular content options, coupled with cheaper internet access. Both Amazon Prime and Netflix soon realised this aspect and joined the bandwagon with localised content on their platforms.

2.7 RUSSIA AND CHINA: THE MAJOR OUTLIERS

In line with their style of governance, Russia and China have allowed a tightly controlled and regulation-laden social media scenario to emerge in their respective countries, where they use social media platforms to sway opinions according to their requirements and portray their decisions in a better light to the outside world.

The Russian Experience

Russia has the largest internet population for any country in Europe, with around 110 million internet users reported in June 2017. No wonder, it accounts for the sixth largest internet user base in the world, preceded by China, India, the US, Brazil and Japan. In terms of social media patterns, the following major trends can be observed:

- VK (or VKontakte) is by far Russia's largest social network, with 46.6 million unique monthly viewers (mainly teens) using it. It was founded in 2006. It is a multi-lingual platform and is available in English as well, but it is largely used in Russian. In 2019, it launched a dating variant Lovina.
- Moi Mir is a social-networking site which is an extension of the email provider Mail.ru. Interestingly, Moi Mir is quickly developing into a social hub, with average monthly users of 25 million in 2019. This shows how untapped source Russia is for the social media bigwigs.
- OK.ru (or Odnoklassniki) a big competitor to VKontakte and is targeted at youth to keep in touch with old classmates. The site has over 31.5 million viewers per month in 2019, 69 per cent of whom are women. It is popular in Russia as well as former Soviet constituents.
- Among the global big players, Twitter is the most popular social media platform in Russia. It is the sixth most popular social-networking site in Russia, and got about 7.7 million visitors a month in 2019.
- YouTube is also a popular video-streaming site in Russia, but is regularly monitored for content which may be blocked in the Russian society. It is constantly under the threat of being blocked by authorities. The Russian alternative, Rutube, features Russian-language content, includes videos created by private individuals and licensed programming from

entertainment companies that are hosted directly on Rutube and also includes videos that have been viewed on Facebook.

- In the domain of business-related social media, LinkedIn had a decent presence in Russia till 2016 when it was blocked because of a local law which required the data of Russian citizens to be stored in local servers. LinkedIn was found of violating the local data storage laws. With a growing user base of 6 million, LinkedIn had its plug pulled as it refused to comply with the local laws of Russia. It remains blocked since then.
- Pinterest has yet to launch a Russian language version, and in the meantime Russian competitor Pinme was launched to fill the gap in the market. As of August 2017, Pinme had 2.9 million monthly visitors.
- Blogging is popular in Russia. However, a popular blogging site LiveJournal has lost a large proportion of its user base in response to censorship of the site by the Russian government.
- Telegram was banned in 2018 by a Russian court order for refusing to grant the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation access to encrypted user communication.

The Chinese Experience

China houses the largest internet population in the world and is a big market for every social media giant. But, internet blocks and tight regulations come as biggest stumbling blocks for global companies to function independently. China has its own version of Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, all heavily scrutinised and monitored round the clock. The most popular social media and networking platforms in China are WeChat, QQ and Weibo. They are so powerful and representative of Chinese society that knowing these three social media platforms would go a long way in providing a good understanding of online social networking in China.

- **WeChat**
  It is an all-in-one powerful app, popularly dubbed as Facebook or WhatsApp of China. Known as Weixin in China, WeChat boasts of almost all features which a contemporary social platform can have: its social ecosystem and combination of features are simply astounding and cater to all sections of online population. WeChat reached one billion monthly active users with the onset of the Chinese New Year in 2018. Not only for personal use, but it has been found effective for business marketing as well. Over 58 per cent of WeChat users said in a survey that most of their new WeChat contacts were work related, while almost 80 per cent claimed to use WeChat for work-related matters, including meetings, transferring money, communicating with colleagues and client interfacing.
- **Weibo**
  Weibo is a microblogging platform set up in 2009 by Sina Corporation. Well known outside China because of its similarity with Twitter, Weibo actually had more monthly

active users than Twitter as of June 2017, which explains the popularity streak of the platform and the power of internet penetration in China. Staving off fierce competition from other platforms, Weibo established a niche market for itself both due to restrictions on Twitter in China, and also since it allowed Chinese nationals to use a tool of their own to communicate. A case in point is its expansion from Dec 2013, when it had only 129 million monthly active users. In order to stay relevant and also regain a prominent position, it integrated short video and live streaming functions to boost user numbers. It also formed a strategic partnership with the Chinese conglomerate Alibaba to explore social commerce and marketing solutions, and to facilitate interaction between merchants on Alibaba's platforms and Weibo users. This helped it leverage customer strength of Alibaba as well on top of its own audience. Its Discovery Zone helps users discover the latest trending topics, and the integrated e-commerce provisions – like Weibo Wallet – Messenger, online games, short videos, live streaming and informational feeds make it a one-stop shop for all social needs of an average Chinese.

- **QQ**
  Much like WeChat in functionality, QQ has been widely used in China since 1999, 12 years before WeChat was founded. QQ is very popular among young user, since it can work without mobile phones also, as against WeChat which requires user to own a mobile device to use. Users usually choose QQ to share their updates, photos and videos. In addition, QQ is themed playful and has loads of entertainment functions, which WeChat lacks, including animated selfie filters, personalised avatars and photo retouching to name a few. Personalisation based on user preferences makes QQ an audience garner platform. Following interesting groups/topics, watching and sharing videos, making short videos and streaming them live are some of the features which keeps the platform attractive for the Gen X.

2.8 SOCIAL MEDIA AND DEMOCRATIC DIGITALISATION

When social media came into being, it brought with it the premise of democratisation of information and sharing to close-network peers, leading to knowledge empowerment. Three decades hence, we are still evaluating whether social media has lived up to its promise. More than free flow of information, based on your activity tracking, algorithmic news feeds are designed to bring you information that you are more likely to tap the 'like' button on and which you are most likely to share. Though the basic idea behind the user's activity tracking was simply to understand what type of content they liked so that the platform could present more of such content to them, it has slowly snowballed into a much bigger issue by creating an information bubble through polarisation, or an information cocoon. Polarisation plays with the user's cognitive bias and simply exposes them to only such information that supports their own beliefs, even if they fly in the face of facts and logic. What this does is that it puts together peers who debate on the same topic and reinforcing their pre-

existing beliefs. Each person resultantly develops a more extreme view on the subject than before entering into the discussion. This causes the issue of fake news and fear mongering based on its propagation.

Before the internet came into being, disinformation campaigns saw limited spread because news was hardly shared with such a large group with the click of a mouse. In the name of information, today it is quite hard to distinguish between credible and non-credible sources of news. Though social media has surely become a pressure group, it is also a handy tool at the disposal of society to make popular decisions known to political elite, which can quickly be converted into hate campaigns and name callings. A tool for direct involvement in decision-making, social media provides a new channel for citizens through which to participate in democracy, but with a pinch of salt, so as to say. Rather than creating a horizontal forum for communication, as many had anticipated, social media has in fact amplified certain voices – called 'hyperleaders', who are self-appointed leaders who represent the unidentified mass. This can lead to consolidation of authoritarian views.

Social media provides relatively unrestricted arenas for free expression, which can unfortunately become open fields for influencing public opinions, especially in such critical events as national elections, with the help of bots and other such mechanisms. Below are some tools and mechanisms used by interested parties to influence public opinion during critical times:

- **Bots**
  One of the tools being used to spread fake news is bot, which per se is an innocuous autonomous program which can interact with users and systems without human intervention. But, when its gets in the hands of people who want to unduly influence public opinion, it can automate accounts on social media sites, create or share a large number of posts, etc. in a short span of time, thus allowing certain opinions look more popular than they are. Bots on Twitter have been used to suggest that current events are hoaxes and heavily criticise liberal thinking.

- **Dark Ads**
  Dark ads make it possible for the advertisements published by advertising managers to be visible only to an intended audience, thus enabling them to control what type of ads are shown or not shown to which group. Age-, geography- and behaviour-based targeting have become common on social media, which look an efficient way of delivering advertisements on the face of it, but can raise unethical concerns when advertisements with objectionable content are deliberately shown to one group of users but hidden from another. These advertisements tend to induce a positive psychology in the intended audience, tricking them to place greater importance on extrinsic values and parameters which should not be given importance in the first place. Dark ads have been in the spotlight due to their use in political elections, especially in the US and the UK.

- **Sockpuppet**
  It means an online identity a user assumes for the purpose of deception or influencing opinions. Unlike bots and dark ads, sockpuppet is not a program. Instead, it is an identity for a real human being who does not want to be known by their real name on the internet, including social media. This term gained currency in the mid-1990s and was used in online forums for anonymous discussion, especially on controversial topics. The purpose of a sockpuppet is to spread misinformation. However, on social media, many brands and stakeholders also use it to improve the visibility of their brands and influence targeted groups even when there is no misinformation involved. It should be noted that sockpuppetry exists on the edge of legality and has been held liable in certain cases by law-enforcement agencies.

- **Catfishing**
  It is a particular type of sockpuppetry where a user creates a fake social-networking presence to harm the reputation of a particular person or create a certain kind of fraud. Catfishing is often used by financial fraudsters on unsuspecting individuals or by those who want to target celebrities or political opponents. However, not all uses of this concept are negative in intent. Sexual minorities are often seen as creating deceptive social media identities to explore their sexualities on social communities and groups before they decide to come out.

- **State-Sponsored Internet Propaganda** Also known as state-sponsored internet sockpuppetry, it signifies concerted efforts by a government or the ruling party to engage an army of trolls, who may go by their real identities or sockpuppets, to influence public opinion in favour of their policies or against stand taken by their national or international opponents. This concept became popular with the Internet Water Army and the 50 Cent Party of China coming to the fore in the early 2000s. The Chinese authorities are said to have employed scores of commentators on social media and other internet forums to create an environment in favour of the Chinese Communist Party. The similar Russian efforts are called Russian Web Brigades. Both these countries being global players, a large number of posts made by their trolls are targeted at opponents in Europe and the US. In India, the Bharatiya Janata Party is said to have employed sockpuppetry in a big way during the Lok Sabha election campaign in 2014 and then in subsequent years to justify government policies on controversial issues.

2.9 CONCLUSION

Social media is ultimately a reflection of patterns, habits, choices and decisions of today's younger generations, which are the main drivers behind the emergence of social networks among peers. The huge market size and multiple offerings provided by social media are tapped by businesses and users. Social platforms provide exciting

avenues for businesses to facilitate committed user interaction and engagement model. Cheap internet and global smartphone boom have been the primary reasons for an ever-expanding social media scenario, varying according to geographies, user interests and habits, economy's type and revenue model adopted by businesses. Social media holds great promise to bring about democratic digitalisation by encouraging greater flow of information seamlessly among networked communities. Though certain negative repercussions have been noticed through social media, like fake news propagation and the resultant compromises on facts, social media behemoths are increasingly becoming aware of such threats and challenges and employing wide-ranging technological solutions, like artificial intelligence and machine learning, to segregate bonafide content and serve it intelligently. This results in a satisfied customer and user and profitable business along the entire value chain.

2.10 CHECK YOUR PORGRESS

1. What percentage of internet users are social media users? What population of the world uses social media?

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   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Which four parameters decide the penetration of social media in a developing country?

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   _____
   _____
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   _____

3. Explain the dichotomy between data protection and customised user experience on social media.

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   _____
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   _____

4. What is the role of Facebook in the Indian social media scenario?

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   _____
   _____
   _____

5. How has YouTube evolved in India?

   _____
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Answers

1. In 2019, an estimated 79 per cent of 4.39 billion internet users accessed social media platforms, which is about 45 per cent of the global population.
2. Gender, age, income and education of users are considered the biggest criteria which facilitate social media penetration in a developing country.
3. Social media giants want to use users' preferences to deliver them a customised exepreince. But, it makes trust in the social media's data and privacy regulations a pivotal consideration. The European Union has implemented the General Data Protection Regulation. Privacy laws are being tightened all around the globe. With consumers themselves being at the centre of this mammoth data-collection exercise, maintaining a fool-proof mechanism to store critical personal information away from the prying eyes of the hacker community is going to be an enviable challenge.
4. A late entrant in the social media space in India, Facebook reached out to a large section of the Indian populace using its eye-catching features. Facebook's rise to the top in India coincided with the fall of Google-owned Orkut, whose unimpressive user interface and less powerful customisation options sent its users to Facebook. Personalised newsfeeds, like options and notification feature of Facebook captured the public imagination like no other social platform had been able to do in India.
5. YouTube Indianised its content by investing in regional language content creation, networking and community building. It won viewership from Tier II and Tier III cities. It started serving video content customised according to local demands, based on user preferences and choices. The user-generated English-speaking courses, educational material on science and maths, preparatory material for government examinations garnered most views on YouTube.

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UNIT : 3 SOCIAL MEDIA AS CONTENT PLATFORM

:: STRUCTURE::

3.0 Introduction

3.1 Objectives

3.2 Customised Content As A Social Media Essential

3.3 Social Media Variants and Their Rationale

3.4 Myriad Forms of User-Generated Content

3.5 From Content Platform to Sharing Space

3.6 Emergence of Ott Platforms

3.7 OTT Platforms in Social Media Ecosystem

3.8 Conclusion

3.9 Check Your Progress

3.10 Reference

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media comes in various forms – social networking sites, bookmarking sites, professional networks, aggregators, etc. To understand social media as a content platform in entirety, it is important to understand how these platforms work and generate shareable content. In this unit, we will look at different facets of social media platforms from the perspective of content generation and sharing. We will also study the emergence of over-the-top (OTT) platforms and how they have come to build on social media platforms to develop subscription-based content consumption models. This unit discusses the overlapping of social and OTT spaces in certain content areas and the symbiotic relationship they have developed.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

- Understand how a typical social media platform works as a content platform
- Study how social media platforms employ different strategies to acquire content from users and corporates
- Develop an understanding about user-generated content and how it is the backbone of social media
- Understand the rise of OTT media

On the Completion of This Unit, You Will be Able to:

- Understand how to study social media as a content platform
- Appreciate how content gets generated and shared on social media platforms

- Acknowledge how OTT space is exploding and building upon the success of social media as a content platform

Index of Unit Contents

- Customised Content as a Social Media Essential
- Social Media Variants and Their Rationale
- Myriad Forms of User-Generated Content
- From Content Platform to Sharing Space
- Emergence of Over-The-Top Platforms
- OTT Platforms in Social Media Ecosystem
- How to Benefit from Social Media

3.2 CUSTOMISED CONTENT AS A SOCIAL MEDIA ESSENTIAL

Social networks are based on the need of humans to interact with each other. People meet their friends, and such interactions establish relationships which then propagate further to include a friend's friend, getting bigger with time and resulting in a web of social relationships. On the internet, social media mimics this real-life behaviour, whose principle and working model are simple – humans need relationships to thrive and grow, and social media creates a space to establish and propagate such relationships. On this simple premise, social media behemoths use various tools and techniques to build giant social networks, which comprise of millions of smaller, tightly defined social networks. Simply put, these portals visualise human relationships in graphical format, making invisible social networks visible to us in an interactive manner. The Facebooks and MySpaces thrive on this underlying urge in human beings to belong to and establish as big a social network as possible for networking, business needs and personal purposes.

Though it may seem a simple thing with a group of 10 people, this web of establishing networks and opportunities get complex even in a group of 100 users who are connected within various sub-groups or networks. Have you ever wondered how social media platforms make it possible for you to keep in touch with hundreds of your friends in real time? This is humongous work perpetually in progress. With each person connected on multiple social media networks, thousands of servers and algorithms are in action round the clock in order to provide the best user experience to the end user. Most of this infrastructure comprises of open-source software, like Linux, MySQL and Apache Web Server for demand management, traffic modulation and network management. This underlying development architecture is one of the main contributing factors towards the establishment of a sprawling social network, which is scalable on demand and as per usage. Different social media platforms have different operational models, though at the core they operate on the following logic: user aggregation based on friend requests, which leads to creation of networks; content generation through textual posts, images and videos

within these networks; content sharing of information among users within and across platforms, which then spirals to other destination nodes subsequently, leading to the creation of viral content.

Social media provides customised experience to users based on the algorithms which it runs in the background to serve content and vouch itself as high on social-friendliness parameter. Since this subject in itself is quite complex and ever changing, major social media platforms come up with dynamic algorithms. Understanding key strategies employed by social media platforms can help content strategists navigate social media better and decipher how these platforms allow users to traverse available content according to their interest areas. Hence, it becomes clear that these platforms manage meaningful user engagement at various levels according to their user preferences through smart algorithms. It should also be noted that these platforms undertake spam management and identification fake and hateful content through these algorithms and community engagement, which allow them to address privacy- and rights-related content.

From the revenue perspective, social media platforms use these algorithms to target paid content and their promotion to the right audience among their users. In essence, their revenues depend on customer engagement and users' response to the subject matter of the promotional content. While different platforms have varied ways to engage users and provide relevant content, they surely tap on the search patterns of a user and, through content search algorithms, serve content according to the user's needs, including through APIs that allow users to 'feed' customised content on their preferred web applications. This provides true end-to-end integration and allows information propagation through multiple verticals.

3.3 SOCIAL MEDIA VARIANTS AND THEIR RATIONALE

Facebook and Twitter have become so ubiquitous that when we imagine social media, only these two names pop up in the mind. However, social-networking websites are only one of the many categories which together form the social media paradigm. It is important to know about them in order to appreciate how they have revolutionised the ways in which content is being served to users in the contemporary era and how their smart usage by businesses and corporations has made them richer and better connected to their audience.

Social-Networking Sites

Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc. fall in this category, which enables us to connect with our friends and colleagues and rely more on personal relationships and the concept of knowledge sharing on the logic of human-to-human interaction. However, each platform has a different purpose and use of user-generated content. Users share thoughts, posts, like and share the content that they see on their personalised feed, which gets filled based on their preferences, and participate in polls and discussions with their groups of friends. Businesses use advertisements or sponsored content to reach out to a diversified community and allow their product lines to be targeted

using specific set of visuals and and data-rich solutions. These platforms study user interactions and offer analytical reports and charts to businesses, which allows them to further reach out to a more refined group of customers and build long-lasting connections with them. These platforms also use social-listening tools to tap user behaviour and study the type of conversations they undertake with their friends/network, so as to serve targeted advertisements on them.

Social-Review Sites

With online world relying more on reviews by consumers to travel and buy online products, dedicated web portals, like Yelp and TripAdvisor, provide user-generated content in a visually appealing and neatly categorised manner to reach out to a greater set of audience. It gives users a sense of satisfaction that they have embarked on the right path and help them choose among the many options available to them. This showcases the real power of user-generated content in helping the peer community in pinning down on the right kind of products or travel options and helps them solve their most pressing needs in a question-answer format. Everyday challenges of life in making informed choices about products and travels are, thus, taken care of by identifying views of others who have already travelled in the same boat and help buyers take decisions based on the responses of a larger community. For example, location-based review sites, such as the food portal Zomato, help users find best dining areas in and around their neighbourhood.

Image-Sharing Sites

Nothing captures humans attention as visuals do, particularly images, infographics and varied illustrations. They leave a lasting impression on users through their information presentation patterns. Leveraging on this psychological fact, many image-sharing portals, like Pinterest, Instagram, Imgur and Snapchat, have sprung up to cater to the insatiable need of humans to share visual content. Users create, curate and share images, which spark conversations in the online world.

As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. Campaigns run on social sites encourage users to click images and videos and post them to their networks with catchy hashtags. This creates a major visual impact in the network and propels many users to celebrity status in a matter of days. Lead generation, brand awareness and audience engagement are the major ways in which businesses try to benefit from such platforms.

Video-Hosting Sites

With video becoming an influential mode of communication on social media, much more than static text and images, moving and dynamic videos have come to capture the imagination of the Generation X in ways that was seldom imagined even a decade earlier. YouTube and Vimeo have emerged as businesses' preferred platforms to showcase their premium video content. Now, even more video platforms have started to emerge, making videos the next big bet on social media.

YouTube revolutionised the way consumers see videos online. With the internet getting more accessible and cheaper and the emergence of

high-end smartphones with top-notch cameras holding sway among larger audience, user-generated content is at the peak in the video format is at the peak of its popularity. Streaming issues being a matter of past, Vimeo and YouTube are used by big corporate houses to stream premium content and build like-minded communities with lots of engagement-related features, like comments, likes and sharing links to a larger audience.

Blogs and Discussion Forums

Blogging sites, though not as flashy as video/image-sharing social sites, have their own charm left for the traditional audience, which believes nothing can express a message as evocatively as text does. Platforms like Tumblr, Medium, Reddit, Quora and Digg allow users to find and discuss opinions and share relevant information and get connected with their readers as soon a blog post is published. Each user has a way to express through topic-specific blogs, which then can have threads based on discussions done by fellow community members. On the other hand, the quest for subject-centred information takes users to domain-specific discussion forums, like Stackoverflow for software-related issues.

On these social platform, syndication of content by businesses help them engage audiences with their product lines by giving them a dedicated space. Many corporates include rather unmoderated discussion forums within their corporate or associated portals. Brutally honest opinions, deep customer research and paid content posts all feature in these and independent discussion forums. Through conversations, people with shared interests get to know each other in a better manner, though not as much as on Facebook, Instagram, etc. But, social marketing by corporates can be pretty straightforward on these platforms with advertisements targeted at communities and sub-communities as found on Reddit.

Social Bookmarking Sites

Bookmarking sites, like Flipboard and Pinterest, help users discover and share information which they find relevant and interesting in their networks. When users bookmark sites and web pages on such platforms, they not only share their interest with their followers but also drive traffic to the bookmarked pages. Many observers see bookmarked pages as a better, more informed alternative to Google and Bing searches since it is based on a network's recommendations. Visual bookmarking sites, like Pinterest, have revolutionised the way net surfers share their preferences for content they find interesting online. These websites allow users to save and manage their web bookmarks at a central place which are usually public and can be viewed and shared by other people in the network. Tags and keywords allow users to categorise links, which, then, can be searched by other users.

Content strategists use bookmarking sites to route web traffic to selected web pages. If enough number of users bookmark a web page, the chances of the content of the web page going viral increase and allow search engines to rate them way above other pages with similar content. Till a few years back, bookmarking links was one the most used social marketing strategies by businesses to drive audience to

their websites. Though not as popular today, it still ranks among the useful strategies for promoting websites.

Sharing Economy Networks

The spread of e-commerce has brought plenty of buyers and sellers online. As the trust of buyers grew in online buying, a new sharing economy, which is social in nature, has taken root. People have started using dedicated online platforms to advertise, find, buy and sell their new and used products and services. Complete end-to-end business models have started appearing on such platforms, which include OLX, UrbanClap, Airbnb, etc. Also known as collaborator economy networks, they offer general to niche services which till now were offered only by neighbourhood shops and service providers. At the heart of the success of this model of peer-to-peer commerce lies the power of social reviews and users' faith in these reviews to gauge the reliability of the products and services. With most such portals allowing social login, users in closed networks buy products which are endorsed by their peers on other social networks. For businesses, it is a great way to generate leads and boost sales.

Interest-Based Networks

A social media network is essentially about a large number of users sharing a common interest. Once the idea of social media matured, therefore, it was a matter of time before single-interest-based networks would start become popular. Now, dedicated social media has emerged to drive audience traffic based on single shared interest, like Housing.com and GoodReads, where users with interest in a specific area form a community and discuss aspects of that interest. Even portals which did not have social components earlier have included them to make themselves more attractive. For example, India's top jobs portal Naukri.com earlier allowed posting of jobs from the employer's side and resumes and profiles from the jobseeker's side. With the success of LinkedIn and facing competition, it has adopted social media features where the jobseeker can follow companies and job consultants.

Some of these sites are pure buy and sell platforms, which businesses try to win over users with paid content and advertisements. However, in sites like GoodReads, the reviews posted, likes, shares and emotions expressed by users influence their decisions in making purchases. Many of these websites – for example, Trivago – act as aggregators, which take data from multiple sources and serve on a common platform for service seekers and providers to meet, liaison and transact based on mutually accepted norms and rules.

The categories mentioned above are dynamic in nature and some of these websites may fall in more than one category. Nonetheless, these websites build up the community perspective in our everyday lives and contribute immensely to the interest we want to pursue.

3.4 MYRIAD FORMS OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Social media's content is mostly user generated. If there are no users contributing content, social media has no relevance. The ways in

which people create and consume content is changing. User-generated content has emerged as one of the most effective and trustworthy components of content-marketing strategy of modern businesses. Since customers have begun to demand more authenticity of the information provided to them rather than blindly accepting what is served, businesses have come to acknowledge this shift in consumer expectation and are adopting innovative ways to accommodate user-generation content in their lead-generation matrix. User-generated content provides this authenticity factor a boost, which bodes well for building a positive brand image around positive customer experiences and reviews.

Recognising the emergence of user-generated content as the next big thing in the age of internet explosion and multimedia devices in Web 2.0 platforms, *Time* magazine termed 'You' as the Person of the Year in 2006. A growing body of evidence suggests that user-generated content on platforms ranging from Yelp to Facebook has a large causal impact on economic and social decisions of users, which range from decisions about choosing restaurants to voting behaviour. Incentives, such as badges offered by brands and social status on a platform, are often used by brands to encourage and steer contributions from social media users. This helps build trust for brands, increase the engagement factor from social media users who are potential customers and give overall visibility to the brands' social media presence.

Wikipedia is a prime example of how a user-driven content platform can have a major impact in the lives of people and change the way they consume content in that genre. Wikipedia has had profound impact on how people have to engage with the encyclopedia industry and almost trumped all kinds of competition with its open and anyone-can-edit model. However, it should be noted that Wikipedia is an open and social platform in the sense of open software, where many users collaborate on a project or idea and then make the product available for open use and further contribution/development by other users. Unlike many other social media platforms, the focus on Wikipedia is the content produced and not the user(s) who produce it. Though readers can see who has made what changes in an article and even discuss issues with them, for most of them, the primary engagement is with the article and not its writers. Wikipedia, therefore, does not work on the principle of creating social media celebrities that, for example, Twitter does.

User-generated content has come to be used in a wide range of scenarios, starting from news, entertainment, advertising, gossip, etc. to advanced use case s like predictive analysis data, problem processing, etc. With little or no moderation happening in this category, the real power of this information revolution is being driven by the common user through their views and opinions expressed in terms of text, photos and videos posted on social media. This has prompted many media organisations to move away from the model of original content creation to a community-driven content generation or aggregation model. Citizen media is also a by-product of this shift, with users contributing to news-gathering mechanisms. Reviews and columns on such websites create opinions for or against a

product/service or idea, impacting the business of companies and standing of social groups directly and indirectly.

The biggest advantage of the user-generated content is the two-way communication that it initiates in the community as against one-way communication which was traditionally in place before the advent of Web 2.0. The audience has become more active by participating in creating the content which they consume, rather than being only receivers. The media platforms have become more accessible with interactive features, which pull in more crowds and encourage people to generate more content, which gets shared and rippled across multiple platforms.

Yelp, TripAdvisor, Rotten Tomatoes, GoodReads, IMDb, Practo – all are examples of platforms which thrive on user-generated content. Users generate positive or negative vibes about a service or product through their experiences and recommendations, and with the usage of intelligent algorithms, these social sites push up or down the rankings of these services and products on their websites. This has become one of the powerful ways by which useful content is served to an information-hungry audience. Crowdfunding platforms also come across as a primary source of user-generated content. With the emergence of wikis in almost every domain, the power and reach of user-generated content is unparalleled and fundamentally changing the way how users behave online.

A novel feature of a platform based on user-generated content is that its end users are both contributors as well as consumers. Because users are producing content, the amount of content and its value to any given user depends on the number of total users on the platform or his/her network within the platform. There are significant network effects on all such platforms, and the value of the platform depends on the number of users it acquires. Of course, some users primarily produce, while others primarily consume. A third set of actors are those who advertise and try to reach users for selling their business propositions.

Drawing upon the above discussion, we can conclude that the defining characteristics of user-generated content are:

- users contribute towards content creation, rather than it being sponsored by a company;
- user contributions are creative and original; and
- user content is placed online and made accessible to everyone to comment and share on the same or other platforms.

User-generated content has been found extremely useful to provide personalised customer experience at scale, which has become indispensable for businesses to attract new set of customers. Millennials have often been found to be content creators and consumers, thus driving the wave of user-generated content. Many corporates prefer user-generated content to increase visitor rates on their websites, as the brand is humanised. The Japanese automotive giant Toyota launched a ‘Feeling the Street’ global campaign in 2016 to celebrate street music and expected users and street performers to

upload videos of street performances. In the six weeks for which the campaign ran, it achieved 12 lakh engagements (likes, shares and comments) against the set target of eight lakh engagements. This was also a jump of 440 per cent from the previous year that Toyota had launched around a similar theme. This campaign is considered one of the most successful social campaigns in which user-generated content played the lead role. It also shows that brands have increasingly started leveraging user-generated content for better engagement with their audiences.

It should be noted that distribution and consumption of user-generated content across the web provides huge data source for analysis and provides enhanced customised content to users according to their surfing patterns and community identification. In general, people can benefit from the emotional feedback provided by a section of the population on social platforms, and governments can use such feedback positively to modify their policies to seek better implementation of their schemes and obtain feedback from stakeholders.

3.5 FROM CONTENT PLATFORM TO SHARING SPACE

Social media occupies a critical space in the everyday life of an average human being. Public entities – be they governments, corporates, industries or non-government organisations – seem to benefit from it. The propensity of an increasingly socially connected population is put to use by these entities in a positive manner. With its widespread use by almost every institution of society, it has also grown from being a mere content platform to something which relies more on re-generating original content by circulating it on multiple platforms.

According to GlobalWebIndex data, people have moved away from sharing content about their daily lives and have become more orientated around pursuing purposeful activities, which have traditionally fallen outside the arena of social platforms. Increasingly, users now rely on information sources using their social media accounts, like news or product reviews. More than original content creators, many users have now turned into passive users – consuming content as per need without contributing any content whatsoever. This behaviour depiction allows brands to engage audience using innovative methodologies, like campaigns, video sessions, live streaming, Twitter events, etc.

Social media has turned out to be the next mass-announcing system, with major political decisions the world over being announced on social media rather than on traditional media. A political establishment often taps the power of social media to trigger and propagate waves of information spiral all over the internet through shares, retweets, likes and comments. The result is that such topics start trending and catch the public's imagination quickly and are retained in popular discussions for days to come to leave a lasting impression on the target audience. As human beings, we love to share our feelings and thoughts with others. Research indicates that when other users like and share our social media posts, it gives us a high and releases dopamine, which is a neurotransmitter linked with

creating a feeling of pleasure in the human brain. Sean Parker, the founding president of Facebook, admitted as much in 2017, saying that with a comment or like on a post 'we… give you a little dopamine hit'. Active participation in social media gives users a greater sense of connectedness and gives them liberty to engage in conversations whenever they feel like with anybody in their network, and, of course, a chance to get famous!

The evolution of mobile telephony from bulky phone sets to trendy high-end, sleek smartphones and cheap high-speed internet, social media has been elevated from being a mere content platform for basic communication to housing information of all kinds that users across the world want to share in multiple languages. Chat forums and discussion groups have emerged as the contemporary crowdsourced R&D platforms as well as customer-engagement platforms. They contribute immensely in generating awareness among peer group with respect to information necessary to create a knowledge-intensive, better-aware consumer society.

The other side of the story is that this propensity to share has led to the phenomenon of fake news, rumour mongering and trolling. The rapid pace with which information which is bound to attract extreme views from populace is a sure shot recipe for trouble, because it hits the emotional stimuli of many and triggers the need for social transmission. The number of comments, likes and shares has become a parameter to indicate an article or post's usefulness, whereas it may not always carry factually correct information. This is true in the case of fake news items being camouflaged as true, sensational news, which triggers panic and gives rumour mongers space to flourish. Though social media platforms have developed algorithms to keep such notorious online behaviour under check, artificial intelligence and machine learning have a long way to go before they decisively predict such information patterns and block their propagation before they start causing damage.

Businesses also seek to tap on this stimuli activation, so that when users see posts on huge discounts, catchy slogans and product lines, they are tempted to buy and share their purchase experience. An emotionally neutral product line or slogan may not attract as much audience, and those reading it may not feel the urge to share the post within their groups. Such sharing insight matches with how modern social behemoths work – triggering emotions of users through trends, paid content and advertising, so that users are inclined to share information as soon as they read or watch it in their feeds.

3.6 EMERGENCE OF OTT PLATFORMS

Over-the-top (OTT) media services are streaming services which users access directly over the internet and are usually subscription based to provide access to premium content. They are usually accessed through websites and apps. Two of the most popular OTT platforms globally are Netflix and Amazon Prime. With the emergence of a forever-connected population, video and multimedia consumption patterns have fundamentally changed. A fiercely competitive market notwithstanding, OTT platforms are luring

customers by providing highly competitive pricing models for accessing their platform's premium content. OTT media is likely to be the future of entertainment services model and replete with opportunities and challenges.

Availability of high-quality content and original content at a low subscription fee and the option to view it across devices, like desktops, laptops and mobile phones, give users choice to select from multiple OTT service providers. Viewing OTT content is no longer a struggle with the availability of high-speed internet, smart TVs, tablets and smartphones.

Much like social media, understanding the audience is key to implementing a revenue-generating model in an OTT platform. Knowing user preferences, likes, dislikes and behaviour patterns determines how the platform adapts to changing scenarios. For this, it is essential to analyse user behaviour data, determine trends in it and then align the business accordingly to make OTT media a viable alternative to traditional media.

Social media performs an indispensable role in this regard, as it allows businesses to study user choices of content consumption. An effective social media strategy, thus, becomes critical for continued audience engagement and redirects it to the targeted OTT platform as a potential subscriber. Through advertisements, teaser content and engaging posts on social media, prospective consumers have a better chance of being drawn to the exclusive content offered by OTT platforms with attractive discounts. A case in point is Netflix, which had a little under 60 million users on Facebook and 15 million users in 2019. It has a massive marketing budget, a large part of which goes into digital promotion and engagements. Its content strategy on social media platforms has won it many engagements and subscribers, keeping it way ahead of its competition.

As digital audiences grow, new players emerge and competition gets tougher, online media platforms must keep ahead of the curve with social video distribution and content generation. Social video is in an expansionary stage and slated to boom further. Even Facebook realises the importance of streaming content and is adopting these features. Facebook's new Watch platform as well as IGTV on Instagram are pushing to stake a claim in the long-form video space through rights and media partnerships. The advertisement-supported business model of social media platforms will be a valuable litmus test for the future of online streaming platforms.

Businesses have understood that it makes more sense to use hugely popular social consumption platforms, such as YouTube and Facebook, to generate a loyal audience, which, in turn, can convert into audience for their OTT platforms, through which they can earn using various revenue models, like subscription, in-app purchases, advertising and sponsorship. Hence, the return on investment on social media marketing tactics is often positive and, in some cases, even exponentially positive. It has been observed that when users are provided quality content, they are ready to pay – the compulsive factor being connecting well with the audience.

3.7 OTT PLATFORMS IN SOCIAL MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

As noted above, the businesses which have understood the complementarity of social media and OTT platforms have used social media's potential to tap a huge organic audience. A successful OTT service seamlessly integrates its social marketing strategy with overall brand building to generate organic audience – its published content is available on social media for free consumption as trailers, teasers, trivia, images, campaigns and related information to generate viral content and judge consumer interest. Social media platforms provide a melange of marketing tools to OTT businesses for promoting content relevant to a targeted audience, measuring audience response to optimise marketing strategy and enhancing audience value to reduce wastage of marketing resources. This seeming overlap between social media and OTT platforms allows for a cohesive coexistence in the content and marketing space.

As social media, OTT platforms should be ready to provide localised content services, which are specific to a geographical region's unmet demand. It is important to notice that many content producers have shifted to OTT platforms from social media, which means that they have shifted from a free model to a subscription-based model. In this sense, the success of OTT platforms can be seen to be built upon the popularity that social media offered to content producers.

It is tempting to view social media as an online monetised video provider with the likes of YouTube and Twitter in competition with OTT platforms, especially in the case of live streaming of important events breaking records in terms of viewership. However, analysts see the future belonging to OTT platforms and social media working as a multiplier in audience acquisition. Since OTT platforms employ strong copyright protection mechanisms, like digital rights management technology, which attracts content producers. Moreover, subscription model is seen as a more viable and sustainable way to support a business idea than an advertisement-based model, which is prone to market-related ups and downs.

How to Benefit from Social Media

A learning from the symbiotic relationship between OTT platforms and social media can be that rather than viewing social media as a stand-alone platform, small businesses, entrepreneurs and content strategists should recognise the inherent cohesion between their sectors and social media. They should use this cohesion to win consumer confidence and stay ahead of the curve by employing continuous audience engagement strategies.

Though it is easy to believe that with all the advantages provided by social media marketing, every business would be deep-diving into the marketing space already. However, the ground reality is different: a survey of the small businesses in the US found that almost 71 per cent of small businesses use social media and only half of them engage their current audience daily. The corresponding figures in other parts of the world, especially India, which have lower internet penetration are likely to be much lower. In 2015, Sheryl Sandberg, the chief operating officer of Facebook, claimed that over 50 million small

businesses used her platform to connect with their customers. Research shows that **63 per cent of customers expect brands to address their service-related concerns through social media as they find it easier to reach out to companies on existing and popular platforms.** This means that a sizeable chunk of businesses are still missing out on something very crucial for taking their businesses to the next level.

Following are some of the advantages that businesses can derive from a properly planned and implemented social media content strategy:

1. Social media marketing helps businesses achieve increased brand visibility and recognition among prospective audience in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. Continuous engagement does leave a positive impression among end users.
2. It allows an increased inbound traffic from end users and helps in moving beyond the loyal customer group. A business will lose out on a huge untapped organic audience traffic back to its website if it does not have a strategy to engage with audience on social media.
3. Conversion rates are often higher when users see that a business provides a lot of value to customers through blog posts, videos and infographics. Such content has high chances of leading viewers to the company's website.
4. Customers have been found to be better satisfied when they are provided a platform for expressing themselves regarding a product. Comments, likes, dislikes, criticism and viral trends help brands to better learn about user expectations and accordingly tailor their product lines and services. This, in turn, increases brand loyalty.
5. Marketplace insights, which are readily available on social media platforms, have become a must have for any business to innovate and grow in the ever-changing landscape of consumer behaviour. Data analysis gives businesses critical insights and allows them to segment their content provision based on content category and identify which content type generates the most impressions and viewership. Such tools have become indispensable to develop content development strategies, customised according to user taste, and measure their conversions on various social media platforms.

3.8 CONCLUSION

Recognising the importance of social media and the power of user-generated content will go a long way in helping businesses find the perfect blend of generating a sustainable revenue stream. Social media, thus, should be adopted as an integral part of every business outreach plan in order to derive maximum benefit from its huge user base. Social media has revolutionised the way people communicate with each other through a plethora of platforms, each having its own set of utilities. Social media and rapidly growing OTT platforms should be viewed as complementary content spaces, contributing to each other's growth, rather than only as competing spheres.

3.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What role do bookmarking sites play in content marketing on social media?

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2. How does social media promote sharing economy?

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3. How is Wikipedia different from other platforms that host user-generated content?

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4. How do OTT platforms use social media to win audiences?

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Answers

1. Content strategists use bookmarking sites to increase traffic to selected web pages. If enough number of users bookmark a web page, the chances of the content of the web page going viral increase and allow search engines to rate them better.
2. The spread of e-commerce has brought plenty of buyers and sellers online. This has also led to the growth of sharing economy, which is social in nature. People have started using dedicated online platforms to advertise, find, buy and sell their new and used products and services. Examples include OLX, UrbanClap, Airbnb, etc.
3. On Wikipedia, users collaborate to produce articles on specific topics and make them available for open use and further contribution by other users. Unlike other social media platforms, the focus on Wikipedia is on the content produced. Contributors of the article assume a secondary role and almost invisible to the general user.
4. OTT platforms target potential subscribers on social media. Through advertisements, teaser content and engaging posts on social media, prospective consumers have a better chance of

being drawn to the exclusive content offered by OTT platforms with attractive discounts. American giants Netflix and Amazon Prime have massive social media budgets.

Further Reading

Web Pages

- '126 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts': https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts.
- 'Global social media research summary 2019': https://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research.
- '130+ social media statistics that matter to marketers in 2019': https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-statistics-for-social-media-managers.

Essay

- 'Social Networks and the Diffusion of User-Generated Content: Evidence from YouTube': https://utd-ir.tdl.org/bitstream/handle/10735.1/3218/SOM-SR-JHOh-310708.7.pdf.

Books

- *India Social: How Social Media is Leading the Charge and Changing the Country* by Ankit Lal.
- *The Zen of Social Media Marketing: An Easier Way to Build Credibility, Generate Buzz, and Increase Revenue* by Shama Kabani
- *Enchantment: The Art of Changing Hearts, Minds, and Actions* by Guy Kawasaki.

Videos

- 'The history of social media': https://selectedpapers.net/a/7kS6sK63-yvmp.
- 'A brief history of social networks': https://www.antevenio.com/usa/a-brief-history-of-social-networks.

UNIT : 4 DIGITAL STRATEGY, SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

:: STRUCTURE::

4.0 Introduction

4.1 Objectives

4.2 Placing Social Media in Digital Ecosystem

4.3 Digital Branding and Marketing

4.4 Digital Marketing and Search Engine Optimisation

4.5 Social Media Tools

4.6 Social Media Content for Multiple Devices

4.7 The All-Important Meta Tags

4.8 Conclusion

4.9 Check Your Progress

4.10 Reference

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Social Media is an integral part of the overall digital ecosystem and has come to play a defining role in the contemporary digital technology landscape. A successful digital strategy needs to have a robust social media strategy woven intricately in it, which should become the prime focus point of implementing a fool-proof digital strategy. With the advent of technology, social media's presence has increased manifolds, with both individuals and corporates intertwining the platforms as an integral part of their overall digital strategy to reach out to a bigger audience. An intelligent and customised digital marketing has become virtually a must have in the basket of digital strategies for a business to make its online presence felt.

Recognizing their importance, we take a look at what goes into making a great digital media strategy with particular reference to its social media component and search engine optimisation. We also have a look at the tools which assist entrepreneurs in driving their branding in an efficient and cost-effective manner to stave off competition from rivals in a sustainable and effective manner. We also take a look at how the demand for multi-device responsive social media has made it compulsory for content to be designed, prepared, served and tracked in a multi-device environment.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

- Understand the significance of social media in the overall digital ecosystem
- Understand the concepts of digital marketing and SEO in relation to social media

- Discuss tools provided by Google and Facebook which help study consumer behaviour
- Understand the significance of social media content with the evolution of multi-device content consumption
- Learn to use technology which helps businesses study user insights for maximum impact

On the Completion of This Unit, You Will be Able to:

- Appreciate social media's indispensability in today's digital marketing space
- Get to know how digital marketing works and the parameters which go into making a successful online marketing experience
- Recognise the role of technology in the provision of various tools and techniques for social media marketing
- Understand how multi-device social media content has forced businesses to adopt and re-orient their core strategies
- Understand various models and tools used by firms to read end-user insights

Index of Unit contents

- Placing Social Media in Digital Ecosystem
- Digital Branding and Marketing
- Digital Marketing and Search Engine Optimisation
- Social Media Tools
- Social Media Content for Multiple Devices
- The All-Important Meta Tags
- Models and Tools for Reading User Insights

4.2 PLACING SOCIAL MEDIA IN DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

Carrying out business using traditional marketing methods is no longer sufficient and effective. Entrepreneurs need to take the leap of faith of adopting digital marketing and using the power of social media to market the USP of their products and services and stay ahead of the curve in a competitive world. This helps in giving the business the uplift and much-needed leverage. In today's connected digital world, such marketing is done in a digital ecosystem using the medium of social media, among other platforms. It gives businesses and personalities a platform to get connected with a large group of users instantaneously.

The digital ecosystem is the underlying architecture which binds all the emerging technology streams all over the world with their end users and includes companies, people, data, processes, etc. Through the shared use of digital platforms, these ecosystems create a collaborative atmosphere and provide results which are beneficial to

every stakeholder involved. The idea is to create a collection of flexible services that can facilitate entrepreneurs to cater to the ever-changing needs of evolving demographics by adapting their businesses to provide product lines and services accordingly. Seeing all the digital media as a unified ecosystem forces businesses to depart from viewing individual digital platforms as monolithic architectures and helps them modify their rigid business processes to tap the power of digital media and social media commulatively. The internet is the prime driving force binding all digital ecosystems into one shared collaborative platform.

It is, thus, important for businesses to recognise constituent elements of their digital ecosystem which work best for them and build strategies around them. Social media is a critical ingredient of an effective digital ecosystem. Businesses using various tools, techniques and models have started to build a direct and organic audience for their products and services. Newer digital ecosystems allow companies to be adaptive and agile and, at the same time, reinforce the message which they want to be relayed to their customers time and again using different modus operandi. This helps create sustainable user value, around which customer satisfaction increases, which correspondingly leads to increased customer retention and acquisition.

With the emergence of user-generated content, the digital ecosystem is flooded with social media presence at different stages – viz. publishing wave (with blogs and websites), the sharing wave (with Facebook and Twitter), the curation wave (with Quora, Pinterest and alike) and the mobile wave (with native apps). What this entails for businesses is a way to tap user behaviour, observe their likes and dislikes and serve content accordingly to improve customer engagement and have a high return on investment as a result. The volume of digital content and its type have resulted in significant changes in user behaviour as well as functionalities provided by tech giants to consume, share and make a content piece viral, especially those with audio-video components.

Content consumption patterns are also driven by the way social media perceives a user's behaviour and whether social media platforms meet user expectations. The power of social media can be gauged from the fact that it is able to predict consumer behaviour in an accurate manner. Though users see a value addition whenever they share something through their devices with networks, the microcosm (that is, the user) is, in fact, a node in the overall graph of interconnected users, leading to a greater level of information propagation. Hence, for businesses to choose among social media platforms, it is not how many they choose to start with but how consistent they are with the chosen platform – this needs to be managed in a viable, sustainable and cost-effective manner in order to obtain a positive business sense and return on investment is in the positive territory. The social interaction ring surrounding social media helps businesses define their communication process.

With the technology taking leaps and bounds and the next generation machine learning and artificial intelligence already finding a place in

social media marketing parlance, it is imminent for businesses to find such technologies and employ them in marketing strategies to make future-proof and forward-looking digital plans.

4.3 DIGITAL BRANDING AND MARKETING

Digital branding has become an important part of brand management strategy that uses both internet branding and digital marketing to develop a brand image across digital avenues, devices and audiences. Establishing brand recognition among users lies at the core of developing digital branding by establishing connections between consumers and the product. It aims to improve the awareness of the product among the general masses, which in turn up the sales and revenue generation for the firm subsequently.

It has to be seen how digital branding has evolved over a period of time and how businesses utilise it to create a sustainable digital strategy to engage with a wider audience. These can be seen in the following parameters:

- For many years, there has been an information mismatch between companies and their ability to reach to right consumers effortlessly. It happened due to limited access to information dissemination, geographical inaccessibility and a lack of interaction among consumers. But, with the advent of the internet, websites and web applications, data is seemingly interconnected and linked, which has facilitated more avenues of interaction between brands and customers and enabled businesses to generate more value.
- Through digital branding, companies have a cost-efficient way of showcasing their brand identity to the outside world innovatively as well as through a message which remains etched in the consumer's memory for a long duration. Such digitalisation phenomenon has allowed companies to think out of the box, innovate, be creative and create models of customer engagement which are novel, indigenous as well as informative, connecting with the desires of the end-user community. This, in a way, creates brand empowerment for businesses and has resultantly heightened the connectivity between brands and customers on a one-on-one basis, something which was present only on a smaller scale (assuming that it was there at all) before the concept of digital branding emerged.
- Building customer loyalty is a *sine qua non* in today's business sense because of its sustainable revenue generation logic. Businesses strive to engage customers in a way which satisfies their demand and creates a unique proposition in their mind which cannot be satisfied anywhere else in terms of quality and relationships. This value creation goes a long way in sustaining such bonds and engages customers to enjoy as well as contribute towards the brand establishment.
- Alongside engaging with the customers, there is an increasing and active collaboration between the companies and their business intermediaries. This leads to collaborative and

healthy promotion, innovative re-designing and a sense of co-existence among competitors in the market.

Different businesses adopt different strategies to realise digital branding in practice. Over a period of many years, digital media experts have evolved a set of best practices which, when adopted, could contribute towards the establishment of a sustainable digital branding for the business. Following are some of those to-dos:

1. Businesses should focus on content which creates value for them, and more than increasing the content footprint, content should establish niche topics around a business which the audience can read and get connected to the brand dynamically.
2. Promoting content through social media is also a sure-shot winning strategy with Facebook and Twitter gaining more limelight with their ad-generated traffic. It helps businesses reach their prospective audience sooner and with less effort than a business taking traditional marketing techniques can.
3. Businesses should know their keywords better than anyone else does. Building a brand's persona around that set of keywords and promoting it helps build a strong connection with customers, rather than discouraging them through information overload. Customers recognise and engage with brands which are consistent in their product and service philosophy.
4. Content visualisation – in terms of using different multimedia options to get message across – plays an important role in today's context. Creating great content and depicting it using the right visuals is double advantage for any audience to get the right message across.
5. For businesses, understanding the market for their products and interaction with similar products in the same space help understand where the connect with the average consumer lags. Using social media to popularise a line of products, businesses can help create the user connect instantly and satisfy the user's insatiable demand.
6. Establishing a relationship with consumers increases credibility about a brand, and what can be an effective way to achieve it than digital marketing, wherein using different methodologies, users are directly connected with the brand in an easy-to-consume manner.

4.4 DIGITAL MARKETING AND SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

Search engine optimisation (SEO) plays an important role in the overall digital marketing strategy of a brand and is considered the most sustainable way to direct the audience to digital assets through organic search engine results. With literally every single user on the internet relying on search engines as varied as Google, Bing, Yahoo, DuckDuckGo. etc. to search anything they want, it is crucial that brand websites feature at the top of search engine result pages

(SERP). It is one of the most crucial deciding factors of whether businesses have been successful in converting their audience into visitors on their platforms. With so much at stake, the quality and quantity of web traffic are dependant on several factors, the unpaid traffic being one of the most dynamic one which brings bounties to the business. The art of ranking high on the organic listing in SERPs for certain set of keywords is what lies at the core of digital marketing strategy.

Almost three-fourth of all online experience begins with a search on a search engine, and almost one-third of those clicks go to the links found in the first page of a typical search engine. According to Backlinko, an SEO consulting firm, there are over 200 defining parameters which Google uses to rank pages in its results page. There are two ways to perform SEO – black-hat techniques, also known as ethical SEO, and white-hat techniques. Using white-hat techniques, which focus on human audiences and play by rule book suggested by search engines, is recommended, as it contributes towards brand building in a sustainable fashion. However, it takes a well-planned strategy and a persistent approach to implement this strategy, which yields results over a period of time. Black-hat SEO, on the other hand, is a quick-buck earner, implementing SEO by bending rules and considering SEO only for ranking high in SERP rather than organic user engagement. Spam, blackouts, total user disengagement are certain some of the looming threats in this method, and this approach is never sustainable though it is quite popular among SEO professionals. The best strategy, as experts point out, is to implement grey-hat SEO to derive advantages from both ends of the spectrum.

For the purpose of SEO, instruments like guest blogging, building external links, meta tagging of web pages, images and videos, keywords building and content publication need to be scalable enough as marketing techniques so as to create a positive return on investment. Higher domain authority, usage of keyword in the domain name, domain registration length, exact match domains, keywords in H1 HTML tag and title tags, appropriate content length, keyword density, the depth of blog posts, etc. are some of the major determinants of ranking high in Google SERP.

On-page SEO and off-page SEO are two basic ways of handling SEO for a digital asset like a website. On-page SEO takes care of how a search engine views a website's technical parameters and its content. It includes considering freshness and originality of content, keyword research and the clean way its HTML content has been formatted. Off-page SEO is more indirect and includes various externalities, such as personal preferences of the user, trust by search engine depending upon your brand's image based on TrustRank, domain and page authority. Through a combination of such SEO tips and tricks, a webmaster helps businesses rank up on SERPs so that they have greater visibility, recognition and brand awareness among the intended audience.

An SEO professional should bear in mind that SEO strategies are required not just for dedicated web pages of brands, they are also being increasingly used for social media pages and posts. Many brands feel that they can attract a better audience only on social media

and therefore put their best content on those platforms rather than on their own websites. In many cases, brands do not even have their own websites, preferring to keep their dedicated presence only on their YouTube channels, Facebook pages or Instagram accounts. In such cases it becomes imperative that these social media pages also figure high in SERPs. While the SEO techniques for social media pages are not different from those for web pages, it should be borne in mind that promotion for social media pages can and must take place outside of the respective social media platforms through SEO techniques.

4.5 SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

As noticed in the previous section, having a social media strategy has become indispensable for companies' online presence, and to have a strategic, technical approach for it pays in the long run. There are dedicated set of tools provided by Google and Facebook in the form of Google Analytics and Facebook Insights to help businesses to collect data on user behaviour, understand their audience demographics and provide crucial feedback points to improve their social media marketing strategy and SEO framework. This come in handy in overhauling the digital branding strategy of companies as well.

A successful social media profile does not emerge overnight. A lot of persistent effort goes into creating evergreen and relevant content as part an intelligent digital marketing strategy to develop a dedicated audience around every social media post. Latest trends, tools and practices need to be adopted to harvest most out of the mega engine that is social media. With newer trends making it to the headlines on how social media is influencing internet user behaviour in one way or another, businesses must adopt some, if not all, of the tools to make their digital marketing strategy a success.

However, with advertising and social media marketing playing the most important conversion rates, businesses can go on spending recklessly without actually knowing whether the money invested is giving them the expected return or not. In this situation, a plethora of social media tools come in handy for businesses to track the profitability of the social media strategy adopted by them so that course corrections can be done immediately. These tools perform usually one or more of the following functions: content curation, discovery, scheduling, publishing, analytics and tracking audience engagement.

Following are some of the most often used social media tools:

Buffer: It started as a scheduling tool for Twitter, and today supports most social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, etc. It is used to share your content on the go within your browser without navigating to those social media platforms specifically. Users can also upload custom photos and videos. The postings can be scheduled, in addition to shortening URLs of the content being shared. An additional feature is its intuitive dashboard to track user behaviour.

Buzzsumo: This tool helps you keep a close tab on your competitors' activities as well and be ahead of the curve. Since competition is an inherent part of today's business psychology, it is important to use this tool to gain deep insights into how your content is doing and find out who are influencers. It helps you to find out which content is being shared like wildfire on social media and get customised alerts based on topics or domains trending, so that you can develop your content based on those alerts. Keyword research makes you stand out from your competitors who too might be developing content, but not as well as you might do. Competitor research is enabled by this tool's usage.

Google Trends: This is simply an interface which tells the end-user about the trending topics and keywords, based on geography with the audience strength indicative of the trend's popularity. Entrepreneurs and social media marketers can use it to compare how their keywords have fared vis-a-vis other domain keywords. This helps them to modify content provision strategy based on geographical locations. The interest over time graph is a piece of information which tells businesses how and why the content peaked or slid in popularity, with related topics giving a cue about other keywords which trended in tandem with the parent keyword.

MeetEdgar: This is a social management tool that helps marketers manage content depending on the requirement, as well as optimise the social traffic built around the content. The automated content re-sharing facility helps businesses to monitor their traffic and keep social media users engaged, increase return on investment and boost evergreen content's relevance by posting content which is posted based on your custom scheduling so that content's relevance is never lost.

Hootsuite: It is one of the most popular tools around to track different social media platforms under one roof. Through the Hootsuite dashboard, marketers can have a bird's eye view of all the recent posts and their performance concerning user engagement. All the social media accounts are accessible and content sharing and user behaviour are all manageable using Hootsuite. A social media calendar and team management allow social media teams to collaborate better and map the customer behaviour to the marketing returns in a much closer and direct manner than is possible with most tools. An in-depth breakdown of different social medium performance along with analytics comes in handy to modify the marketing strategy whenever required as per need. It also provides for easier integration with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other popular social media platforms. But, it comes across as a very expensive tool and can be a costly proposition for a casual user.

Mention: A powerful social media listening tool, it monitors social media about the performance of your brand and helps entrepreneurs to respond to their audience reaction from within a common platform, rather than traversing to that platform in person. Influencer marketing campaigns is made easy using Mention, along with monitoring a brand's performance vis-a-vis its competitor's online presence.

Sumo: Traffic management is something that Sumo is famous for, providing that extra zing that entrepreneurs expect most social media

tools to provide. It offers insights on uer engagement in such a way that necessary course correction can be made midway, rather than spending their whole marketing budget without getting commensurate returns. Its social shares feature helps users visiting a website to share content on social media seamlessly. Businesses this way can keep track of the number of shares done on various media platforms and, hence, keep a close tab on the performance of their content marketing strategies.

Google Analytics: One of the best ways to understand about your website's visitors and the type of content which draws them is provided by Google in the form of Google Analytics. It allows you to drill down to see which pages attract maximum visits and which invite maximum bounce rates or where the user just left without navigating to any other section on the website. You also get to know the source from where all traffic came from, the number of leads converted and the overall website traffic as well as unique impressions. Understanding your audience behaviour better and more will help you to tailor-make the content accordingly so as to attract the audience particularly suited to your domain.

Facebook Insights: The section on Facebook insights can be an eye-opener of sorts for many. Here, businesses get to know about user engagements, number of likes to their pages and followers they get and how other pages on the same topics are doing elsewhere vis-a-vis their posts. It also shows demographic breakdown of audience based on gender, age, education, employment levels, etc. to better allow businesses to know their audience and develop content suited to their requirements. It also shows which posts gather the most engagements, whether organic or paid.

As noted above, social media tools help businesses track user engagement with their content on the fly and respond to the feedback received quickly. They help businesses connect with the right audience, build sustainable online relationships and get better conversions from social media.

4.6 SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT FOR MULTIPLE DEVICES

With the evolution of smartphones, multi-device and responsive websites and social media content have also become a unified reality. The way content is being consumed has changed considerably, with smartphones and tablet usage changing the landscape considerably. A mobile-first strategy is being given undue weight by most marketers, as, invariably, this is how majority content is going to be consumed now. To develop a social media content strategy which is compatible across devices, it is imperative to understand how the majority of users relate with their devices. This, however, requires marketers to understand which devices users prefer to access content platforms and how much time users spend on them on an average. This helps marketers to map out the right content based on the peculiar requirements of the platform. Hence, it is important to align the content development with the goals that business has on social media. This logic has become even more important with the emergence of

hashtags and mentions as part of mainstream conversations, which are easier to manage through mobile devices than on desktops. Actionable, readable and shareable content is what users want, especially with a majority of users just scanning web pages, without getting to read them.

Responsive web design (RWD) provides the development team option to develop the same version of web content to be flowable and flexible to open in a variety of resolutions across devices. Through RWD, developers make the same content to be served on multiple devices by using media queries to determine how the content is rendered on the client-side environment. Developers use the concept of screen breakpoints – which are essentially different width resolutions of user screens – to allow content to flow at correct width for devices ranging from smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop to ultra HDTVs. Since the range of screen resolutions is so vast – it can range anywhere between 300 pixels in width to 2,000 pixels for most common devices – this requires a different strategy for content and artwork for each audience group, since the requirements of each group may be different. According to Google documentation on best practices, keeping the message short and crisp, reducing unnecessary clutter, and getting to the point quickly are some of the best ways to deal with a mobile audience. Designing content for mobile phones is an art and requires careful strategy to capture the 'next billion' as Google puts it.

Social media platforms have also considered it essential to be responsive to user interactions and hence started incorporating changes in their features to suit such behaviour. A case in point is the way YouTube has now accommodated vertical videos and will now dynamically resize the video resolution to fit its viewport, so that users do not feel awkward while viewing videos shot in portrait mode. With the emergence of user-generated content in the form of selfie videos as the next in-thing, it is no wonder YouTube has rolled out this update to cater to a large section of the audience and adjust its viewport along with controls depending on the video resolution. Such adaptive views take into consideration the user community's viewpoint and resultantly cater to their preferences. A content marketing professional should take a cue from this kind of adaptability of the social media platform and create videos and static artwork to meet the requirements of device preferences of users.

4.7 THE ALL-IMPORTANT META TAGS

Schema mark-up codes are a rich way of providing information to end users about a website through intelligent and concise snippets. Marketers can particularly influence how their websites appear when shared on social media by ensuring that their developers add the required lines of code. Schemas are content previews with rich information sets about a digital asset on social media, search engines and mobile apps, which ensure that user engagement hits the maximum because content displayed is optimized. Social sites attract a higher user base with richer multimedia content and feel more trust when seeing more details upfront. A title, description and an additional image help users to just share by adding a custom message, other information is already taken care of through schema mark-ups.

Rich snippets view is also provided by microdata, like itemscope (specifying block of content about a particular item), itemtype (value of an itemtype can be determined according to the type of content on your web page, according to a list of predefined values) and itemprop (it defines properties for itemtype in the scope). Metadata to social sites can be provided through itemprop values, like name, description and image. To test whether the right schema mark-up code has been generated, it can be tested using Google's Structured Data Testing Tool or many other similar online tools. A marketer or coder can check the code by adding the URL of the web page they want to test in the testing tool and ensure that the user sees exactly the snippets of content that the web developer wants them see in social media posts, search engine results, apps and other such aggregating platforms.

Open Graph protocol (popularly known by its abbreviation OGP) is used to provide rich snippets on Facebook, with the metadata providing rich snippet information when the page is shared on Facebook. Sometimes it is also called Open Graph metadata. The meta tags can be described using property and content attributes, like title, description, canonical URL, image, type, etc. These tags provide semantic information to crawlers from social sites, like Facebook. The OGP has also been adopted by other social sites. Here is an example of OGP of the film *The Rock* in IMDB database:

<html prefix="og: http://ogp.me/ns#">

<head>

<title>The Rock (1996)</title>

<meta property="og:title" content="The Rock" />

<meta property="og:type" content="video.movie" />

<meta property="og:url" content="http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117500/" />

<meta property="og:image" content="http://ia.media-imdb.com/images/rock.jpg" />

...

</head>

...

</html>

The corresponding metatags for Twitter are called Twitter cards. They allow user engagement on the social platform by allowing them to add media, like images and videos, to tweets with a link to the web page. By adding appropriate metadata, tweets with links to a brand's page will have a card added that includes the rich detail added by the developer. Markups can be validated using Twitter's Card Validator widget.

The best way is to include all the three options described above in your web page's head section under the <head> tag, so that the respective user group gets a rich preview on the go while sharing your web pages, which improves the credibility of your content and makes user behaviour more engaging.

Models and Tools for Reading User Insights

Businesses need to gain user insights to better serve them with improved and targeted content. Major social media platforms have developed their own set of tools to understand how users respond to posted content, drilling-down to fine details on the parameters of demographics, language groups, geographies, interest areas, educational level, etc., which assist individuals, businesses and organisations in making informed decisions about their marketing and social campaigns and create a tailored experience for users based on the categories they fall in. Hence, measuring social media engagement is an important facet for companies and organisations to determine how they create campaign strategies. Below we describe various methods and concepts involved in measuring user engagement on social media posts:

- Tracking audience growth over a specified period is a sure-shot way to determine how content is being received, with the rate of audience growth giving a fair indication of the content's reach. The number of followers/following ratio on social media is also indicative of how particular businesses fare in following interests related to their industry, but there should be a balance in the ratio. It is ideal to keep this ratio near to 1, to relay the right message to your end-users.
- *Clicks per post* (CPP) measures the number of times users click on the links included in the shared content. This indicates the traffic from social media to the linked web page and shows whether the content is aligned with the brand message and the target audience.
- *Audience demographics* helps a business track categories of users most interested in their services and whether that maps with their target audience. Information about age, gender, designation and geographic location about the audience through tools noted above provide critical user insights and make businesses think whether to alter their content strategy.
- *Cost per click* (CPC) is the amount businesses pay to social media platforms per individual click on their sponsored social media post. CPC provides an important indication on how paid content marketing performs on different social media platforms. Rather than focusing on total spending done, businesses should instead focus on CPC to help them weigh if their investment is efficient or wasteful.
- *Cost per thousand impressions* or *cost per mille* (CPM) is the amount a business pays to a social media platform every time a thousand users scroll past a sponsored post. Unlike in a CPC-measured campaign, a CPM post does not necessarily drive action but only creates impressions and views. Therefore, it is more difficult to evaluate from a monetary perspective but contributes to overall brand building.
- *Post reach* is an effective way to determine how many people have seen a targeted post from the moment it is made live. It depends on many factors, out of which the post's timing (denotes

when your audience is available online) and its content type are primary factors.

- *Social share of voice* (SSoV) tells us how many people are mentioning a brand on social media vis-a-vis its competitors.
- *Conversion rate* is one of the most important metrics when it comes to judging the value of social media posts and their effectiveness towards the achievement of the result, which is conversion of a user into a prospective customer by tracking their actions once they land on your website. A higher conversion rate shows that your content is compelling and goal oriented.

Though likes and shares counter is one among the many ways to determine a social post's reach and impact, it is a basic indicator of how well its audience is connected with the post and its relevance to building your brand online. But, for a more professional evaluation of user behaviour requires a content marketer to employ the tools described above and measure their content's reach.

4.8 CONCLUSION

Building an effective social media strategy – both for monetary purpose as well as to meet branding goals – is the result of a combination of factors, which when put together, yield positive results in the long run. There is an immediate need for businesses to recognise that social media is one of the most important components of their entire digital ecosystem around which brand awareness and user engagement primarily revolves. Social media being a mega platform, offering multiple options to content marketers, it needs to be properly leveraged with the right and adequate set of tools and techniques to gain critical insights about user behaviour. This not only involves relying on the traditional approaches, like grey SEO and social media marketing, but also investing intelligently on paid marketing by keeping a close tab on social media metrics and constantly changing strategies accordingly. With the evolution of multi-resolution media devices, it has become essential to tailor social media content and approach accordingly.

4.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is white-hat SEO technique?

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2. How can content marketers use Google Trends to reach the right audience?

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3. Describe schema mark-ups and OGP and the role they play in content depiction on social media and search engines.

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4. How is the same social media content presented on digital devices of varying resolutions without compromising on conveying the right message to the right audience?

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Answers

1. White-hat SEO technique includes building audiences organically and ethically with keyword analysis, backlinking, link building to improve link popularity and writing blog posts. Marketers who want long-term returns on web pages employ this technique.
2. Google Trends is simply an interface which highlights trending topics and keywords in different geographies. Entrepreneurs and social media marketers can use it to compare how keywords on their web pages fare vis-a-vis other domain keywords from competitors.
3. Schema mark-up codes are a rich way of providing information to end users about a website through intelligent and concise snippets. Open Graph protocol (popularly known by its abbreviation OGP) is used to provide rich snippets on Facebook, with the metadata providing rich snippet information when the page is shared on Facebook. Schemas are content previews with rich information sets about a digital asset on social media, search engines and mobile apps. Schema codes and OGP tell social media platforms and search engines what information to fetch from a web link to show to users who can preview image and text.
4. Social media and web content banks on the responsive web design (RWD) technique to allow the same content to be flowable and open in a variety of resolutions across devices. This entails using CSS media queries, which define content placement within defined resolution of screen width in pixels. The width of most commonly used devices can range anywhere between 300 pixels to 2,000 pixels. A developer defines width breakpoints, say at 350 pixels, 500 pixels, 990 pixels, etc., and then defines the resolution of media files and and font sizes. For example, an image on a screen breakpoint of 350 pixels can have a maximum width of 250 pixels, but on the screen width of 990 pixels, it can be 700 pixels wide.

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UNIT:5 SOCIAL MEDIA, POLITICAL BRANDING AND GOVERNANCE

:: STRUCTURE::

5.0 Introduction

5.1 Objectives

5.2 Arrival Of Political Activism On Indian Social Media

5.3 Mini- and Meta-Brands

5.4 Composing a Political Campaign on Social Media

5.5 Content Placement in Big Political Campaigns

5.6 Social Media and Good Governance

5.8 Conclusion

5.9 Check Your Progress

5.10 Reference

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media allows you to contradict and question at the same time. It is for this reason that social media has come to acquire the trust of its users. Of late, the role of traditional media, like newspapers, magazines, radio and television news, has come under attack on two counts: one, it is considered as way too uni-dimensional, whose top-down approach does not sit well with youth, which is restless and politically aware; second, since the traditional media has become concentrated into a few hands, as it involves big money which only a few can afford, there is a fair amount of criticism around it being manipulated by the rich and the powerful the influence public opinion, especially during the all-important electoral processes.

On the other hand, social media has seen spectacular growth in India, particularly around the two General Elections of 2014 and 2019. Political parties have built in a big way on its humongous user base, especially among the first-time voters, and its ability to facilitate two-way communication between political players and their support base. Social media became the arena of high-voltage political debates around issues and political personalities in these elections. While it is tempting to conclude that social media facilitates spontaneous debates in such surcharged environments, these two elections and political campaigns in Western democracies have generated interest among researchers to study how political campaigns are structured on social media to maximise their reach.

It has been noticed that social media platforms are organised enough now to influence the decisions and choices of individual supporters through a unified message shared by all the active agents of a political group. At the same time, these campaigns provide opportunity to the bright and enterprising among these supporters to stand out through

their posts, comments, tweets, etc. and capitalise on the heat and momentum generated by political campaigns and become social media influencers.

Social media not only helps political leaders in connecting with their support base but also allows them to assess their popularity in a certain demographic. Social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, allow users to connect amongst themselves and create a wave in favour or against a political party or leader. Politicians all around the world, including in India, took note of this phenomenon after the US presidential election of 2012 came to be known as a social media election, in which around USD 2.23 billion were spent on various marketing techniques on the internet.

In this unit, we will study the emerging trends on social media campaigns and what makes these political campaigns successful.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

- Understand how social media acts as a tool for political branding
- Know how key individuals act as mini-brands within larger political campaigns
- Learn to customise content for political campaigns on social media
- Understand how the idea of good governance attaches itself to social media
- Know why public institutions should use social media to engage citizens

On the Completion of This Unit, You Will be Able to:

- Learn how social media captured the imagination of the Indian political class
- Grasp the vastness of social media canvas in global democracy
- Create content for different types of political and governance-related campaigns
- Understand best practices required to become a successful manager of a political campaign on social media

Index of Unit Contents

- Arrival of Political Activism on Indian Social Media
- Mini- and Meta-Brands
- How Political Campaigners Target Social Media Users: The Case of Trump Campaign
- Composing a Political Campaign on Social Media
- Content Placement in Big Political Campaigns
- Social Media and Good Governance
- Why Public Institutions should Use Social Media

5.2 ARRIVAL OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM ON INDIAN SOCIAL MEDIA

Today it is impossible to imagine a world where all political messages are communicated to the intended audience exclusively through press conferences or press releases, which was the norm till a decade ago. Politicians and activists do not speak with their audiences and support groups through traditional media like news bulletins and newspapers. Neither do their audiences wait for the newspaper to arrive the next day for them to know the thoughts of their leaders. Social media has ensured that users want to participate in political debates either with leaders or their official support groups before they decide to throw their weight behind one ideology or the other. The active participation of potential supporters and a constant need to engage youth in a political conversation has brought political parties and social groups of all ideological hues on social media. Political messages now originate on social media and then travel to other forms of mass media or even mobilisation platforms on the ground, like rallies, house debates, TV shows, etc.

The immense of growth of internet users accessing social media on their mobile devices, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, has created a continuous two-way relationship between users and their leaders, because a mobile device is always with the user and the internet has become affordable to keep both sides connected to each other. The market research agency Kantar IMRB measured that in India there were around 566 million internet users in early 2019, out of which 251 million were in rural India. The agency expected the number to touch 627 million by the end of 2019. These numbers have motivated political parties to pour in money to ensure their success during election campaigns and create a positive brand image for their leaders.

Political campaign managers in India have successfully learnt lessons from campaigns run in Western democracies, especially the Barack Obama campaign for the US presidential election of 2008. The Obama campaign is considered the first major political campaign which successfully used social media to garner political support. However, it took some time before social media political campaigns became major influencing factors in Indian elections. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) are considered the first effective users of social media for political campaigns in India. The political campaigns in India grew in number and influence around 2012 when a social movement was launched against corruption in public life by the social activist Anna Hazare. Soon, the new entrant in Indian politics AAP tapped the potential of social media for the Delhi Assembly election of 2013. The next big political campaign was launched by the BJP for its prime-ministerial campaign of Narendra Modi for the 2014 election. The next big political campaign was launched again by AAP for the 2015 Delhi Assembly election.

Both the BJP and AAP, the two early proponents of political campaigns on social media in India, used novel methods of creating brands for their respective leaders. They included catchy one-liners, hashtags, video stories and endorsements by celebrities. The AAP

campaign of 2015 included the catchy Hindi slogan *'Paanch Saal Kejriwal'* (five-year term for Kejriwal), which was sung by the playback singer Vishal Dadlani and shared on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. It had become an instant hit. Similarly, the 2014 campaigns run by the BJP, like *'Abki Baar Modi Sarkar'* (Modi government in this election) and *'Chai pe Charcha'* (teatime discussion) enthused its supporters on Twitter and Facebook. Staying true to the composition of a political campaign on the ground, the social media political campaigns, thus, show similar traits of catchy slogans.

5.3 MINI- AND META-BRANDS

Brand strategist spends their lifetime in understanding how organisations create and showcase their identities over social media to users. In today's social media era, public figures are no different from brand names. Political leaders have bigger following on social media compared to commercial brands. The former US president Barack Obama has a following of over 110 million on Twitter, whereas the big US coffee company Starbucks has over 11 million followers on the same platform. Apart from the reason that politics plays a much bigger part in our lives than brands do, the main reason behind this difference could be that users are able to connect better with individuals than they do with non-human entities.

A political party is only as appealing as its leadership. Or, at least, that is how it has played out in world politics recently. A good example for this point of view can be the rise of Narendra Modi in the BJP. He has moulded his party in his own image ever since he has taken to the national stage. Similarly, Barack Obama did wonders for the Democrats, while his successor in the presidential race Hillary Clinton failed to project a Democrat brand in her own image. Every political party needs a face which can resonate the party's motives and plans among its supporters.

While a good leadership choice can help a party win elections, a bad choice may ruin the hard work its cadres put in the field and be a financial burden for political campaigns. Brand analysts believe that faceless campaigns or campaigns which have less credible faces at the centre tend to have a lower reach or exact timid response from supporters. While the actual electoral success depends on a number of factors, the importance of credible campaign faces add that extra factor for them to be effective. And, social media campaigns are no exception to this rule. It is this understanding of campaign dynamics that prompts, for example, the BJP to weave its major political campaigns around Modi in the field as well as on social media.

This kind of individual or the face of a campaign, thus, works as a smaller voice for the larger set which is the political party they represent. We can call these leaders as mini-brands. The actions of these mini-brands help them connect with individual supporters and build a loyalty relationship with them and the parties they represent. The regular updates on social media about their activities, visits to various demographics, interaction with citizens, speeches and views keep users connected and add to their fan following. Every tweet and Facebook and Instagram posts are a part of a unified, controlled

message which the party wants these individuals to share specially during elections, so much so that many a times a careful user can detect the similarity in messages shared by multiple leaders of the same party. This fact hints at a coordinated approach managed by a central authority either within the party in question or a marketing agency engaged by the party.

The organised nature of political campaigns on social media has led to a new concept called meta-brands. These are proxies between users and the political parties; it could be any ghost author, a reporter or anyone with some following on social media who is purposely engaged by political parties. Their aim is to project the ideas of the parties through their channels and accounts in support or against a notion. Since they are not associated with any party directly, they have an advantage of claiming neutrality or objective distance. Political parties hire these individuals to present their ideas to social media users to create an environment in favour of the party line while projecting as if these ideas are being adopted and pushed on the internet spontaneously.

How Political Campaigners Target Social Media Users: The Case of Trump Campaign

Gone are the days when gathering support for a political campaign could take up to a month. With the power of social media in full display, getting support for a campaign has become easier for political parties and activists. Social media works as a communication channel and plays a key role in broadcasting the crux of the message of any political campaign. Social media has enhanced people's access to political information. They now feel that they are part of the targeted campaign and share their views either for or against the campaign on their social media handles. Analysts believe that such a targeted campaign directly influences the voting decision of users.

One of the popular political campaigns which is considered successful in impacting the voting decision of American voters was Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again' again for the 2016 presidential campaign. With his dedicated team of social media experts, he was able to convey his political messages across and ultimately obtain victory. He promoted his views from his social media handles both on Twitter @realDonaldTrump and Facebook. Paid ads on Facebook allowed him to reach more users than organic posts did. The campaign was initiated on Facebook with an initial ad spending of over $2 million. Later, it expanded to include massive spend on Twitter, where his team popularised hashtags #makeamericagreatagain and its abbreviation #maga. He received huge donations for this and after which he shared the names of his supporters giving them the credit for this outreach.

Political observers believe that Trump used social media more than any other candidate in the campaign, and it became his primary mode of reaching out to his supporters. Trump seconded this opinion in 2017 when he openly attacked traditional media and attributed his presidential success to social media. He tweeted: 'The FAKE & FRAUDULENT NEWS MEDIA is working hard to convince Republicans and others I should not use social media – but remember, I won the 2016 election with interviews, speeches and social media. I

had to beat #FakeNews, and did. We will continue to WIN! My use of social media is not Presidential — it's MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL. Make America Great Again!'

The Trump campaign is known for the effective use of Facebook's custom audience and lookalike audiences features, which experts believe swung the social media campaigns in his favour and against his Democrat rival Hillary Clinton. Custom audience feature allows a campaigner to bid for Facebook ad real estate with clickbait ads. Facebook counts a successful bid in favour of the bidder who has a better chance of making a user engage with a post or ad. This allows for more provocative content to emerge winner in the ad-bidding process. Trump's team ensured that its content was more clickbatish than Clinton's and won this game handsomely. Similarly, through the lookalike audience feature, Facebook allows uploading of email addresses, profiles and other contact details of users that an advertiser wants to target and through which Facebook's algorithm finds users with similar profiles and delivers them advertisements. Trump's team used a custom database of voters, which was code-named Project Alamo, and had data of over 220 million Americans. It engaged Texas-based firm Giles-Parscale, which identified 14.4 million persuadable voters in swing states for serving political ads, posts and videos on Facebook and other platforms. The Trump campaign is said to have paid an estimated amount of $94 million to Giles-Parscale for effectively running this social media campaign.

5.4 COMPOSING A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

For any political campaign to be successful on social media, one must ensure that it has the foundation it needs to succeed. While most features that a political campaign has on social media are similar to what other campaigns have, there are some peculiar points which a social media manager should not lose sight of. Given the nature of debates and discussions a political campaign generates and the way it polarises audiences, it is important to understand the ingredients of the campaign well, since the content once posted cannot be easily retracted. The stakes are very high in political campaigns and therefore advance planning and multiple checks should be considered before content goes online. Here are some aspects that a social media manager can keep in mind to create an effective and error-free political campaign:

- **Understanding ideology:** Much like any brand, a political party has an ideology that informs its actions and policies. It is also true of campaigns the party runs on the ground and on social media. A social media manager of such campaigns should ensure that they understand the brand/party and its ideology well. The manager should know the stand of the party on major issues very well and respond to emerging debates in the light of the party's ideology. For example, if the party has been stating that it is against foreign direct investment, a message in its support may harm the party's image.

- **Create a team:** Any campaign needs the support of a good team, which has a good understanding of social media and content creation skills. Knowledge of current affairs greatly empowers the team. Its members should also know their target audience and the party viewpoint before starting any campaign. They should be able to create diverse content, both visual and textual, and also respond to the comments on social media to engage readers consistently.
- **Create a plan:** Planning in advance greatly reduces the chances of a flaw and last minute mismanagement. The social media team should create a calendar for various days for different platforms, declare engagement goals and identify potential partners and influencers who can lead the campaign as its faces. The team should be aware of what is to be shared on the social channels well in advance to prevent last-minute content creation issues.
- **Verified accounts:** Having a verified account on social media platforms greatly amplifies the reach and reliability of any political campaign; both Facebook and Twitter offer the option of verifying accounts. The social media team should ensure that the accounts of individuals or parties which wish to tweet are verified. This way the users are sure that the message being shared with them is authentic and not fake news.
- **Understanding the target audience:** To get an understanding of the target audience the social media team should run some initial ads or use data from earlier campaigns. The key areas to focus on are age groups, likes, dislikes and demographics. Minor details, like the time when the users are most active and devices (desktop or mobile) which they use, can be a game changer in the long run.
- **Tracking the campaign:** In running a social media campaign successfully, tracking the engagement levels of the targeted audience is as important as creating content. The social media team can easily use insights and data provided by social media platforms to better understand in which audience segment a particular campaign is making an impact. The social media team should also consider using external and commercial tracking tools, such as Hootsuite, TweetReach, Brandwatch Consumer Research, BuzzSumo, etc. Though these tools charge a hefty license fee, but insights and analytics provided by them allow the social media manager to study the engagement levels of users to the minutest details.
- **Omni-channel approach:** While a social media manager intuitively knows that they should focus on multiple social media channels – like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. – to reach a wider audience, they should differentiate in the messaging meant for individual channels. There could be multiple factors why a different audience prefers a particular platform. It is important to understand the composition of each audience segment per channel and then customise messaging accordingly. Though this principle is

true of all social media campaigns, it becomes particularly true of political campaigns since it is in the nature of political messaging to reach out to particular support segments. For example, the campaigns around issues that concern youth should be run on channels where there is a sizeable youth presence. There is little value to pushing a campaign on such an issue on a channel which has minimal youth participation. Also, the composition of messaging allowed on each channel requires that messaging is done differently for different channels. For example, there is character limit on Twitter, but Facebook allows users to share a larger message. Similarly, pictures perform better on Instagram.

- **Visual messages:** According to studies, visual messages have a larger impact on users and tend to create more buzz when compared to textual updates. Make use of images and videos in the social media updates. Using real images is preferable to stock photos. It is much easier to use visual messaging in political campaigns on social media, since content is easily available in the form of speeches, sound bites, interviews, etc. The social media team should build on this material and post it on different channels with additional material, like data charts, images and infographics. Channels like YouTube, which is the second largest search engine after Google, and Facebook videos keep users engaged for longer duration. Apart from standard video messages, the social media team should look to leverage live streaming features of YouTube and Facebook to take political campaigns immediately to users.
- **Discussion communities:** Making use of discussion communities greatly enhances the reach of a political campaign. There are several discussion communities on the internet, like Reddit and Quora, where users frequently ask and discuss political topics. In fact, Quora has emerged as one of the most popular discussion sites in India in recent years. Replying to queries and taking part in political discussions by the social media team ensures users are engaged and aware of the party's ideologies.

The social media manager should remember are that not every message can go viral. Asking the followers for their feedback from time to time ensures that you are on the right path. Request your followers to share your message within their circles of influence, so that it can gain more views. Another engagement strategy to run contests or ask questions on your social media pages. This could be something like #SelfieWithTiranga where users were asked to take a selfie with the Indian national flag. This was one of the most popular hashtags on the Independence Day in 2019.

5.5 CONTENT PLACEMENT IN BIG POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Political advertising is often thought to be a 30-second TV commercial which often becomes boring. On the other hand, social media advertising is an interactive medium for candidates and the

viewers to connect with each other. It allows two-way interactions, helping parties to build trust with their audience, where candidates get to know more about users' likes and dislikes. The digital nature of this medium allows candidates to measure success of the campaign on various parameters and analyse them for further effectiveness.

To use social media platforms to its full potential, a social media manager should begin by analysing current topics on which content can be generated in favour of the client. It could be something like electricity shortage in an area, low employment rate or high inflation. Different demographics and geographies respond to different topics as per their concerns. A metro may suffer from low employment rate or high rate of crime, while residents in a rural area may be worried about frequent power cuts. Depending upon the brand profile being sought, a candidate may want to push a piece of content talking about the employment situation in the region or on gender equality. Creating content on such topics which resonates with common people ensures that the message gets high engagement rate even when the political tempo is not high. Such topics draw users' attention throughout the year irrespective of whether elections are close or not.

On the other hand, content composition of an out-and-out political campaign, especially when it is high profile in nature, is completely different. For example, when the 44th US president Barack Obama created history to became the first African American to win a US presidential election in 2008, it was seen as a great victory of the internet campaigning. One of the major factors for his victory was the effective use of social media platforms and technology. The stats from his campaign are enough to prove the work done behind the curtains. He was active on 15 social media platforms and had 15 million cumulative followers; his YouTube content had over 50 million views and a watch time of 14 million hours. His campaign team sent one billion emails. It also planned 200,000 offline events and 400,000 blog posts were shared. The team composition and strategy started one year before the elections in 2007. The campaign focused on building communities and did not solely rely on technology. It created a website, www.my.barackobama.com, where users could create their own profile and connect with other users. The website carried promotional material in the form of speeches, videos, posters, debates and photos, which users could share among their groups. One should note that the content preferred by the 2008 Obama campaign was longer in nature, since the social media platforms which push shorter content pieces, like Twitter and TikTok, had not arrived yet. The staggering number of blog posts preferred by Obama's team shows that brand campaigners still treated social media content as an extension of news media.

The biggest social media campaign in India in the political space was undoubtedly Narendra Modi's bid for prime-ministership in 2013-14. It is widely believed that Modi's team was able to influence a large number of young voters through relentless social media campaigns across platforms and devices. Modi's team relentlessly relayed party slogans across social media platforms. The most prominent of its campaigns was built around a catchy slogan *'Achhe din aane waale hain'* (good days are about to begin), which ran with hashtag

#AchheDin for days during the election campaign phase. The BJP's social media channels carried Modi's live speeches and then ran his sound bites for days after the speech got over. Quotes from these speeches, the data used in them, slogans coming out of political rallies were turned into infographics to be shared on social media channels. Soon, he became the most followed Twitter personality in India. The 'Achhe din' video garnered over 4,00,000 views on YouTube.

Modi's 2014 campaign was managed by the brand strategist Prashant Kishore. He is credited with bringing the Western-style social media political campaigns to India with the Modi campaign. Apart from managing the nitty-gritty of this campaign, he caught public imagination with the offline-online event called 'Chai pe Charcha' (teatime discussion), in which Modi would interact with groups of citizens through live chat and video conferencing which were relayed on social media channels. Kishore's team also identified influencers on social media who would support the BJP's messaging among their followers. The core idea of Kishore's strategy was to depict Modi at par or bigger than the party he belonged to. Kishore ensured that even if the actual political messaging came from the party, Brand Modi became its chief communicator to people.

With these examples, one could conclude that when it comes to big political campaigns, social media is a very effective medium of the overall strategy of a party and its messaging cannot be different from the overall electoral messaging of the party. The second takeaway is that on social media in big campaigns, the main actor behind a campaign is the content. All content originates in and ends with the main actor at least till the election lasts.

5.6 SOCIAL MEDIA AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Ever since social media became the preferred method of accessing information on the internet, governments and elected representatives have adopted its various channels to connect directly with citizens and electorates. Though traditional media continues to wield influence in conveying the messaging around governance to citizens, social media has dented its popularity. In certain cases, elected representatives speak exclusively to people through social media, or at least do so till traditional media picks up the cues from social media and converts them into stories in TV broadcasting, newspapers and websites.

Once elected, governments tend to spend heavily on their social media channels. Elected representatives also move in quickly into their new roles and adopt official social media handles to communicate with citizens. For example, Barack Obama tweeted regularly from his official handle @WhiteHouse on Twitter once he was chosen to the White House while maintaining his heavy Twitter presence on his personal account @BarackObama, which he had created during 2008 presidential campaign. In India, Narendra Modi tweets regularly from the handle @PMOIndia, which was started by Monmohan Singh's government in 2102. However, when it comes connecting with his supporters, Modi tweets from @NarendraModi.

In usual course of events, governments and ministers usually describe their policy initiatives to citizens through official social media

channels, but the tone of content changes if governments face a difficult situation. For example, in December 2018, when the UK prime minister Theresa May was facing a difficult vote on the Brexit deal, it is known to have spent heavily on social media to influence public opinion, a move which was heavily criticised by her opponents. Facebook said in a statement in December 2018 that the May's government had spent £100,000 on Facebook advertisements in a week leading up to the Brexit vote in the House of Commons.'

Factly, a public information portal in India, estimated in 2018 that the publicity spending of the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has increased consistently with a total figure of about Rs 10,000 crore from 2002 to 2018. It measured that this spend increases up to 40 per cent in the election as compared to the preceding year. It also claims that 'the NDA government spent a total of Rs 67.17 crore in the ... [four] years between 2014-15 and 2017-18'.

Realising the importance social media plays in communicating governance- and policy-related issues with citizens, the Department of Electronics and Information Technology devised guidelines for government agencies in 2012 to engage the general public. It identified four reasons why government agencies should use social media strategically: enhanced outreach, because of the immense user base of social media; real-time engagement, because it 'connects policymakers to stakeholders in real time'; individual interaction, because traditional media does not allow policymakers to engage with users directly; and, managing perceptions, to stop fake information about the government's work from damaging its reputation.

This set of guidelines also requires government departments and their social media managers to be aware of the following aspects:

- **'Identity:** Always identify clearly who you are, what is your role in the department and publish in the first person. Disclaimer may be used when appropriate;
- '**Authority:** Do not comment and respond unless authorized to do so especially in the matters that are sub-judice, draft legislations or relating to other individuals;
- **'Relevance:** Comment on issues relevant to your area and make relevant and pertinent comments. This will make conversation productive and help take it to its logical conclusion;
- **'Professionalism:** Be polite, be discrete and be respectful to all and do not make personal comments for or against any individuals or agencies. Also, professional discussions should not be politicized;
- **'Openness:** Be open to comments – whether positive or negative. It is NOT necessary to respond to each and every comment;
- **'Compliance:** Be compliant to relevant rules and regulations. Do not infringe upon IPR, copyright of others;
- **'Privacy:** Do not reveal personal information about other individuals as well as do not publish your own private and

personal details unless you wish for them to be made public to e used by others.'

These guidelines remain valid for all students who are training to handle government accounts in future.

Social media managers of political campaigns should keep the following aspects in mind:

- Share the point of view of a party or candidate on important, trending topics at regular intervals to ensure constant engagement
- Interact with your community/target audience at every opportunity
- Create different content pieces for different social media channels. For example, an embedded video content on Facebook performs 200 per cent better than a text or an image. Since the user is restricted to 280 characters on Twitter, the message should be short yet effective. If the tweet is long, breaking it down into several parts will help
- Make sure that the first message in a series is most impactful to attract people into the whole thread
- Remember that content is king. Make sure the design of every tweet or update is perfect
- Regular updates ensure that your users are not lost
- Develop a social persona for the party or the candidate. Barack Obama and Narendra Modi's tweets do not necessarily fill users with politics all the time. You get to see the other side of these politicians where they live their normal lives with their families. Such pictures and posts gather significant attention and help build a relationship with the audience
- Host Twitter discussions and Facebook live sessions. Make use of Facebook and YouTube live option to connect with the target audience.

While the government uses social media as a public relations exercise, the general public uses social media to interact with public officials, government departments and elected representatives to hold them accountable and seek redress of their grievances. Citizens tend to tag public officials and ministers when their grievances are not heard through regular channels and sometimes when they are in a state of crisis. Helping such citizens in their need of crisis and then publicising it on social media works for government departments.

The former Union minister for external affairs Sushma Swaraj built a reputation for herself and her ministry when she started taking distress messages from Indians all over the world who were stuck on foreign shores for one reason or the other. She would often swing the government machinery into action with a simple tweet sent by an aggrieved Indian. Similarly, the former minister for railways Suresh Prabhu would address grievances of rail travellers when they tagged him or the ministry on social media for any deficiency of service.

However, many a times, citizens are at the loggerheads with their governments. Social media plays an important role in such situations too. A research conducted by the Virginia Tech College of Science in 2017 concluded that the penetration of Facebook has a direct bearing on people protesting against government corruption. Compiling data from 150 countries, its researcher Sudipta Sarangi claimed that Facebook acts as an alternative to free press. He says, '... [S]ocial media is negatively correlated with corruption regardless of the status of the freedom of the press. In other words, Facebook likewise helps reduce and/or lessen corruption in governments where press freedom is low.' Most importantly, this study concludes that most of the anti-corruption content is user generated and not an organised effort. One can conclude that social media, thus, keeps government officials on their toes and overall can have a positive impact on governance.

Why Public Institutions should Use Social Media

Given the number of users that social media has and the amount of time they spend on its various platforms, it is unthinkable that a responsive government will not engage its citizens there. In fact, social media is fast emerging as a medium of choice for government communicators. These platforms bring many benefits to the government apart from letting it live up to its primary task of being accountable to its citizens.

Some of the key benefits of using social media by government agencies are:

- **Cost-effectiveness:** India is the world's second most populated country. For any government agency, reaching out to every citizen is a challenge. Traditional public outreach to an ever-demanding electorate poses major difficulties and involves a heavy cost. Agencies tend to use social media for a part of this outreach programme at an affordable cost and can obtain better results per rupee spent.

  Governments around the world spend billions of dollars on public relations. In the 2014-2018 period, the Indian government spent over Rs 4,300 crore on public relations. Social media can dramatically cut this cost. Instead of spending a huge amount of money on traditional advertising and banners, governments can now leverage the cost efficient online platforms, like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, to create awareness about issues of public interest. These platforms have acquired great penetration, on which public participation can be measured.

- **Effective during disasters:** Social media has made government organisations more effective in the time of public emergencies. Sharing information about an earthquake, cyclone or any other natural disaster has become easier and help save lives. People use features like the facility to mark themselves safe on social media to convey to their family and friends about their well-being. Social media has become a place to provide verified information by government agencies

in such times when accessing reliable information becomes a challenge.

- **Interaction with citizens:** In richer countries, almost everyone in the age group of 16 to 24 years is on social media. This group spends up to six hours everyday on social media. Facebook remains the market leader and records about up to 2.3 billion monthly active users. In India, there were about 326 million social media users in 2018, a number which is expected to touch 448 million in 2023. With such heavy user presence, interacting with citizens and ensuring that their concerns are heard can help build trust in the government. Social media gives government the opportunity to be transparent and effective.
- **Building trust:** Government agencies are forever fighting a perception battle and finding newer ways to seek citizen trust in them. In the '2019 Edelman Trust Barometer: Global Report', researchers found that only 58 per cent of informed people trust in their government, while the corresponding figure in the general population is around 47 per cent. However, it must be noted that the general population in India trusts its government more than the global average. The trust figure in this survey for India is around 72 per cent. Government agencies globally rely heavily on social media to increase this figure to a more acceptable level.
- **Educating the audience:** Social media allows government institutions to educate and disperse messages to their audience. Messages ranging from environment conservation, like reducing the use of plastic and water conservation, to civic and health awareness, like eating iodine for brain development, can reach the target audience effectively if proper content placement is done on social media for the right audience.

  As users recognise verified accounts, they understand that these government institutions are the source of credible and trustworthy information. Users tend to refer to these accounts to gain knowledge and education on diverse topics without worrying about the harmful effects of unreliable data or vague arguments.

  A good example in this category is NASA and ISRO's social media handles. Nearly every post on these handles is educational and offers information on astronomy and physics. With over 50 million followers on Instagram in 2019, NASA's posts have very high engagement rates. The reason behind its success is that its social media managers know their audience well and provide credible information to them apart from engaging data, videos and pictures.

Social media accounts of government institutions should not focus just on themselves. Rather they should engage their audience and address the issues faced by citizens. Encouraging discussions and engagement with users allow such institutions to understand citizens' problems and rectify them.

The social media manager of a government institution should be a good listener, and before writing any tweet or Facebook post, they should understand the target audience and demographics the public institution wants to serve. Many social media managers who run handles of government institutions make the mistake of sharing posts before knowing what their audience wants to read or what redress it seeks. It results in a poor engagement rate with posts and a poor social media experience.

To understand users, social media managers should read user comments regularly, check demographics and help in solving their problems. Social media gives a great opportunity to government institution to answer queries that citizens raise. A good example of social media connectivity with users can be seen by visiting the social media handle of any of the e-commerce giants, like Amazon, Flipkart or eBay. On these platforms, every query or feedback is replied by a dedicated team of social media handlers. This helps the businesses sustain in the long run and helps customers pose trust in a certain brand. In the same way, a government institution or a political party can gain trust by replying to the concerns of their users regularly and promptly.

5.7 CONCLUSION

We know that with each passing day, the number of citizens who are accessing online services is increasing; hence, it is essential to leverage the power of social media for political campaigns and governance-related issues. Transparent, authentic and strategic efforts on social media can increase the support for any political party or government institutions.

The measure of a successful political campaign focuses on participation of public and addressing their immediate needs. Government institutions should come forward and start using social media to address the issues faced by people in their demographics.

In recent years social media has helped political parties from around the world increase their voter base and allowed open communication with them. Paid social media provides a wider reach and accurate targeting with tailored messages for different audience sets. Since social media is a double-edged sword, political parties should use caution and wisdom while running online campaigns and its social media managers should be aware of pitfalls a badly run campaign can create.

5.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Questions

1. How can online communities help in creating a buzz during political campaigns?

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2. Which social media channels do you recommend for political marketing and why?

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3. Why is it important to interact with supporters on social media?

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4. What are the relevant metrics for tracking return on investment on social media?

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Answers

1. Online communities like Reddit and Quora have a huge user base, where users are constantly engaged in discussions related to politics. Replying to popular questions and sharing positive answers improves the chances of success of any political campaign.
2. No single social media channel is enough to reach all audience sets, though Twitter and Facebook are two social media channels which have more than 50 per cent of all social media users and hence can be targeted specifically. The engagement rate and flexibility to run ads on these channels allows a campaign manager to fully utilise them to their potential.
3. Social media handles should not be treated as one-way communication medium. This approach restricts the engagement level of fans and supporters of a party or candidate. Constant engagement with users on social media platforms allows a party or candidate to have a better recall value among the audience.
4. Engagement rate is one the key metrics which should be monitored along with brand reach and lead generation. Though good engagement rate in itself may not be the complete way to provide users with conversions. If a campaign fails to provide conversions, other metrics like landing page experience, banner designs and messaging should be checked. However, this conversion should not be confused with the conversion of a social media user into a voter in favour of they party that runs the campaign.

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UNIT : 6 SOCIAL MEDIA AND BRAN MANAGEMENT

:: STRUCTURE::

6.0 Introduction

6.1 Objectives

6.2 Arrival Of Political Activism On Indian Social Media

6.3 Account Names, Handles and Audiences

6.4 What and When to Post on Social Media

6.5 Conclusion

6.6 Check Your Progress

6.7 Reference

6.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media is one of the most essential tools to reach out to customers in the modern age of internet. There are over 3.2 billion people on the internet, which is nearly half of the world's population. Apart from this reach, the cost effectiveness of social media far surpasses that of traditional media channels, like television, press, radio or billboards. Social media is a two-way communication concept, which allows customers to connect with their brands and brands to respond to their customers' needs and concerns. When social media branding is done correctly, it can help the businesses grow manifolds.

6.1 OBJECTIVES

- Understand the concept of social media branding
- Understand how brands use social media to expand their businesses
- Identify best channels for social media branding
- Learn how social media help in lead generation for brands
- Track success of social media branding exercises

On the Completion of This Unit, You Will be Able to:

- Understand why social media matters in branding
- Differentiate between different social media platforms and comparative advantages they offer
- Decide which handles to choose for your brands and how to verify your business pages
- Understand how to measure the success of branding exercises using platform-specific tools

Index of Unit Contents

- What is a Brand?
- Social Media Branding
- Best Channels for Brand Management
- Acquiring an account and handle name
- What and When to Post on Social Media
- Cross Promotion
- How and What to Track on Social Media

6.2 WHAT IS A BRAND?

Before understanding how social media helps corporates in branding and marketing, one must understand the concept of branding as against the idea of product. A product is the item or service which is sold in the market, whereas a brand is acknowledged by customers as a well-known name, design or personality. For example, when we talk about mobile phones, the dominant name that comes to mind is Apple. It ranked at the third spot in the Fortune 500 list in 2019 just below Walmart and Exxon Mobil. Over the years, Apple has created an unparalleled brand name for itself. It has reached out to consumers around the world and set a benchmark for its competitors with a device like the iPhone, though it has also started its transition from a product (iPhone) company into a service company.

Much like a brand, the word *branding* in marketing term refers to the process of creating and disseminating the brand name through a product or service. The process of branding can be conceptualised on the single product or a company/organisation selling that product.

Brands that revolve around products are usually protected by trademarks, so that others cannot copy or use their names and design. Usually, they have a distinct logo and a tag line.

Social Media Branding

While traditional ways of branding exercises, like reaching out to consumers through TV and print advertisements, billboards, events and word of mouth, continue to be in vogue, a new aspect has been added with the advent of social media. According to Hootsuite, there are 3.48 billion social media users in 2019. This huge number makes social media the ultimate branding arena, which no company with ambition to have a global or even local footprint can afford to ignore.

When we talk about social media, we mainly emphasise on the five giants which have the most number of users and come to acquire unassailable leads in their respective areas of influence. They are Facebook with 2.41 billion monthly active users; YouTube with two two billion monthly active users; Instagram with one billion monthly active users; Twitter with 335 million monthly active users; and, LinkedIn with 590 million monthly active users (all figures for October 2019). To have a presence on Facebook, Twitter and

LinkedIn is a must for any organisation looking to expand its presence on social media and create a brand recall value for its products.

Social media branding is about consistently engaging with the audience and gauging their needs and queries. Much like traditional channels, social media also enables in expanding brand awareness. It helps brands to build a firm fan base and loyal customers who are always eager to buy from the company.

According to a 2016 survey of social media marketers, the number one goal for companies on social media is to grow brand awareness, followed by lead generation and customer loyalty among others. Apart from this, social media also helps in tackling customer grievance. Top brands, like Coca-Cola, Amazon, Google and Microsoft, employ a dedicated team of social media experts who handle their customer support on social media channels, which is essential in today's competitive world.

Best Channels for Brand Management

Before beginning the task of brand management on social media, a marketer must know which channels to target for maximum reach of brands in their portfolio. While the aggregate numbers of users on each platform vary and may even look staggering, it becomes important to know which kind of users the brands will appeal to. Each social media channel comes with its set of positives and cost effectiveness.

- **YouTube:** Apart from being the second largest search engine on the web, YouTube also has the second largest user base. This vast user base watches over five billion videos on this platform everyday and, on an average, mobile viewing session lasts around 40 minutes. These figures give brands the exposure they need to reach their target audience.

  A social media manager should keep in mind that upfront promotional videos do not gain views on YouTube. They may be good for paid promotion, but on the organic side they fail to generate views. Therefor, before starting with YouTube, the social media team of a product should understand the brand well which it wishes to promote and create educational videos around the brand. Creating content around tackling already existing problems with the product or brand service in question can help garner more views on YouTube, where how-to videos generally do well. For example, if the social media team has a task of promoting a hair loss shampoo, the team should first show users the widespread problem of hair loss, the causes of hair loss and how the product being promoted can assist in overcoming this problem.

  The social media team should also realise that YouTube is not designed for all brands. If a company has a small social media team which lacks the ability to create good videos in a short time, it is better to avoid YouTube and use this scarce resource on other channels. Sporadically posting videos of random products which the company wishes to promote will not engage users and, therefore, not have the desired outcome. Consistently creating high-quality videos around the

customer's preferences will help in increasing brand awareness.

It is easy to create a brand page on YouTube. Just head over to the profile change and click 'Your Channel' link and change the channel name; also add a logo and a banner image that represents the company's objective and fill in the 'About' section as concisely as possible. Do not forget to place YouTube channel's link on the company's website.

If a certain video starts performing better than others, it is an indication that the audience will love to see more such videos. Longer videos of over two-minute duration, created in high resolution, tend to outperform shorter videos on YouTube, something many marketers forget to notice since on other social media channels shorter videos perform better. Having keywords in the title of the video and its description greatly increases the chances of it showing up in search results and in the section of similar videos. Also, remember to create custom thumbnail to increase visibility and click rate. It must be remembered that many unethical brand promoters use clickbait thumbnails to draw users. While this strategy can work in the short run, users tend to attach negative brand value to such tactics in the long run, which can prove detrimental to the branding exercise of products which want to win a loyal following.

- **Facebook:** Facebook is the big daddy of social media. Nearly all major brands are on Facebook these days. The primary reason behind it is that it offers multitude of functionalities and flexibility to brands to interact with their customers and understand their needs apart from the fact that it has the maximum number of users among all social media channels. Brands can send personal messages, set auto replies to queries, schedule posts using third-party apps, share videos, create events, showcase business pages, run paid promotions and much more.

  It is suited for nearly all businesses, big or small. It also does not require a huge team to manage a brand page. To begin with Facebook, brand managers should set marketing goals: what does a company want from social media?; does it expect better visibility or more lead conversions?; does it want to increase brand awareness or offer customer support. Once this has been decided, the social media team should create a business page on Facebook and select the correct category. Selecting the right category for the brand is important as it allows Facebook to classify brands properly and allow its posts to be shown in the timelines of users who are most likely to be interested in those brands. Also, make sure to add one or multiple banner images, a logo, a detailed description about the business, its working hours and a website link.

  Once the page is set up, the social media team should start posting regularly. Videos and pictures perform better than text updates on Facebook. Remember that always talking about the

company can bore users. Mixing updates and talking about trending topics related to the business help in gaining loyal fans.

Facebook also provides the feature of personal messaging, where users can get in touch with brands and get their queries resolved. Quick response to users' queries increases the brand's credibility and wins loyal followers.

Another feature which a social media team should harness is the verified page. A verified page gets a batch shown with a blue tick mark; this gives users assurance that this is the authentic page of the company with which they can interact and is neither a fan page nor a parody account.

- **Twitter:** Launched in July 2006, Twitter is a micro-blogging site; it allows users to share an update of up to 280 characters. This means that the social media team should keep its messages crisp and to the point. Sharing images and short videos under 140 seconds, which is the allowed limit, ensures a higher engagement rate. Twitter offers somewhat similar functionalities to those of Facebook, where a brand can get in touch with customers and even respond to their queries over personal chat. However, Twitter does not offer any functionality like a Facebook business page. Instead, it treats a user account as a business account.

  Businesses should use Twitter to create awareness about the brand or product. Also, it should be used to answer customers' queries and improve customer loyalty through periodic interactions. Keeping an eye on the competitor's Twitter feed can help understand what works for others and what does not. Brands that offer consistent engagement with users tend to perform better on this channel.

- **LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is a social media platform dedicated entirely for businesses and educational purposes. It has over 590 million professionals in its network. It mainly focuses on business-to-business marketing. Much like Facebook, it provides businesses the ability to create showcase pages from which they can share constant updates to engage their followers. One of the main objectives of brand awareness which is fulfilled by LinekdIn is increased reach through greater exposure and identifying customer's professional portfolio.

  On LinkedIn, marketers achieve their goals through paid advertisements or building a following through targeted organic content. After acquiring a page, the social media team should post a well-written description in the overview section of the company's 'About' page. A banner showcasing company's work and logo should be added. Ensure that company's top management also has well-written profile pages, which convey to the user that the page is genuine and followed by known names in the industry. LinkedIn also offers users to post long articles, which can be used to engage users and generate credibility among them. Much like Facebook,

LinkedIn also allows posting of images, videos and text updates to be shared from its business pages.

- **Instagram:** Unlike Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, Instagram is more focused on a younger audience which prefers a casual, informal way of communication on social media. It is hard for businesses to get business-to-business traction on Instagram. Instead, this channel focuses on image and video sharing; hence, brands which have a lot of images and videos to be shared on a regular basis should consider Instagram as its primary channel. It can be considered a visual solution for inspiring and captivating audiences from around the world. Instagram provides tools for business users to help them get most out of their accounts; one can find options similar to that of Facebook business pages, like call to action, call, text, email and more.

  Business profiles on Instagram also have access to analytics tools to help them evaluate the success of their posts. Since Instagram is an image-focused social media platform, sharing images vaguely will not benefit the brand; instead, a brand should have a well-defined character to it. Pictures can be used to tell stories or benefits of a product. If a brand wants to get more followers on Instagram, it should have a certain plan to keep users engaged through its posts.

While dealing with these social media channels, a marketer must understand the importance of hashtags. They are a great way to get exposure on Instagram and Twitter. Hashtags are used to promote a campaign or a popular keyword. For example, a hashtag for a Christmas with #ChristmasEve will show all updates with these keywords. When using hashtags, make sure that they are related to the post and should be specific, targeted, relevant and well thought of. Also, remember that when a hashtag that can be identified with the brand being promoted is already trending, that is the best time to push related posts on your pages and get the benefit of local or global trends.

6.3 ACCOUNT NAMES, HANDLES AND AUDIENCES

The first part of any kind of brand management on social media is to acquire a handle on each platform. It is best advised to have the brand name in the handle so users can easily find it. This is also beneficial for SEO purposes: when users look for a company or a brand name, they can easily find it in Google or other searches. Google searches through feeds from Twitter handles in its search results.

Keep the name of the handle short and easy to remember. These social media handles work as user names for various websites and can be accessed by using @ sign within posts. This allows users to tag a brand name in their posts whenever necessary. For example, @CocaCola is the handle for Coca-Cola on Twitter. Once these social media handles are acquired, link to these handles should be placed on the official website of the brand or company at a prominent place, either on the header or the footer of the website, allowing users to easily follow the brand's updates. Through various widgets, it is also

possible to allow website visitors to like the social media pages of brands without opening social media sites. Placing such widgets on websites can help garner more likes. This also gives users the sense of authenticity, and they are able to differentiate between a real and a fake/parody/unofficial handle.

Make sure to use the official logo and banner on the acquired social media business page. All social media websites provide a bio/about section. This should be used wisely to reflect the company's services and activities. The bio section should contain link to the official website, phone number and address. Do not fill the company's about section with random hashtags, motivational quotes or unrelated things.

Knowing your Audience

A big challenge faced by business is that they fail to get initial traction for their brands. They wait for something to happen. Brands should promote their profiles whenever possible through print media, flyers, brochures, business listing websites and other social media channels. Organisations should also ask their employees to follow their social media handles and share it with their circle. Getting the first few thousand followers is difficult. It is only after this base is built that social media pages of brands start acquiring organic traffic and followers.

An important part of social media branding is to know the target audience. This helps in making practical decisions, like what kind of content can be shared on social media channels, what the right time to share content is and who in the organisation's hierarchy should acquire the content. Planning a strategy on these lines can generate a higher engagement rate as compared to sharing post for a blanket audience. Some of the key metrics to track are age group, gender, demographics, time when target users are most active on social media, devices used for accessing posts, etc. Brands need to get into the shoes of the audience in order to get a better picture of which kind of content is most liked by them. Keeping an eye on the competition can greatly enhance the chances of creating engaging posts.

Verified Handles

Whether it is a personal or brand account, having a verified handle on various social media channels can be a game changer. A verified handle is a symbol of authenticity and conveys to the audience that this is the real account of a company or brand. Getting verified is a difficult task and can be time consuming, but it is worth the effort. If the account has a huge following and not been verified, it may mean that either the company has not tried to prove that it is the official handle or the social media platform has not noticed it.

Initial rejections of the requests to get verified from a social media platform are part of the process, especially for lesser-known brands and companies. If one follows the rules correctly, getting verified on Twitter or Facebook is not a tough task. It may be harder for some parties to prove their identity as compared to others, given that there could be competing claims on the same or similar brand identities and, in some cases, these claims could be a part of the legal adjudication in a territory.

Twitter was the first platform to introduce the verification option, which was soon adopted by other social media channels, like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc. It is a way to identify which accounts are fake, parody or unofficial and which ones are owned by the brands or companies they talk about. The verified account also tells users that this is no ordinary profile and is worth following.

To get verified on Twitter, a user must fill in the bio details, provide a profile picture or logo of the brand and add a cover photo, name, website address and other details. The user or brand must have a verified phone number and confirm an email address. If you forget the password or need to reset it for any reason, the social media platform will use these details to verify that you are the genuine owner of the account. Also, remember to add the birthday if the account is about an individual. The tweets should be made public in the privacy setting option. Once these steps are complete the user should head towards the Twitter verification form page and fill out the form https://verification.twitter.com. Use an official email ID to improve the chances of getting verified. The biggest factor which helps in getting verified is that the profile should be of public interest. If the request is rejected, the user can try again in 30 days on Twitter.

Similarly to get verified on Facebook, two essential things are required: good press coverage and a compelling reason. To get a business page verified make sure you select the right category for your business, which is a local business, company or organisation. As mentioned for Twitter, the bio section of the page should be complete with a clear logo of the organisation and a cover image. Once this is complete, head towards the 'Page Settings' link. Under the 'General' option, you will see the page verification link. Click on the 'Verify This Page' link and get started. Fill the given form with essential information, like a publicly listed phone number, country and language. Once done, click on 'Call me Now' option to allow Facebook to send a verification code.

If the user does not see the 'Verify This Page" option on the company's page, it could be because the feature has not been rolled out to all users yet or the page is not eligible. It may require more likes from Facebook users or a better bio section. If this does not work for a brand and it has a Facebook Business account with a good amount of budget spent each month, ask the Facebook customer care executive to assist you with the verification process. The executive can file the verification request on behalf of the company.

The turnaround time for Facebook to revert to a verification request for a blue badge varies from three to 45 days. The user should keep an eye on the support inbox for any incoming messages from Facebook. Some of the reasons for getting denied verification badge on Facebook include a lack of media coverage, no Wikipedia page, the lack of a compelling reason to get a verified ID, a lack of good content on the Facebook business page, etc.

With the number of Facebook users increasing each day, the verification process has become tougher, and Facebook will not verify a business or a brand page until its popularity is proven.

6.4 WHAT AND WHEN TO POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The type of content shared by a brand on social media sites shapes a company's image in the mind of the audience. The content shared by a brand may make or break its marketing campaign. Hence, it becomes important to know what is to be shared through the company's official handles. Visual content has always been appealing users more than the textual content, especially on most social media sites. Video marketing is something to look out for. According to a study done by the internet-marketing company Backlinko.com, uploaded Facebook videos get over 200 per cent more views compared to videos linking to external sites like YouTube. A social media manager should create short videos around the brand which are engaging and describe the details about various services or product features the brand offers. Videos can be tutorials or some tips which can benefit users.

A brand manager should use tools like BuzzSumo.com to find out if there have been some posts related to the niche in which the brand is trying to run campaigns.

Social media sites like Facebook offer more content choices when compared to other platforms. For example, long videos and a large number of images can be shared on Facebook without incurring any cost. According to a study done by Sprout Social in 2018, 30 per cent of users it surveyed said that they wanted links to more information from brands, followed by 18 per cent who said that they wanted more images; another 17 per cent said that videos would be more engaging. The same report was discussed with social media marketers who said that videos were their top priority. Similarly the traffic for video content is expected to rise by 82 per cent by 2022.

Visual elements play an important role in the content creation for any brand. Eye-catching creative designs perform better than doodles designed by unprofessional designers. A social media manager should prefer using real images in comparison to stock images. Remember that our brain perceives visual content 60,000 times faster when compared to regular textual content.

Some of the content which a brand may produce is tutorials, daily tips, product details, services offered, etc.

Hashtags

Promoting a brand on social media becomes hard when no hashtags are used in posts. A hashtag is denoted by the hash sign (#) and was first used by Twitter. These are now popular on nearly all social media platforms, likes LinekdIn, Facebook, Instagram and even Pinterest. A hashtag works as a hyperlink which shows all the updates on a social media site which have used this hashtag and have something in common. Hashtags are mainly used for campaigns, events or even to showcase a popularly searched keyword like #travel. It draws attention and encourages users to interact.

Hashtags are spelled with a hash sign, followed by the keyword one desires to use in the post. There is no space between the hashtag and the keyword. One can use numbers but symbols and punctuation marks are not allowed. These hashtags can be placed anywhere in the

post. It also allows the social media network to index whatever the brand handle has shared.

Hashtags should be used carefully. Adding keywords which are irrelevant to the post can irk users, forcing them to either unfollow or report a handle for spamming. Short hashtags are easy to remember than a single long word. Hashtags can help in not only attracting the target audience of any brand but are also useful in getting insights about a brand's competition. Searches done using a certain keyword uncover all content shared on that topic by all competitors. Use tools like https://hashtagify.me or https://keywordtool.io to find the best hashtags related to the keywords you want to target.

Scheduling Posts

A common misconception among the marketers is that their pages can become popular overnight. In an attempt to achieve this, they tend to share unimportant and irrelevant content. Feeding users with too much content of one type can backfire rather than being beneficial. Building relationship with the target audience takes time and effort. Hence the frequency of your social media posts should be optimal. A post per day is a good number to begin with for a new brand. If you are news site or media house, this number can be as high as two to three posts per hour. Remember to be consistent with the posts and refrain from publishing all ready posts in one day and going blank the next day. Consistency is the key to getting more user engagement. Many popular online publishing tools can help marketers in social media media publishing, like Hootsuite.com, Buffer.com, Zoho Social, etc. These tools allow administrators to schedule their posts on all major platforms, including Twitter, Linkedin, Facebook and Instagram. To get a greater reach, the posts should be published when users are most active. This data can be found in the insights section of the Facebook page you are handling.

Facebook is one of the most difficult social media sites to get views from organic content. Algorithms have made it harder to get optimal posting times. Visit the insights section of the page to find out when users are most active for a business page. According to recent studies, Wednesday has been recommended as the best time to post for most of the Facebook profiles, whereas Sunday is the least active day to get engaged with users. The least recommended time for sharing social media posts is early morning or late night. Identify where your users mostly come from and then determine the right time for their time zone.

Cross Promotion

Cross promotion of a brand's social media content does not require any investment and helps in expanding the brand's reach. Cross promotion should not be confused with cross posting, wherein a brand shares the same posts on all social media channels. This may give users an impression that the brand is too lazy to rewrite its posts on different channels. Marketers should avoid cross--posting and instead curate posts for each social media platform differently.

The best way to cross-promote a post is to contact brand or company partners and request them to share the update from the brand's official

handle. Marketers can tag these partners in their social posts as well. This will help brands leverage the fans of their partners as well. These partners can include influencers who may be from the media, well known entities, users with a high number of followers and celebrities.

Marketers can also join hands with local businesses, businesses outside their niche area, nonprofit organisations, etc. and convince them to share their posts. A good example of cross promoton is where a bookstore donates books to a non-profit organisation and the recipient non-profit gives a special mention on its Facebook page to the bookstore.

Marketers can also use the monthly or weekly newsletters sent from brands to promote their social media posts. These newsletters can use customer relationship management (CRM) tools to strengthen the connection between the audience and the brands. Newsletters can have mentions of the best posts which were shared on social media in the designated week or month. This not only helps in increasing user engagement but also attract more followers to the brand pages.

Similarly, marketers should also request users on social media to subscribe to their periodic newsletters. This will help in increasing subscribers in the email list, which are considered an efficient way to convert leads into sales. To encourage email sign-up, add a custom subscribe link on social media pages. The option to add custom tab is available on Facebook and LinkedIn business pages.

Another method to gain more exposure with the help of cross promotion is by sharing social media posts on the brand's website by using widgets provided by social media platforms. Each day the website gains bulk of new users from Google search and having a separate box or a section somewhere in the lower part of the website can help in gaining more fans. Both Facebook and Twitter provide an option to embed page feeds on a website. To embed a Facebook page feed, visit https://developers.facebook.com/docs/plugins/page-plugin and fill the form. It generates an HTML code that can be easily embedded in the website. Similarly for Twitter, visit https://publish.twitter.com and enter the page details. Twitter asks a few questions about the design of the widget and then generates an embed code, which can be embedded in the website. Similar options are available for LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube. It is easy to add social media feeds on the website, though adding too many feeds can confuse users and reduce their effectiveness. Hence, it is important for a marketer to decide which is the best feed to showcase on the brand's website.

Sponsoring an event is another means of expanding the reach of any brand. This is beneficial for both online and offline content promotion. When a brand sponsors an event, the brand is showcased on the social media pages of the event organiser's business page. The audience of these events can follow the marketer's brand page and gain access to current and future content. There are several websites which can help in finding the relevant events and meetings which can be sponsored. They include MeetUp.com, eventshigh.com, bookmyshow.com, etc. Choose an event which matches with the brand's theme and is under the budget.

These strategies for cross promotion can improve the brand's reach. Apart from implementing organic strategies, brands may also improvise by spending a few rupees and gain more paid views. According to a recent study shared on gritdaily.com, organic reach on Facebook is declining. Hence, it becomes beneficial to spend a small amount to gain eyeballs.

How and What to Track on Social Media

There are several small and big things which matter in a brand-building exercise, data being the most important of them all. For example, Walmart has been extensively using sales data to predict consumer behaviour, especially before a natural calamity hits the USA. In one such exercise, the company found that strawberry Pop-Tart was in high demand when authorities made pre-cyclone warnings. It used this data to stock every store with the relevant food items before each cyclone's warning.

This example proves the importance of data tracking, though this examples uses sales data and not social media analytics. Below are five important metrics to track in social media marketing.

1. **Content types:** The content which is being shared on each of the social media platforms should be documented somewhere in a spreadsheet. In order to make this spreadsheet accessible to all the social media team members, a marketing manager can make use of Google Spreadsheet or online MS Office 365 options, which allow multiple users to work on a spreadsheet and ensures real time changes. It is important to keep track of the images used in these posts. The social media manager should create an online repository of these images either by collating freely available images, the ones provided by the client or buying them from paid online databases. This ensures that images do not become monotonous to users when the number of posts is high.

   A marketer should share infographics, videos, guest posts, publications, testimonials, industry case studies and similar information to keep users engaged. Create a column in the spreadsheet to identify if the post is a link-, video-, image- or text-based post, original content or was the content from another source. At the end of each month or a quarter, this strategy will help you identify which content type performed the best. Popular social media management tools, like BuzzSumo.com and Agorapulse, can help in analysing which type of content has been shared more often on a brand's business page.

2. **Date and time:** Though some social media sites, like Facebook, give a brief idea of when users are most active on any fan page, it is best to keep the data in a spreadsheet. Identify which is the best time to post new content. Brands may want to capitalise on trending topics and wish to post on different times of a day or a week. In your tracking sheet, include a column for number of posts shared per week and their date and time of posting. To view the audience metrics

on Facebook, head over to the insights section of the business page and tally your data with what Facebook's algorithm offers.

3. **Audience metrics:** The audience metrics should include the age of users and their location and gender. If a brand's posts are attracting the wrong kind of users, it may not be beneficial in generating leads. In the spreadsheet, a marketer should track the audience data for total followers, new followers, gender, location and age groups.

4. **Audience engagement and emotions:** A social media manager should keep track of the comments and emotions users share in their conversations about a brand. The social media team should notice if users are annoyed with a brand or they are unhappy with the services provided. Taking note of these emotions can help in determining the loopholes and be beneficial in the long run for any brand or organisation. A spreadsheet for sentiments should be created to track user emotions, with columns like number of brand mentions and sentiment type – positive, negative or neutral. Some popular tools to measure brand mentions are mention.com, tweetdeck.twitter.com, brandwatch.com and SEMrush.com.

5. **Competitor metrics:** Many marketers get so involved in their own marketing game that they tend to forget their competitors. Keeping an eye on competitors is one of the pathways to success in social media branding. Since most of the backend analysis cannot be determined from public pages of the competitors, it is best to devise other methods to gauge the tactics competitors use. For example, a manager should study the content being used competing brands, new ideas being adopted and strategies being used. The social media manager should improvise swiftly after noticing better elements in the competitors' campaigns. The social media team should create a column of competitors' strengths, weaknesses, number of followers and engagement differences between your page and theirs in a spreadsheet for ready reference. Apart from the inbuilt insights offered by Facebook on competitors, some of the tools which come in handy in this segment are Likealyzer, Phlanx, SEMrush and BuzzSumo. They provide users with in-depth analysis on competitors' strengths and weaknesses.

6. **User engagement:** Engagement metrics is the foremost thing to measure for any business. This helps in deciding whether a business is heading in the right direction or not. Marketers should not get lost in the mirage of page likes, as an increase in the number of page likes shows only one side of the picture. A good user engagement should include post sharing and comments as well. Some of the metrics to track for user engagement are total engagement, number of likes, retweets, comments, link clicks and shares, increase or decrease in engagement rate, mentions and personal messages received. These metrics are provided in the insights sections of Facebook and LinkedIn page and in the analytics section of

Twitter. It is easier to use these analytics rather than manually counting the engagement of each post.

7. **Social media traffic:** Social media traffic may not be important in the cases of public campaigns, but for brands which wish to sell their products or services, it is an important metric to consider. If users are heading back to the social media pages after clicking on the links of the brand's website, then the social media messaging is not in line with the website content. Make sure that what is being shared on social media is also there on the website, which could be the service or product being offered. The social media manager and the website administrator should analyse how long the sessions for social media visitors last, if they are filling up forms or making a purchase on the web links shared on social platforms and if users need to browse through several pages on the website to find the right piece of information. Analysing such data will give new insights into the social media posts. Google Analytics is one of the best tools to monitor this kind of data. Some of the metrics to keep track of on Google Analytics are number of sessions, page views, bounce rate, number of pages browsed by users per session, session duration, devices used and demographics of users.
8. **Goals and conversions:** Many marketers solely rely on Google traffic for goal conversion, whereas social media takes a back seat, which is seen as a tool only for branding. Social media is a powerful tool, and brands should use it whenever possible to increase the chances of conversion as well. Write down your goals on a spreadsheet, and use Google Analytics to find out how many conversions or goal completions were done through social media. The duration for this goal conversion can be a week, a month or a quarter. Marketers should also include the metrics like conversion rate, number of assisted conversions, the channel used for conversion, economic gains and the number of social media posts done during that duration. If a certain social media channel is not performing well as expected, try a different approach towards it. It could be that image posts are not performing as expected and video content could improve the chances to attracting more eyeballs.

Social media analytics is different from website analytics and should not be restricted to study user engagements alone. It should focus on measuring all marketing efforts, analysing the tactics used and keeping an eye on competition. While reports created around shorter duration may give an obscure image, reports created for a quarter or six months tend to provide a larger picture of where the brand is heading. This also means that the brand-building exercise on social media is a long, arduous journey, which has no shortcuts.

6.5 CONCLUSION

If marketers use social media only to share updates, it may not have any effect on lead conversions for the brand. Direct interaction with

customers and understanding their likes and dislikes are key aspects of social media brand management. Replying to tweets and comments is the initial step in engaging fans. Some companies feel that they are too big to respond to consumer queries on social media and just focus on sharing social media posts. They rarely respond to user comments: this creates a gap between consumers' expectation and the brand, reducing their faith in the brand. Thus, constantly engaging with fans is the key to success on social media for a brand.

6.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Questions

1. How can social media help in expanding a brand's reach?

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2. How does one identify the target audience for a brand?

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3. What barriers do marketers face in conveying the right message on social media?

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4. How does a marketer choose the right social media platform for a brand?

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Answers

1. Social media is an essential part of digital marketing. Platforms like Facebook provide a greater reach for brands than running ads in Google search. Whatever the industry may be, a substantial number of users are present on social media. According to a recent research 68 per cent of American adults are present on Facebook. It also provides an option to brands to interact with users and helps in understanding the target audience. It allows companies to understand what products users are interested in, what their hobbies are and the age group and demographics which prefer a

particular brand. Targeting the right set of users on social media allows brands to expand their reach.

2. To identify the right target audience for any brand, a marketer must make use of both external and internal tools. Internal tools, like Facebook insights, and Twitter and Linkedin analytics, provide useful data sets for advanced analysis. On the other hand, external tools, like Buzzsumo, can be used to study user behaviour and the performance of social media posts. Using these tools, a marketer must keep an eye on the age group, location, time when users are most active, gender and the average income of users to run their campaigns. Running social media surveys from time to time can also help in identifying the likes and dislikes of the target audience.

3. As more and more companies increase their presence on social media, finding leads has become difficult. Some of the barriers that marketers face each day include a lack of expertise: if a marketer is unaware of business goals and has been sharing the same message repeatedly, she will end up with one-sided communication on social media channels. Another barrier is not identifying the right person to manage social media. Every organisation should have one dedicated person who is responsible for social media management. This person should be aware of the company's goals and ethics. Marketers tend to ignore the consistency principle. Updates going online from any brand should be in line with the company's policies and brand name. For example, a dog food brand should avoid talking about politics unless a clear connection can be established.

4. There are numerous social media channels; choosing the right one for any business is the key to winning or losing the marketing game. The nature of the business should be a deciding factor. The marketer should carefully notice whether the company under consideration operates in the business-to-business (B2B) or business-to-consumer (B2C) segment. LinkedIn is best suited for business-to-business organisations, whereas if the brand is targeting casual consumers or business-to-customer segment, something like Facebook or Instagram is a better option. The client's demographic is another factor which can help in deciding the right social media platform. The marketer should consider what gender, age group and location a brand wants to target. While an omni-channel approach is good, constantly keeping track of the social media analysis will help in identifying which platform is performing the best.

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- *Networking in the 21st Century on LinkedIn: Creating Online Relationships and Opportunities* by David J P Fisher
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- *The Art of Social Media: Power Tips for Power Users* by Guy Kawasaki and Peg Fitzpatrick

UNIT : 7 SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS: PART I

:: STRUCTURE::

7.0 Introduction

7.1 Objectives

7.2 Emergence of Public Campaigning

7.3 Internet Activism, Social Media and Public Campaigns

7.5 Public Campaigns as Petitions: The Case of Change.org

7.6 Crowdfunding Campaigns

7.7 Conclusion

7.8 Check Your Progress

7.9 Reference

7.0 INTRODUCTION

The only thing constant in the world is change. A change can begin with the emergence of just one voice of dissatisfaction or discontent over a certain law which may have gone archaic or an issue that affects our surroundings. The voice of dissent can raise concerns about our natural environment, cruelty to animals or any social cause. This voice soon gets amplified on social media, as there is no concern which impacts only one individual, and thus becomes a social movement. The idea of social campaigns is as old as humankind, even when the strategies to organise people around causes or the very definition of causes keeps changing.

In this unit, we will study the anatomy of social campaigns right from the times of the arrival of democracy in the world to the complete dominance of social media as a platform to organise people. In the first part of the larger topic 'Social Media and Public Campaigns', we will discuss how traditional social campaigns changed their character with the arrival of internet activism and then social media, different types of campaign mediums and how campaigners raise funds for such campaigns.

7.1 OBJECTIVES

- Understand the significance of social media in the modern-day public campaigns
- Discuss social platforms which encourage public campaigning online
- Analyse how campaigners mobile public opinion using social media

- Understand how new social media platforms encourage financial support for social campaigns

On the Completion of This Unit, You Will be Able to:

- Understand the modern-day impact of social media in public campaigns
- Understand the functioning behind some of the important platforms and their role in creating awareness
- Understand the real impact social media campaigns create on social issues
- Learn how to raise funds using the crowdfunding method

Index of Unit Contents

- Emergence of Public Campaigning
- Internet Activism, Social Media and Public Campaigns
- Public Campaigns as Petitions: The Case of Change.org
- Crowdfunding Campaigns
- Crowdfunding as Social Media

7.2 EMERGENCE OF PUBLIC CAMPAIGNING

Public campaigning is considered an important ingredient of a social movement without which it cannot be sustained over a long period of time. The concept of campaigning is as old as the idea of social movements, which the American sociologist Charles Tilly (1929–2008) has defined 'as a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims on others'. A public campaign, thus, becomes a sustained effort to influence public opinion and public authorities towards a specific set of goals.

In the modern sense of the term, the emergence of social movement can be traced to the 18th century England, where a fast-changing economic scenario due to the first industrial revolution led to the creation of a middle class, and along with it, the idea of periodicals and newspapers. Historians and sociologists believe that the libel case of John Wilkes (1725–1797), the editor of The North Briton, whose radical views angered the then prime minister of England Lord Bute, created the first social movement. The middle classes often mobilised themselves in favour of Wilkes and chanted slogans in his favour in the streets of London, with which emerged the idea of public campaigning.

With the spread of the industrial revolution and emergence of socialist ideas, the next set of public mobilisation came for the rights of workers, women, disadvantaged groups, like the people of colour in the USA and Europe, and colonial subjects. Newspapers and periodicals played a major role in the spread of these movements. The example of the Indian National Congress is a case in point, since newspapers played a big role in taking Gandhian ideas to the Indian

masses. At the same time, historians believe that the Dandi March was the biggest mobilisation of people in history.

With time and development in technology, social movements started using mass media to reach out to their target audiences. In the 20th century, public campaigns were carried out largely through television, radio and print media along with physical campaigning. But, with the emergence of the internet, and more specifically social media, the character of public campaigning has significantly changed, so much so that many social movements run their campaigns largely on social media. This development has also led to the growth of dedicated online platforms where social groups organise themselves and push their agenda.

7.3 INTERNET ACTIVISM, SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS

Social media started catching the attention of brand managers and public campaigners in early 2000s after it became clear that the online population was moving towards more interactive, or social, features. The first social media platform to hit a million monthly active users was MySpace, which reached the magic figure in 2004. Though MySpace lost its way around 2010 after hitting a peak of around 70 million monthly active users, the social media space has expanded massively. An overwhelming number of internet users use social media platforms now, so much so that in certain countries almost all young users are on social media, with Facebook leading the pack. These numbers are so overwhelming that it dwarfs all other media and branding avenues in comparison.

As a result, public campaigners increasingly began to vie for people's attention and influence their behaviour through various social media channels. Though internet activism was already a popular term by the time social media started attracting users in hordes, it relied heavily on email groups or listserves, newsletters, blogs, podcasts, etc. for discussions among members of a campaign or the potential supporters along with physical gatherings which were facilitated by internet activism.

Public campaigns on the internet have had many celebrated moments before it shifted to social media. One of the earliest examples of public campaigns taking the internet route was the Intervasion of the UK movement. Termed electronic civil disobedience, it was launched in 1994 against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill brought in the UK Parliament by Prime Minister John Major's government. It sought to outlaw outdoor dance festivals. Protesters from all over the UK email-bombed the country's cabinet members and Parliament's servers with an intention to jam their internet facility.

Another high point in the trajectory of successful internet campaigns was the movement against globalisation discussion happening at the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in 1999. Many global social movements came together to create a multilingual internet portal the Independent Media Center, which came to be popularly called

Indymedia. Hundreds of grassroots and independent journalists from around the world contributed stories to this portal.

By mid-2000s, a lot of public campaigns moved to social media. The traction on social media was so big that many political movements, which were largely spread through social messaging and posts on the internet, could effect regime changes. The Arab Spring protests in West Asia shook up the politics of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Syria between 2010 and 2012, followed by public campaigns like Black Lives Matter, Je Suis Charlie, Occupy Wall Street and MeToo.

Analysts feel that social media multiplies the support a socially conscious organisation or movement would otherwise have and even gives space to individuals and causes who stand ignored in traditional media. Social welfare organisations, like the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which was established in 1980 long before the emergence of social media and already had a strong presence globally, increased its influence multifold due to running successful campaigns on social media. Its main page on Facebook had over 5.6 million followers in 2019 and its country-specific pages also being popular within animal lovers in respective countries.

According to its 2019 annual review, its social media posts were seen an average of 142 million times each month. In its half-yearly 2016 report, it claimed that its social media team posted 500 posts about animal killing, vegan eating and the treatment of animals raised and killed for food on. Its video 'Chicken Dinner in Reverse', which shows the truth about where a chicken dinner comes from, was shared 151,500 times and received 15 million views on its main Facebook page alone. Similarly, its video 'A Year of Vegan', which shows the journey of a vegan starting from Googling 'how to go vegan' to gradually helping her mother become a vegan received over 1.9 million views. Its video and subsequent posts on social media about the mohair industry in South Africa, which depicted cruelty in name of shearing goats, led to more than 300 brands, including Lacoste and Zara, to ban the use of mohair.

Similarly, public health causes have benefited through social media campaigns. In 2018, Mahindra partnered with the Cancer Patient Aid Association and posted a video called *'Sehat ka Batua'* on social media. It was part of a breast awareness programme and used purse as a metaphor to check for breast cancer. This video got 750,000 views in 2019 and was shortlisted for the Cannes Lions 2018 festival in the the Campaigns for Change category.

While running public campaigns on social media, featuring a known public figure boosts the impact of posts and videos. For instance, the American actor Matt Damon posted a video for Water.org about the scarcity of potable water in developing countries and how women have to stand in queue for up to six hours to fetch water. This video went viral on several mediums, including YouTube. His videos often feature the problem of accessing potable water in India.

The cases of PETA and Water.org look like impressive social media success stories. However, critics warn that social media mimics corporate biases of traditional media and allows a higher traction to bigger organisations which are centrally controlled and funded or

where popular figures are involved. Activists often complain that social media behemoths do not allow democratic pooling of resources and management of pages and communities the way a web server allows.

7.5 PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS AS PETITIONS: THE CASE OF CHANGE.ORG

As previously mentioned, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. are some of the largest social media platforms where an individual or an organisation can get quick access to hundreds of millions of people. However, there are dedicated platforms which operate specifically in the sector of social welfare and public awareness. In this section, we discuss popular social media platforms which campaigners can leverage to spread their message and win popular support.

The foremost among the campaigning sites is Change.org. Crucially, it is run by a for-profit organisation called Change.org, Inc., which is headquartered in San Francisco in the USA. It was founded in 2007 by Ben Rattray and since then has grown to have a large user base across continents. In fact, by January 2020, it received only 26 per cent of its traffic from the USA, the rest being spread across countries. It gets around 9.8 per cent of its traffic from India and an equal share from Brazil. Users can raise public petition on this website on a host of issues, like environmental causes, human rights, health, sustainable economics, etc., and seek support in their peer groups on this and other social media platforms.

Change.org claimed to have 265 million users worldwide in 2018, with India accounting for around 13 million users. It has won investments from some of the biggest names in the digital ecosystem, like the Microsoft founder Bill Gates, the British entrepreneur and founder of Virgin Atlantic Airways Richard Branson, the founder of Huffpost Arianna Huffington, the Hollywood actor Ashton Kutcher and co-founders of Twitter, LinkedIn and Yahoo.

Its business models includes running paid campaigns for organisations like Amnesty international, Humane Society, etc. It also earns revenue through a subscription membership model and people promoting petitions on the site for a fee and raises money through crowdfunding. In 2018, 1.6 million people promoted petitions on this social media platform.

Some of its most notable petitions include the 2016 petition to impeach Dilma Rousseff, the then president of Brazil, which got around 2.2 million signatures. In India, a clean-up campaign for the Ghazipur landfill site in Delhi, which was marked to the local member of Parliament and former cricketer Gautam Gambhir, received around 30,000 signatures. The Parliamentarian acknowledged the campaign and his Twitter page and promised to address the citizens' concern. Another petition led by Alina Tiphagne and signed by over 63,000 Change.org users led to Uber to mandate a seven-year background check on all its drivers. The petition was initiated after a woman was raped by an Uber driver in December 2014.

Similarly, in Iran, Iman Ghavami's online petition to the governments of Iran and the UK to release her sister Ghoncheh from prison got over 775,000 signatures. It aided in her release in 2015. Ghoncheh, a British-Iranian dual citizen, was arrested after she went to watch a men's volleyball match.

When the deadly coronavirus hit multiple countries and almost paralysed life globally, Change.org saw a host of petitions on its portal, in which people urged their governments, corporates and fellow citizens to act decisively against the deadly virus and take care of the vulnerable among them. Cumulatively, in the first week of March 2020, just when the pandemic spread across continents, the petitions portal had seen around 3.6 million signatures on over 1,600 petitions. Many petitions demanded that companies allow workers to operate from home or universities allow online classes without a loss or reduction of wages or attendance respectively, two aspects that seemed to have become effective immediately.

Change.org has acquired a diverse character and elicits social behaviour form its users the way any other social media channel does. Change.org patrons can work on groups and support very large causes or simply back smaller causes which are of no significance to a large number of people. Sometimes the most popular of its petitions win support from patrons for causes which appear more like quirks. For example, in 2018, over 1.2 billion signatories on a Change.org petition urged the popular social media platform Snapchat to junk its new app and revert to the older version with which users were more comfortable. Similarly, when the popular video-streaming platform Netflix announced in 2018 that it would discontinue the sci-fi show *The OA*, its small, but loyal, audience started an online and offline movement #SaveTheOA. The audience descended upon New York City's Times Square as flash mobs and protested outside the Los Angeles headquarters of Netflix with slogans like 'Algorithms don't tell stories. Human hearts do'. Since Change.org plays an important part in raising awareness about a cause, however localised it may be, a petition was raised to save the show on this platform too. In August 2018, the same month in which the show was cancelled, it had won support from over 80,000 people. This number shows the importance of a popular petitions platform and how people consider it important enough even when they decide to launch physical protests.

Change.org has moved from 6,000 petitions in 2008 to more than six million in 2018. Such a massive jump made it reflective. It commissioned a study to analyse petitions on its platform to help users figure out what works in digital activism. The study 'Crafting Headlines for Change: The Art and Science of Petition Titles' found that petitioners preferred 'stop' as the most common first word in the tile of their petitions, followed by 'save' and 'ban'.

Based on these studies, the organisation suggests to its patrons that they consider the following points:

- *Positive terms:* the organisation feels that positive terms, like 'save', 'grant' and 'protect' in the title of the petition are more likely to achieve enthusiastic response from peers than more negative terms.

- *Title length:* the report deduced that short, crisp titles in petitions do not work, unlike on other social media channels. In fact, the longer and descriptive a title is the better chances it has of catching the attention of users. However, the organisation cautions against using very long titles.
- *Locale details:* the report found that most petitions are geography specific and extremely localised in their appeal. Thus, it suggested that the title of the petition should mention clearly where the action belongs. It also helps on SEO both within the portal and on other popular search engines. The organisation, in fact, suggests that users should use keywords about most local surroundings.
- *Clickbaits:* the report suggests that clickbait titles do not work on Change.org, as its audience is more serious than on other social media platforms. The patrons on this platform go there to consciously engage, and not just to read about an issue, which makes intense involvement a pre-condition for them. Such users are not likely to come on the portal just on the lure of a title. In any case, the intent of the campaigner is not to increase traffic on the petition page, which is the reason why people use clickbait titles. Such a title can harm the cause of the campaigner as users expect passionate association with the petition.
- *Clear target:* the organisation found that the best-performing petitions clearly explain who the petition is addressed to and what action is expected. The best petitions identified the most apt decision maker and tried to put moral pressure on them to act. It found that mostly campaigners addressed petitions to political figures or public and private institutions. Successful campaigners also routinely target big corporates and remind them of their social responsibility. The top brands that the campaigners targeted on Change.org included Netflix, Facebook, Apple and YouTube among others. The report found that opinion was divided on whether the campaigner should address the petition to a brand or a particular individual within the company directly.
- *Hashtags:* unlike Twitter and Instagram, Change.org does not support hashtags. However, the report found that even when an overwhelming number of titles did not have any hashtags, the ones that did, did perform very well. The report found that the use of hashtags indicates that these petitions are part of a larger movement and thus already have a dedicated audience and help supporters easily identify and further popularise it on other social media channels. The organisation suggests that campaigners should use hashtags only when they are a part of a larger movement for brand identity, since they do not perform better or appear higher in intra-portal search results.

7.6 CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGNS

Every public campaign needs funds to reach out to supporters. The larger the intended reach of a campaign, more funds it needs to win

followers. Vested interests tend to support traditional public campaigns that severely limit their impact and subject areas. As the idea of social media grew, the concept of public funding of campaigns gathered steam online and with this emerged the idea of online crowdfunding. Though the concept behind crowdfunding is as old as the idea of public campaigns, where organisers seek individual donations either at the event, before it or through subscriptions, crowdfunding has come of age in the digital era and is used in the context of digital economy only.

Crowdfunding in the digital sense is known to have emerged in the 1990s in the music and artistic communities. However, one should notice that the term 'crowdfunding' was still not in currency then and became popular only around 2006. With the rise of digital economy and social media, this sector opened up and developed many approaches, with US emerging as the core market. By the end of 2019, China emerged as crowdfunding leader. The crowdfunding sector consists of equity-, reward- and donation-based models, the last one being most important for public campaigns since supporters giving money to a campaign do not expect any financial returns on the payments made, unlike in the other two models. According to a report published by Massolution on the crowdfunding industry, the size of the market in 2015 was USD 34 billion, out of which the contribution of donations was almost USD 3 billion.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the crowdfunding efforts centred around campaign-centric websites where supporters of a cause could log in and pay small amounts. The first known example of such a successful campaign was the US tour of the British rock band Marillion, when it elicited support of up to USD 60,000 in internet campaigns, which gave it confidence to adopt the same method to fund its studio albums. Subsequently, the Vegan Society raised money for its documentary *Truth of Dairy*. Software industry was another major beneficiary of crowdfunded campaigns, especially the developer community that created open-source software. This community propagated public-spirited ideas, like free software and copyleft. Its members saw software development as a kind of public activism, which pitched its codes, products and services against the proprietary and closed source codes promoted by big corporations. This community achieved major success in terms of raising awareness around the ideas it espoused and money it raised to develop software that rivalled the best of products promoted by big corporates. Some of the very successful examples which were crowdfunded include the Firefox web browser, LibreOffice office productivity suite that rivals Microsoft Office, the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, Linux distributions that rival Microsoft's Windows and Apple's iOS, many offering from the Free Software Foundation, etc.

It is crucial to note that since donation-based public campaigns have public good at the centre of their operative rationale, campaign leaders tend to develop reciprocity with donors. This reciprocity does not work at the individual level, as it does in the equity-based crowdfunding, where every donor becomes a stakeholder and hopes to benefit from the success of the campaign they back. In the donation-based crowdfunding campaigns, donors expect campaign managers to

give back to society in some form. From this reciprocity has emerged the idea of openness, or open access to the products or services that are created out of these campaigns. For example, Wikipedia is a free encyclopedia. The organisation running it has given a commitment that it will never charge readers for accessing its full content. Whenever Wikipedia needs more funds to run its operations, it starts new crowdfunding campaigns and never proposes to sell subscriptions. Similarly, Linux distributions, like Ubuntu and Mint, never charge their users for any versions and make the newest versions available to all users free of cost as soon as they are released.

Another important feature of crowdfunding is its use in political campaigns. Increasingly candidates are using crowdfunding to raise funds for contesting elections. It all started with the US presidential election in 2004, when the norm was to raise campaign money from rich donors during primaries. The Democratic politician Howard Dean fought for party nomination in 2003 and asked his faction within the Democratic Party to raise funds from supporters. His team used the internet to gather funds and typically an average donation amounted to USD 80. In all, Dean's campaign raised around USD 50 million. During the next election campaign, another Democratic candidate Barack Obama further refined this idea and made it a success story that Dean could not. Since then, crowdfunding for political campaigns has become an integral part of first- and third-world democracies.

This idea is slowly taking roots in India as well, even when the political funding sector in the country is not transparent and banks heavily on cash donations, which, many a times, are not even accounted for. A transparency think tank said in March 2020 that major Indian political parties obtained donations from unknown sources up to a staggering Rs 11,234 crore in 15 years. However, the idea of political crowdfunding got a fillip in India with the arrival of the Aam Aadmi Party, which grew out of an urban social movement. The very nature of this movement first and then the political party ensured that it could survive only public donations. Since, a large number of its founding members and supporters had a technical and engineering background, especially among the non-resident Indians, internet-based crowdfunding became a natural choice for it. Scores of people responded to the party's calls on social media, its website, support networks online, etc. to fund its electoral foray into the Delhi Assembly election of 2013.

Since then, many politicians have used crowdfunding platforms to raise money for their election campaigns. The former president of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union Kanhaiya Kumar raised Rs 70 lakh from individual donors for the 2019 Lok Sabha election on the crowdfunding platform Ourdemocracy.in. This is the maximum amount a candidate can legally spend in a Lok Sabha election according to the rules notified by the Election Commission of India. For the 2019 election alone, 78 candidates raised around Rs 1.6 crore on Ourdemocracy.in till April 2019. Most of these candidates were either independents or belonged to smaller parties, like the Aam Aadmi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Left parties, etc., though two candidates from the Congress also used crowdfunding platforms

in the 2019 election. This data shows that the idea of political crowdfunding is slowly catching up in India. However, the bulk of electoral funding in India still takes place either through large corporate donations or unnamed sources.

Crowdfunding as Social Media

From websites dedicated to individual campaigns to the present-day scenario where dedicated crowdfunding platforms allow individuals and organisations to seek funds from a targeted community of supporters, this segment has developed the features of social media. The first such social funding platform is considered to be the US-based website ArtistShare. Started in 2001, it allows fans to fund the production of music albums which are sold largely on the internet. The success of this model can be gauged from the fact that many of the albums thus produced went on to win Grammy nominations and even awards, the first such album being Maria Schneider's *Concert in the Garden.*

The success of ArtistShare led to the development of many such platform, the notable among them being Kiva, which started in 2005, IndieGoGo (2008), Kickstarter (2009), GoFundMe (2010), Microventures (2010) and YouCaring (2011). As the name suggests, YouCaring is devoted to charitable causes. As more platforms of social funding emerge, each one of them is beginning to offer tools and campaign models for targeted audience segments. Kickstarter has emerged as one of the biggest crowdfunding platforms in the world. In January 2020, it claimed to have helped raise funds for over 176,000 projects from over 17 million backers, who had pledged over USD 4.7 billion. Its best most successful campaigns and projects are run in the fields of gaming, design, technology, films and videos, fashion and publishing.

In the domain of social campaigns, the American organisation Avaaz.org has emerged as a global leader in little over 10 years. Founded in 2007 by the Canadian-British activist with part-Indian descendance Ricken Patel, Avaaz is the world's largest online activist community that won the trust of over 55 million members in 194 countries by January 2020 across campaigns in sectors such as climate change, human rights, animal rights, corruption, conflict resolution, etc. In India, its members have touched a figure of around one million. The success of Avaaz is meteoric enough for global organisations and publications to award Patel numerous awards. The *Foreign Policy* magazine put him in the list of world's Top 100 thinkers in 2012 and *The Guardian* called him 'the global leader of online protest' in 2013.

Since 2009, Avaaz has not taken donations from any foundations or corporations, nor has it accepted payments of more than USD 5,000 from an individual donor. According to its tax filings in 2018, it received over USD 25 million from its members worldwide in the previous year.

Along with its over 55 million members supporting over 2,700 campaigns on its portal, the vast Avaaz community has over 1.6 million followers on Facebook and over 780,000 followers on Twitter. Some of its notable campaigns include The Paris climate accord campaign in 2016, where it spearheaded the largest mobilisation on

climate change with 1.5 million participants; multiple campaigns against internet censorships; and a campaign against the chemical giant Monsanto, where it mobilised public opinion against chemical farming.

Crowdfunding as an idea to fund public campaigns has also taken roots in India. This sector has expanded with the emergence of many dedicated social funding platforms in the country. Like in the West, this sector in India has both reward- as well as donation-based platforms. Rang De is one of the first such platforms, which encouraged peer-to-peer lending to rural entrepreneurs. The Mumbai-based platform Ketto has become a credible name in seeking funds for social and public campaigns. One of its three core areas is raising funds for community and social projects. It encourages big companies to fund social projects under their corporate social responsibility norms. Some of the other notable crowdfunding platforms in India include FuelADream, BitGiving, Milaap and OurDemocracy, the last one being successful in running both political and social campaigns to raise funds for electoral candidates, legal defence of victims of heinous crimes, social causes, etc.

A campaign manager should keep the following aspects in mind before choosing a crowdfunding platform:

- Not every platform deals in all sectors effectively even if it lists them as its area of intervention. A campaign manager should consider the audience of each platform carefully before deciding which platform they should target.
- Since all social funding platforms keep a part of the donations or funds raised for a campaign as their share, the campaign manager should know exactly what amount will be deducted from the final amount. A smart manager will not agree to pay a percentage of funds to the platform if the final amount is significant. It is better to agree on a fixed fee in such cases.
- Most platforms offer content-centric services for campaigns, which a manager should avail if they do not have the capacity to do so in-house. Without great content and advertising material, a campaign may not reach the target audience in shortest possible time.
- Most crowdfunding platforms also offer to promote a campaign on multiple social media channels, including their own platforms and on their pages on other channels, for a fee. Unless the campaign manager is sure that their team can push their campaign successfully on social media, availing this service can help meet targets earlier than usual.
- The campaign manager should also negotiate copyright of the campaign material carefully with the crowdfunding platform, especially if it entails sourced material from other repositories or involves public figures. While there could be campaign-specific permissions for the use of this material available with the campaign owner, its archiving and subsequent usage rights may have been withheld by the original owner. Ignoring such nuances can lead to avoidable litigation.

7.7 CONCLUSION

The transition of public campaigns into social media campaigns has made the idea of campaigning more democratic and inclusive. Now, even small groups of people with little resources and recognition can organise themselves online and raise awareness about their causes. With the proliferation of portals like Change.org and Avaaz, concerns that matter to even small groups of people on a varied range of issues – like environment, human rights, housing, freedom of expression, etc. – have found traction and forced policymakers and corporates to alter their public engagement models. Despite the bigger groups still making most of the emergence of new forms of social media, this is a positive development for non-profits and public-spirited groups and individuals whose passion needs an outlet to change society for the better. These tools of digital activism are making a difference to global as well as localised causes.

7.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Questions

1. How is social media used for public campaigning?

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2. What factors should a campaigner keep to choose the right platform for a campaign?

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3. Give an example of how social media-centric public campaigns work better for traditional organisations.

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Answers

1. Social media has come a long way in terms of gaining users. As a result, public campaigns increasingly vie for people's attention and seek to influence their behaviour. By mid-2000s, a lot of public campaigns moved to social media. The traction on social media was so big that many political movements, which were largely spread through social messaging and posts on the internet, could effect regime changes. The Arab Spring protests in West Asia shook up the

politics of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Syria between 2010 and 2012, followed by public campaigns like Black Lives Matter, Je Suis Charlie, Occupy Wall Street and MeToo. Analysts feel that social media multiplies the support a socially conscious organisation or movement would otherwise have and even gives space to individuals and causes who stand ignored in traditional media.

2. A campaign manager should understand that not every platform deals in all sectors effectively, even if it lists them as its area of intervention. A campaign manager should consider the audience of each platform carefully before deciding which platform they should target. Since all social funding platforms keep a part of the donations or funds raised for a campaign as their share, the campaign manager should know exactly what amount will be deducted from the final amount. Also, most crowdfunding platforms offer to promote a campaign on multiple social media channels, including their own platforms and on their pages on other channels, for a fee. Unless the campaign manager is sure that their team can push their campaign successfully on social media, availing this service can help meet targets earlier than usual.

3. Analysts have found evidence that social media amplifies the support a socially conscious organisation or movement would otherwise have and even gives space to individuals and causes who stand ignored in traditional media. Social welfare organisations, like the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, which was established in 1980 long before the emergence of social media and already had a strong presence globally, increased its influence multifold due to running successful campaigns on social media. Its main page on Facebook had over 5.6 million followers in 2019 and its country-specific pages also being popular within animal lovers in respective countries. According to its 2019 annual review, its social media posts were seen an average of 142 million times each month. In its half-yearly 2016 report, it claimed that its social media team posted 500 posts about animal killing, vegan eating and the treatment of animals raised and killed for food on. Its video ‘Chicken Dinner in Reverse’, which shows the truth about where a chicken dinner comes from, was shared 151,500 times and received 15 million views on its main Facebook page alone.

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UNIT : 8 SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS: PART II

:: STRUCTURE::

8.0 Introduction

8.1 Objectives

8.2 Use of Social Media by Non-Profits

8.3 Me Too Movement in India

8.4 Structuring Public Campaigns for Maximum Impact

8.5 Conclusion

8.6 Check Your Progress

8.7 Reference

8.0 INTRODUCTION

The mobilisation and campaigning strategies of activists have changed after the arrival of the internet. With the popularisation of social media, these strategies underwent another monumental change, as it made the task of raising awareness easier and allowed campaigners to reach a large number of people at an affordable cost. The idea of public campaigning has developed to such an extent now that some campaigns are not only exclusively run on social media, they even manage to spread in an organic way without any perceptible set of people pushing them. In the second part of the unit on social media and public campaigning, we analyse how non-profits and disparate individuals make use of various social media channels and win support for their causes.

8.1 OBJECTIVES

- Understand how non-profits attract support for their causes on social media
- Analyse how established players have changed legacy campaigning into social media-driven campaigning
- Study the growth of leaderless movements on social media
- Analyse how social media becomes a handy tool for competing interest groups in a campaign
- Study factors needed to mount a successful public campaign on social media

On the Completion of This Unit, You Will be Able to:

- Learn from successful social media campaigns run by international organisations
- Understand the importance of celebrity supporters in a public campaign

- Understand the importance of making alliances with like-minded social groups and organisations
- Analyse the influence of global movements on Indian social media campaigns
- Make connections between social media campaigns and mobilisations on the ground

Index of Unit Contents

- Use of Social Media by Non-Profits
- Social and Environment-Based Campaigns
- Character and Structure of Social Campaigns: The Case of Me Too Movement
- Me Too Movement in India
- Competing Interests in Social Media Campaigns: The Case of *Jallikattu*
- Structuring Public Campaigns for Maximum Impact

8.2 USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY NON-PROFITS

While crowdfunding platforms have attracted citizen groups which may or may not be formally bound by an organisational structure, traditional non-profits also use social media extensively to further their causes. From using all the tools available at different media channels to running online campaigns to raise awareness and tapping into celebrity influencers, they have also mastered social media strategies. This category of non-profits include both Indian and global organisations.

Below we look at some such organisations which have used social media effectively to raise awareness about the causes they serve:

- **Animal Aid Unlimited:** This organisation was founded in 2002 in Udaipur, Rajasthan, by Erika Abrams, Jim Myers, Claire Abrams-Myers. It is a donation-based NGO and has an aim to treat sick and injured animals. The organisation's actions and campaigns have attained popularity on social media channels, particularly YouTube, where its videos showing the whole process of rescuing animals from near-death situations have gone viral, leading to its huge popularity and a steady inflow of donations and volunteers from all over the world. Some of the most viral videos of the channel include 'Anguished mother dog wails for wounded baby. Sweetest reunion!', 'Drowning dog's desperate wish comes true' and 'Stuck for hours in rock-solid tar, puppies rescued', which had over 65, 73 and 40 million views respectively in January 2020. The organisation's YouTube channel hit a subscriber base of almost 5 million in January 2020. Its pages on Facebook and Twitter too have over a million followers each.

  The social campaigner can take the following learnings from the social media strategy of the organisation:

1. If compelling visuals are available for the campaign – visuals of animals in pain being rescued, in this case – the use of text or voice over can be minimal;
2. Edit videos sharply to avoid unnecessary shots taking too much time of the viewer;
3. Make sure to tell the complete story of the aspect of the campaign that a particular video covers. For example, in the videos of the organisation, the videos ends with the rescued animal coming to terms with its new life in the shelter and slowly showing signs of physical improvement;
4. If the campaign is positive in nature, stress on the positives in the message more than the negatives. For example, in the videos of animal rescue, this organisation puts a better focus on the rescue part than how the animal was injured. However, there can be campaigns where the purpose is to shock the viewer to awaken them to the cause; and
5. Always look for local, national and international alliances among like-minded groups which are already popular on social media. The Animal Aid Unlimited has an alliance with the hugely popular website The Dodo, which had almost 30 million followers on Facebook, 1.9 million on Twitter, 5.25 million subscribers on YouTube and 7.9 million followers on Instagram in January 2020. The Dodo has dedicated one page on its website to the Animal Aid Unlimited and constantly posts its videos on The Dodo community and brand pages on social media.

- **CRY** or **Child Rights and You** was started by Rippan Kapur in 1979 with a vision to advocate children's basic rights. It seeks to crate linkages among individual supporters, thousand of dedicated fieldworkers, policymakers and non-governmental organisations with affected children on the issues of healthcare, education, nutrition, access to information and leisure. It claims to have ensured lasting change in the lives of over three million underprivileged children in India.

  Being an established organisation, it already had a popular brand image among social sector stakeholders. With the onset of social media, it was well placed to make the shift and consolidate its hold in the popular imagination further. Its Facebook page had more than 4.5 lakh followers and Twitter page about three lakh followers in January 2020.

  On 3 December 2018, the Swedish YouTuber Felix Kjellberg, who runs a YouTube channel as PewDiePie, launched a fundraiser on GoFundMe for CRY in order to help Indian children at the height of his channel’s rivalry with the music label T-Series. Between 2013 and 2019, PewDiePie had the most number of subscribers on YouTube and in 2018, T-Series came close to unseating it from the top. T-Series outperformed

PewDiePie in January 2020 by at least 23 million subscribers. The video he posted on his YouTube channel to support CRY garnered over 10 million views. He managed to raise over USD 200,000 for the organisation.

Learnings from the social media strategy of CRY include:

1. Effective branding partnerships can be mutually beneficial and bring in donations;
2. When social media influencers recommend a social campaign, it is easy to win support;
3. Concentrate on the existing stream of supporters rather than chasing newer set of followers just because the medium of branding has changed;
4. The old-fashioned ways of writing in the traditional media and then sharing links on official social media pages generates a fair bit of interest among a dedicated set of supporters. CRY's top management contributes articles to newspapers and websites, which become talking points for the sector-specific stakeholders; and
5. Cultural celebrations can become talking points on social media when the cause is seen as just and worthy by an organisation's supporters.

- **Greenpeace International** is a non-profit organisation with offices across continents and a coordinating centre in the Netherlands. Founded in 1971, it focuses on climate change, deforestation, nuclear weapons and genetically modified crops among other issues. Greenpeace runs campaigns at the global scale and has always been known for devising innovative strategies to push its programme. Like CRY, Greenpeace also has the advantage of having a great brand and adapting its campaign strategies to different platforms.

  Greenpeace was always aware of the use of internet in reaching out to its supporters even before it discovered social media. In early 2000s, it ran effective online campaigns against Coca-Cola for removing poisonous chemicals from its refrigeration equipments. The effectiveness of the campaign ensured that other big players like Unilever and McDonald's followed suit. Greenpeace also appealed to the conscience of Apple users and compelled the company to assess the toxicity of components in its products.

  With the advent of social media, Greenpeace has earmarked a sizeable chunk of its human and financial resources to this medium and internet campaigns. It runs campaigns, quizzes, contests and other strategies online to engage concerned citizens, mostly with actionable messages, which often succeed in bringing about change. In 2010, it ran online campaigns against Nestle, which went viral in the West. It opposed Nestle's use of palm oil obtained from companies that had a history of harming Indonesian rain forests. It released a video in which the wrapper of Nestle's popular brand Kit Kat is shown to contain a finger of an orangutan. This video hit a

viewership of around 1.5 million. Greenpeace also asked supporters to launch an attack on Nestle's social media pages and handles. By 2015, Nestle conceded to the pressure and announced that it would obtain only sustainable palm oil.

Around the same time, it asked supporters to re-design the logo of BP, the oil and gas major, in protest against BP's oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. This campaign received innovative responses from activists, artists and others, which showed BP in poor light, thus making these campaigns successful.

Another of Greenpeace's successful mobilisations came about around the 'Save the Arctic' campaign, which aimed to prevent oil drilling and unsustainable industrial fishing in the Arctic region in 2012. It became an iconic campaign for its extensive use of social media, internet activism and all other forms of mobilising support. Let us look at some of the milestones achieved by this campaign:

- Greenpeace aimed to collect a million signatures supporting the campaign, which was achieved within a month of initiating it, and, by early 2013, it managed to obtain over 2.5 million signatures, including support from the actor and director Robert Redford, the businessman Richard Branson and the singer Paul McCartney.
- In 2013, Arctic 30, a group of 28 activists and two journalists, were arrested by the Russian authorities in the international waters when they were aboard the Greenpeace ship the Arctic Sunrise for protesting against oil drilling in the Arctic region. After three months of arrest, they were released when international pressure mounted on Russia.
- Greenpeace, along with Avaaz, also subtly attacked the Danish toymaker Lego as part of this campaign, since Lego made toys for Shell, which is involved in drilling the Artic along with other old majors, like Gazprom, Rosneft and ExxonMobil. Lego toys were sold at Shell outlets. Greenpeace targeted parents of young children, who are typical Lego consumers, on social media and urged them to put pressure on Lego to break association with Shell. This pressure tactic worked and Lego decided not to renew its decades-old contract with Shell in October 2014.

For social campaigns, Greenpeace builds on its network of supporters and their online friends. The Facebook page of Greenpeace Internation had over three million likes in January 2020, while its country-specific pages had likes from one lakh to over six lakh. Its Twitter handle had about 1.9 million followers in the same period.

Learnings from the social media campaigns of Greenpeace include:

1. Campaigners as well as their targets use social media effectively, which means that every time an issue-based campaign is launched, its detractors will also activate their defences and start using options available on social media platforms to undercut the campaign. For example, Nestle targeted Greenpeace by making YouTube strikes on its Kit Kat video on account of copyright violation. Greenpeace shifted strategy and used Vimeo, a YouTube competitor, to push its campaign video along with accusing Nestle of not addressing the issue. A campaigner, thus, should keep in mind that there will be a counter attack from the target of the campaign and, thus, should keep a strategy ready for such an eventuality.
2. Greenpeace asked its supporters to write emails to Nestle top brass, especially its then CEO Paul Bulcke. Initiating email campaigns which send protest emails directly into the inbox of decision makers is an effective strategy used by protest campaigner all over the world.
3. A campaigner should pay heed to the visual elements of the campaign they launch. Greenpeace banks on crowdsourced graphics, logos, etc. and asks its supporters to use them as their cover and profile pictures, thus multiplying the reach of these visual elements. It asked its followers to make Kit Kat Killer logo as their profile pictures on Facebook.
   The *'Je sui Charlie'* campaign had a similar feature, which was launched after two Islamic radicals killed 12 people at the office of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in 2015. Thousands of supporters of this campaign used the visual elements and magazine covers and cartoons published in the magazine as their profile pictures.
4. Greenpeace campaigners set precise goals on each campaign, which range from raising awareness about an issue to forcing corporates and governments to alter their policies. It is important for campaigners to understand how many of these goals can be enforced through social media campaigns and not set unachievable targets.

Character and Structure of Social Campaigns: The Case of Me Too Movement

The Me Too movement is a movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault of women, especially at workplace. In 2006, the American social activist and community organiser Tarana Burke began to use the phrase *MeToo* on Myspace. She wanted to draw attention to the widespread abuse of women in the US especially for the women of colour. This and many related terms were used on the Internet and in feminist discourse till the inflexion point was reached in 2017 with *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker* revealing sexual harassment charges against the powerful Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.

The term 'MeToo' acquired a new meaning in the women's struggle for equal rights soon after and got a fillip when the American actor

and singer Alyssa Milano used it on Twitter to offer solidarity to victims of sexual harassment. On 15 October 2017, Milano tweeted: 'If all the women who have ever been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote "Me too." as a status, then we give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.' Other Hollywood actors and public figures soon joined the online movement, including the actors Gwyneth Paltrow, Ashley Judd, Jennifer Lawrence and Uma Thurman.

The unique thing about the Me Too movement is that it was a purely online campaign, which was driven cohesively by voluntary efforts without anyone driving it consciously as a community, politically or for financial reasons. It started and expanded on social media, touching different sections of society – for example, the media, film industry, military, sports, Silicon Valley, politics and religious institutions – and countries at different points of time. An important character of this movement is that one can never say when it gets over. There was a period of about 10 years between Burke's first use of the term 'me too' and it becoming a rage at the height of the Weinstein expose. At the same time, due to the organic nature of its expansion, layers of meanings kept getting added as it spread to different cultures, languages, geographical regions and even other sexual groups, like the LGBTQ community. Burke herself acknowledged that such a campaign cannot have a leader and identified herself rather as a 'worker' of the movement. She said, 'People call me a leader of this movement, and I accept that as a title I guess, but I'm a worker more than anything.'

The phrase 'me too' was tweeted by Milano around noon (US time) on 15 October 2017, which was used more than 200,000 times in the next 24 hours and tweeted more than 500,000 times. It had a similar story on Facebook, where the hashtag was used by more than 4.7 million people in 12 million posts during the first 24 hours. Millions of people, including film celebrities and other public figures, replied with #MeToo stories of their own. Some men, such as the actors Terry Crews and James Van Der Beek, also detailed experiences of their own harassment and abuse.

The Me Too movement, while continuing to be efffective on social media, brought tangible results in many high-profile cases. For example:

- The against Weinstein led to the New York Police charging him on multiple counts of sexual assault in May 2018 and he was fired from his own company.
- The British actress Emma Thompson refused to work with the creative head of Skydance Media John Lasseter on its production *Luck* because he was accused of sexual harassment by multiple women at his earlier workplace Pixar Animation Studios.
- Time's Up, a women's group in Hollywood, set up Time's Up Legal Defense Fund in January 2018 for providing legal support to the victims of sexual harassment. It had raised USD 24 million by October 2019.

- American activists demanded transparency transparency in the church after Pastor Andy Savage made an admission in January 2018 about assaulting a 17-year-old girl who was in his care. The pastor later resigned after the issue became part of the larger Me Too movement.
- In the field of education, the Me Too movement became particularly big at different campuses of the University of California, notably Berkeley, Davis and Irvine. Its maximum impact was felt in the resignation of the evolutionary biologist Francisco Ayala in July 2018 due to many sexual harassment claims against him which were alleged to have taken place between 2003 and 2018.
- The former doctor of the US Gymnastics national team Lawrence Nassar was exposed at the height of the Me Too movement for sexually assaulting child and young female gymnasts, one of them being as young as six years old. He assaulted the Olympic gold medallist McKayla Maroney too. More than 150 women accused Nassar of sexual assault. He was awarded a prison term for these crimes.

7.3 ME TOO MOVEMENT IN INDIA

In India the Me Too movement became popular in the late 2018 and was clearly an offshoot of the global campaign. The Bollywood actress Tanushree Dutta opened a Pandora's box when she started speaking about the actor Nana Patekar's alleged attempt to sexually harass her while shooting for the film *Horn OK Please* in 2008.

This revelation was followed by other posts by women in the film industry, the media and other fields who shared stories about harassment they faced at the hands of powerful men. Most of these stories were first put in the public domain through social media, after which the mainstream media started covering them. However, Dutta made the allegation against Patekar in an interview to a TV channel.

The TV producer and writer Vinta Nanda accused the actor Alok Nath of rape and making sexual predatory advances. Many actresses who have worked with Nath, like Renuka Shahane, Himani Shivpuri, Sandhya Mridul and Deepika Amin, also admitted knowing about his alleged predatory behaviour.

Some of the other film personalities who were accused of sexual misconduct include the film directors Vikas Bahl and Sajid Khan, the singer Kailash Kher, the music composer Anu Malik and the Tamil lyricist Vairamithu. The popular writer Chetan Bhagat also faced charges during the Me Too movement in India. Many noted academics also faced similar charges when the law student Raya Sarkar crowdsourced a list of sexual harassers in academia in 2017 by the popular name of LoSHA (List of Sexual Harassers in Academia).

Competing Interests in Social Media Campaigns: The Case of *Jallikattu*

As noted above in the context of the Greenpeace campaign against Nestle, if a campaign has a clearly identifiable target, the campaigner should expect the target to launch a counter-attack. This logic holds

true even in the case of emotive issues, where people tend to take sides and launch many side campaigns to counter the original campaign. Let us look at one such campaign where two competing sides extensively used social media to shape public opinion in favour of their respective stands.

In 2011, the Ministry of Environment and Forests banned the use of bulls as performing animals, thus effectively banning the bull-taming sport Jallikattu, which was popular in Tamil Nadu. After a prolonged legal battle between competing interests, the Supreme Court banned the sport in 2016 on account of animal cruelty on a petition filed by the Animal Welfare Board and the India chapter of the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). This led to widespread discontent, especially among the youth, in the state. Throughout 2016 and in early 2017, when large-scale street demonstrations broke out in Tamil Nadu, groups that were in favour of the ban and the ones which opposed it extensively used social media to win support towards them. Notably, Tamil Nadu had over 40 million internet connections in September 2018.

An important feature of the Jallikattu campaign was that celebrities batted on both sides of the issue. While PETA enlisted support from the actors Vidya Balan, John Abraham, Sonakshi Sinha, Jacqueline Fernandez and Bipasha Basu among others, many actors from the Tamil film industry, popularly called Kollywood, backed the sport. The actor Kamal Haasan offered support the Jallikattu and claimed that he had even participated in it in his youth. Another superstar Rajinikanth also supported the pro-Jallikattu protests, as did the music director A R Rahman. The overwhelming support of the Tamil cinema community for the festival is not surprising, given the fact it has a long history of depicting the sport favourably in its films. Some popular movies on this topic include *Cheran Pandiyan* (1991), *Rajakumaran* (1994), *Virumaandi* (2004) and *Aravaan* (2012).

Among other public figures, the cricketers Virat Kohli and Shikha Dhawan supported the PETA campaign, while other sportspersons like Vishwanathan Anand, Virendra Shewag and Rawichandran Aswin sided with the cause of Jallikattu.

The participation of these celebrities created buzz on social media about their role in the two competing campaigns around the issue. Given the fact that most of these public figures had large followings on social media, both campaigns became social media events. The Tamil cinema is said to have played a major role in turning a local rural sporting event into a tourist even, due to which it came to be identified with the cultural pride of the region and attracted youth to it. The success of pro-Jallikattu campaign on social media and the cinema fraternity's participation in it, thus, seems to be a result of this trend.

Pro-Jallikattu Campaigns

For many people in Tamil Nadu, Jallikattu, an ancient bull-taming sport, is considered a matter of cultural pride. Jallikattu supporters believe that the Tamil Nadu government and sport organisers take utmost care to ensure both animals and players remain safe during its conduct. So, it is no surprise then that its supporters took to social media in a big way to oppose the ban. In January 2017, a massive protest took place on the Marina beach in the state capital Chennai, for which people and public opinion were largely mobilised on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. The images of youth sleeping on the beach and the spectacular pictures of thousands of them flashing their mobile flash lights became a rage on social media, making the cause even more popular. Real-world social networks in schools and colleges, workplaces, neighbourhoods and families posted, tweeted

and forwarded messages, audio clips and videos about Jallikattu. The high teledensity in Tamil Nadu allowed these social media networks to cut across urban-rural divide.

Popular artists also backed these protests. The Chennai-based musical duo who go by the name of *Hiphop Tamizha produced* 'Takkaru Takkaru' *song in support of Jallikattu. Its video went viral in 2016 and garnered more than 16 million views on YouTube. Two Twitter trends* #Jallikattu and #JusticeForJallikatu had over 1.6 million tweets in January 2017. Some of the popular Facebook pages that supported the continuation of the sport included Jallikkattu Vera, Vilaiyattu, Jallikattu Tamilnadu, Tnstudentsjallikattu, Jallikattu Explained and Chennai Memes.

Such popular outpouring of emotions on social media and the streets brought pressure on the state government, which resulted in the state legislature passing a law on 23 January 2017 which exempted Jallikattu from the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. However, this being a case of a state law interacting with a federal law, the final legal position on the sport may change again.

Notwithstanding the outcome of this campaign, one can easily say that the pro-Jallikattu campaign became successful due to participation of youth in it, which, in turn, was fully facilitated by use of social media by major participants in the campaign. In this sense, it can be called a matured case of social media movement which seems to have attained its goal to a large extent.

Anti-Jallikattu Campaigns

Just as pro-Jallikattu campaigns were being mounted throughout 2016 and 2017 with each change of its status in courts and the Tamil Nadu legislature, the anti-sport campaigners also started taking on the proponents of the sport on social media. Following are the highlights of these campaigns:

- on 6 July 2017, PETA released a YouTube video in Tamil showing the how bulls are ill-treated during and before the event;
- social media posts in favour of the Jallikattu ban were made largely by activists and animal welfare organisations, while many public figures in Tamil Nadu backed pro-Jallikattu campaigners;
- animal rights activists shared data, graphic images and videos about how the bulls were kept together in cramped spaces in harsh weather conditions without adequate food or water. They also shared visual material about bulls collapsing of dehydration;
- many social media posts showed bleeding noses of bulls who were being prepared for the sporting event; and
- these social media posts also documented the number of bulls and human beings injured or killed during the conduct of this sporting event in different cities and towns of Tamil Nadu.

7.4 STRUCTURING PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT

Many of the early public campaigns on social media were spontaneous, where an impulse or cause caught the imagination of people, particularly youth, which then went to use social media to organise and call for action. However, later-day campaigns have come to be more structured and managed by centralised authorities. Some of them are purely conceptualised and driven on social media. As public campaigns on social media mature, their structure becomes visible. Thus, in order to successfully launch a campaign or petition on social media, a campaign manager should execute best practices, some of which are mentioned below:

Right Topic and Time

The topic should be something relevant to society in which we live. It may be something which is on the tip of everybody's tongue or an age-old bone of contention which everybody is aware of but not much has been spoken about. It may be something which is widely popular in other parts of the world, but yet to be popular in your part. For example, it could be something which is already popular, like #MeToo, or something about a complex problem, like global warming, which requires funding and government intervention.

Similarly, the date of launch of the campaign should be strategically chosen. It may match with an awareness day around the campaign topic or come as natural response to certain current issues.

Right Audience

Your target audience can comprise of people who may deal with similar issues or who are directly impacted by the decisions around a campaign. The audience can also comprise of people who have empathy towards the cause contained in the campaign. Therefore, it becomes essential to define the demographics of the audience, their geographic location, educational background, etc. Hitting the right audience is one of the most important aspects to carry forward a campaign.

Campaign Message

Research shows that supporters who understand and are connected to a non-profit's mission have a larger likelihood of completing their missions. To create the most effective message, your promotional material should aim to increase awareness and excitement with your existing followers/donors and new audience. Therefore, a campaigner should study profiles of existing followers of a non-profit to know what messaging they may appreciate. The content of messages may change according to age group, device and social media platform preference of followers or their interest areas.

Public Figures

Ambassadors and public figures who are well known and already have a fan base can contribute largely to spread the message of a campaign. Having a renowned person helps largely to propel the campaign towards rapidly accelerated growth.

Reachability

Plan carefully and strategise your campaign to use all of the mediums in the right combination for maximum impact, like:

- Email newsletters
- All popular social media channels
- Automated or dedicated phone call campaigns
- Advertising on social media and popular websites
- Podcasts
- Shareable textual, audio and video content tailored to suit the size and resolution limits imposed by social media channels

Sponsors

It is easy to see how and why big international organisations like UNICEF, PETA and Greenpeace use social media extensively and have large in-house social media teams to prepare content and market their message. Apart from raising awareness, such organisations routinely approach their existing and potential donors through social media.

If your campaign is complex and plays out over a long term, centres around big issues, like environment protection, animal rights, human rights, etc., sponsors and partners help you raise funds required for achieving your goals. You can follow the lead of these big players and start using social media for engaging potential donors. Every campaign team requires a strategy to raise funds to sustain a long struggle, and this is as crucial an aspect as deciding the content and target of the campaign.

Like the big charity organisations, you can also define the funding goals on your social media pages and organise multiple fund-raising events in a year, which can be centred around upcoming or popular issues or any event of regional or national importance, which could be the World Environment Day, Children's Day, Independence Day, etc. The popularity of related keywords on social media channels in the periods around these days helps you to benefit from the existing social momentum.

A public campaign manager should also use crowdfunding platforms effectively and popularise crowdfunding campaigns on all their social media pages. There are many organisation which bank fully on donations which they seek on social media to survive.

Once money has been raised, the manager should regularly update the donors about how this money is spent on the causes it was sought for. Many managers tend to ignore this aspect. Regularly updating existing donors is crucial for retaining their trust in the cause and the organisation backing it. Apart from making accounts of donated money public being a legal requirement, it is the moral duty of the manager and the organisation to be transparent, particularly to donors. This practice also ensures the success of further fund-raising campaigns.

7.5 CONCLUSION

In the last few sections, we have studied social media as an enabling platform in generating public awareness and supporting public campaigns against injustices and pro-environment activities. Due to an ever-increasing number of people getting access to the internet, and thus access and sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, public protests and campaigning are gradually changing the way they have been executed conventionally.

Some of the noteworthy points we accumulated in the two units on public campaigning are:

- Online platforms like Change.org help campaigners raise petitions supporting their cause and connects them to millions of like-minded people
- Organisations like Greenpeace and Avaaz help campaigners join hands to save and protect environment, among other causes
- Existing and established organisations, like PETA, which advocate animal rights, use social media platform wisely to expands their existing support base
- Organisations like CRY and Animals Aids Unlimited use social media effectively to raise donations for their causes
- A global organic campaign like #Me too can ignite the fire on an issue which has been suppressed for a long time and force socially dominant groups to take note of age-old oppression
- Campaigns built around Jallikattu show how two competing sides can use social media to influence thousands of people to turn the tides against each other

7.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Questions

1. What elements should a video story on social media have for attracting followers for a campaign on social causes?

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   _____
   _____

2. How did a CRY campaign figure in the rivalry between two giant YouTubers?

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   _____
   _____
   _____
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3. Describe Greenpeace's use of social media in its campaign against Nestle.

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4. Why does the Me Too movement have a special place in the list of achievements of social media campaigns?

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Answers

1. A video story on social causes should tell the complete story of the aspect of the campaign that it covers. For example, in a story on animal rescuing, the video should end with the rescue operation getting complete and the animal in question showing signs of recovery. If visuals are compelling, the video producer should keep the voice over to the minimum and use sounds of the animal as background sound. The producer can also add text summaries of scenes being depicted at regular intervals to allow viewers who access the video in mute mode to understand the message. The video editor should edit the video sharply to avoid unnecessary shots taking too much time of the viewer.
2. On 3 December 2018, the Swedish YouTuber Felix Kjellberg, who runs a YouTube channel as PewDiePie, launched a fundraiser on the GoFundMe platform for CRY in order to help underprivileged Indian children at the height of his channel's rivalry with the music label T-Series. Between 2013 and 2019, PewDiePie had the most number of subscribers on YouTube and in 2018, T-Series came close to unseating it from the top. T-Series outperformed PewDiePie in January 2020 by at least 23 million subscribers. The video Kjellberg posted on his YouTube channel to support CRY garnered over 10 million views. He managed to raise over USD 200,000 for the organisation.
3. Greenpeace is one of most effective social media campaigners in the world. It has earmarked a sizeable chunk of its human and financial resources to social media and internet campaigns. It runs campaigns, quizzes, contests and other strategies online to engage concerned citizens, mostly with actionable messages, which often succeed in bringing about change. In 2010, it ran online campaigns against Nestle. It opposed Nestle's use of palm oil obtained from companies that had a history of harming Indonesian rain forests. It released a video in which the wrapper of Nestle's popular brand Kit Kat is shown to

contain a finger of an orangutan, since this animal is directly affected by the depletion of forest cover. This video hit a viewership of around 1.5 million. After initially resisting the charge, Nestle conceded to the pressure by 2015 and announced that it would obtain only sustainable palm oil.

4. The unique thing about the Me Too movement is that it was a purely online campaign, which was driven cohesively by voluntary efforts without anyone driving it consciously as a community, politically or for financial reasons. It started and expanded on social media, touching different sections of society and countries at different points of time. An important character of this movement is that one can never say when it gets over. There was a period of about 10 years between the American activist Tarana Burke's first use of the term 'me too' and it becoming a rage at the height of the expose about the Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.

   At the same time, due to the organic nature of its expansion, layers of meanings kept getting added as it spread to different cultures, languages, geographical regions and even other sexual groups, like the LGBTQ community. Burke herself acknowledged that such a campaign cannot have a leader and identified herself rather as a 'worker' of the movement.

   The organic spread of this movement, its emergence and continuance on social media, its adoption by different cultures in their own cultural contexts and its ability to resurrect itself every few years makes this movement special.

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UNIT : 9 SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

:: STRUCTURE::

9.0 Introduction

9.1 Objectives

9.2 Who Are The Social Media Influencers?

9.3 How to find a social media influencer?

9.4 Conclusion

9.5 Check Your Progress

9.6 Reference

9.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media is driven by individuals and brands. Users not only connect with their friends and family members but also tend to follow the people whom they consider as their idol. A user may follow movie star or player from his favourite team. Social media influencers are those individuals who have the power to influence others through social media. The way through which a social media influencer leaves an impact on his/her audience varies from each individual. These individuals hold social media account which can help them drive traffic and sales to product or a service. Influencers have been divided in to various categories most popular being celebrity, micro influencer and nano influencer. The major difference between them is the size of audience they have under their influence. While celebrities have fans from across the globe, a micro or nano influencer may be restricted to a certain demographic or niche. These influencers may belong to any of the following niche like travel, beauty, blog, politics, media, modeling, sports, comedy etc.

Influencers can reach a target audience, help build trust and drive engagement for any brand. It is essential that these social media influencers have a vision which aligns with the brand or the product they wish to promote. Influencers can have anywhere around thousand to millions of followers.

In this unit we will learn who are influencers? How they change a brand's perception and discuss how individuals grow out of their immediate networks to acquire a much larger audience?

9.1 OBJECTIVES

- How social media is being driven by influencers?
- Why are brands interested in influencer marketing?
- How anyone can become an influencer?
- What are the strategies and practices followed by influencers to grow their network?
- Content creation strategies used by influencers?

On the completion of this Unit, You will be able to:

- How to identify an influencer and why they hold a high value on social media
- How can you become an influencer?
- How brands identify the right social media influencers?
- Which are the popular channels used by social media influencers?

Index of Unit Contents

1. Who are the social media influencers?
2. How to find a social media influencer?
3. How to become an influencer? How to grow immediate network and acquire larger audience?
4. Strategies and practices followed by individualsto grow immediate network and acquire larger audience

9.2 WHO ARE THE SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS?

Social media Influencers are independent individuals who have an impact on their target audience through their blogs, tweets, videos, and other social media updates. While some consider these individuals of having a hostile voice, others consider them as a brand ambassador to promote their business and products.

Because of the persuasive power of these individuals, companies and brands are developing ways to identify such individuals and hone their followers for their benefit.

These influencers have established credibility over a specific industry. One of the most popular and well known influencer on social media is Kendall Jenner. She is an American model and media personality who has worked in TV shows like Keeping Up with the Kardashians. She has over 118 million followers on Instagram[1]. She is quite active on social media and her brand posts easily gain millions of likes. With the advent of internet and the rapid growth of social media businesses have shifted their focus from traditional marketing to online marketing and these influencers work as bridges in connecting them with their target audience. There are four main types of social media influencers namely [2]

a) Celebrities (Athletes, movie stars, singers, politicians, businessmen etc)
b) Industry experts and thought leaders (Journalists, Academics, Professional advisors)
c) Bloggers, vloggers(video bloggers) and content generators
d) Micro Influencers

Most of the marketing that occurs on social media is done through micro influencers. While celebrities charge a high amount for promoting any brand or a product these micro influencers offer targeted reach under a budget.

Celebrities: Gone are the days when celebrities used to show up in TV commercials for a brand. Now these celebrities endorse brands

and products and promote them through their social media channels. Businesses have researched over the years and found that when a celebrity promotes or endorses a brand the sales of the product drastically increases.[3]

. Figures retrieved in 2019.

2. What is an Influencer? https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/

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This happens due to the fact that the trust level of consumers is enhanced when they see a well known face with a brand. These celebrities have verified accounts on various social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter with huge number of fan following.

The problem with celebrity influencers is that they are not cheap and only a few of them are willing to participate in influencer campaigns. On the contrary if a celebrity already likes and uses a product he may be willing to promote it at a reasonable charge. Celebrities also lack credibility with a product's target audience, for example a young male pop star selling retirement plans may not work well.

Industry experts and thought leaders: The industry experts include journalists, economists, technical experts, professional advisors etc. Industry experts and thought leaders gain popularity among their fans due to their skills, qualification and experience in their area. A good example can be of the technical experts who review newly launched mobile phones, and gadgets. Similarly travel bloggers who share their experience when they visit a new place. Getting coverage in print or online media through journalists can easily skyrocket a brand's image. Apart from this, the journalists usually do not charge anything for covering a brand or a product. Similarly technical experts, economists and professional advisors are approached by several brands to cover their product and showcase a positive view on their social media channels like Youtube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Bloggers, vloggers and content generators: Blogging has been there for some time now users share their personal opinion and reviews on these blogs, which in turn is shared on their or their fan's social mediahandles. Many bloggers have a good number of following in a specific sector for example gadget blogs like Engadget, TechCrunch, and Gizmodo and travel blogs like Dan Flying Solo, A broken backpack and Lili's Travel Plans are well known names in their field. These bloggers, vloggers (Video Bloggers) and content generators also provide opportunities of guest postings where brands try to get their products and services reviewed. Buying a sponsored post on these large blogs is also an option. Another noticeable thing to mention is that these blogs have a good social media presence which works in the benefit of brands who are working with them.

Another form of content generation done by influencers is through videos, this is especially popular among technical reviewers and travel

bloggers. These Influencers have a huge fan following on Youtube. Brands find Youtubers who are in line with their company's target audience and have a good number of subscribers on their channels.

The content generated by these bloggers, vloggers and content generators is shared widely on their social media channels, which makes them micro influencers.

Micro Infuencers: Micro Influencers are normal users on social media who are well known for their knowledge on a specific topic or niche. These users have a large following on their social media channels. Not only is the number of followers an indicator of an influencer but also their relationship with their fans. Some of the micro influencers may not be aware of their existence, in such case brands need to approach them and convince them about their worth.

Much like Celebrities, the relationship between a brand and a micro influencer should align with their target audience. Some micro influencers are ready to work for free while others may expect some fee for their work.

With the increase of various social media channels like Tiktok and Instagram even micro influencers have risen to fame. Some of the well known micro influencers on Indian social media channels are Bhuvan Bam who has a Youtube channel BB Ki Vines with over 15.4 Million subscribers, GauravChaudhary, known professionally as Technical Guruji with a Youtube Channel of 14.5 million subscribers, similarly, Sandeep Maheshwari, Carry Minati, and Nisha Madhulika[4] are well known names in the world of micro influencers.

9.3 HOW TO FIND A SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER?

There are over 500,000 active influencers on Instagram, similarly Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Linkedin[5]. On the one hand this large number gives endless opportunities for brands to market their products and services through these influencers, this also creates a problem of finding the right person under the right budget who would agree for a brand's promotion on social media and is aligned with the brand's values.

1. **The 3 Rs of influencer marketing:** Here are some key points to consider while finding influencer
   a) Relevance
   b) Resonance
   c) Reach
   a) Relevance: First and the most important point to consider while searching for an influencer is to see if the person is relevant to the brand's target audience. For example a brand is about carbonated drinks and the influencer is known in health and fitness field such influencer will not yield positive results for the brand, even if the influencer has a high number of fan following they won't convert in sales or brand enhancement. A good example of relevance is when 23andme.com a website which offers DNA genetic testing analysis and tells people's ethnicity worked with Trevor James, a Youtube Food travel blogger and did his free DNA test. His origins took him to Greece where he did a food and culture tour.

4. Figures retrieved in 2019. 5. Top Influencer Marketing Tools for Instagram https://influencermarketinghub.com/instagram-influencer-marketing-tools

This way he was able to promote both 23andme as well as his food travel channel on Youtube. The video helped him garner over 1.3 million views and expanded the reach of the website as well. Trevor James' Youtube channel called "The Food Ranger" has over 3.54 million subscribers.

b) Resonance: Resonance or the level of engagement that an influencer will have with his audience when interacting with a brand. Marketers often fall prey to the number of followers or subscribers any influencer has. Large number of followers does not always ensure greater engagement. If the follower is not interested in the offers, services or products the influencer is promoting its useless to spend money or engage with such influencer. It would be best advisable to spend same money on sponsored ads on Facebook, Linkedin, Twitter, Youtube etc. which will ensure far greater conversions than influencer marketing. To avoid this trap, it is best to find niche influencers, who will have very dedicated and engaged followers, and provide better engagement despite their smaller follower count. Some good example of niche based influencers is Geekyranjit who runs the first English tech channel in India and has over 2.81 million subscribers, or Abroad in Japan channel on Youtube which showcases Chris Broad, who has 1.4 million subscribers, his work focuses on Japanese culture and travel in Japan. Similarly Jamie Oliver a British chef and restaurateur who has over 7.5 million followers on Instagram, anything which has to do with foods and restaurants industry can be promoted through his social media channels.

One should not underestimate the power of micro and nano-influencers as well. While micro-influencers have around 10,000-50,000 followers, nano influencers have somewhere around 1,000 and 10,000 followers, but their fans are dedicated and accept their verdict as the last word. [6]

c) Reach: Reach is the number users a brand can reach with the help of an influencer. As mentioned earlier, higher number of fans does not always ensure greater reach, a niche based influencer have a more targeted fan following and can reduce the cost of acquiring an influencer under any campaign.

2. Knowing the audience: Next step in finding an influencer is to know your audience, the best way to initiate this is to interact with the brand's audience through online surveys, reading their comments on various social media posts, and speaking with the right users. First step is to define who will be the target audience, their demographics, age, location, etc. Once this is defined the social media marketer should identify the influencers these users follow or the popular micro or nano influencers in this niche. Tools like Awario, Followerwonk, Klear, Buzzsumo, can be used to indentify influencers with high number of fan following in a certain niche.

6. What Are Nano-Influencers? https://mediakix.com/blog/what-are-nano-influencers/ Figures retrieved in 2019.
7. **Identify the trust level users have in the influencer:** Having an influencer in a certain niche with good number of followers is not enough, trust is the key. If the audience has trust in the influencer the brand or product which is being circulated through his channel will gain popularity. To identify trust it is important to read users comments, check number likes, and shares. A good engagement rate is an indicator that the fans are loyal and the numbers are not inflated by fake likes and followers.
8. **Content should align with brand's image:** If an influencer is generating random content across various niches it may not be beneficial for the brand. Brands need to find someone who generates seemless content that compliments the brand's image. The tone used by the influencer should not be harsh, offensive or criticizing. One such popular name is of Gordon James Ramsay, a well known British chef, restaurateur, writer, television personality and food critic, though his image is popularly accepted as a food critic, his TV show like Hell's Kitchen show his attacking tone. Certain food brands may find it offensive and may not endorse such a celebrity to be their social media brand wagon.
9. **Frequency of Sponsored Posts:** Once the potential influencer has been indentified it is essential to monitor how often they are posting sponsored content. If the influencer is frequently posting sponsored content, his fans are already being fed with an overdose of such content. In such case the engagement rate will be low and the message will be lost. Instead look out for more organic and less paid content which the followers may be interested in reading. Having one sponsored post in every 5 or 10 posts is a good number. Brands should also restrict themselves from forcing an influencer to throw in too many branded messages in a short duration of time, which may be futile or hard for an influencer to accept.
10. **Study an influencer before approaching them:** Influencers get offers quite often hence it is necessary that one must study their channel, audience and content generated by them before approaching for any sponsored messaging. A slow approach will preferably result in a positive response from any influencer. Like, comment and share on their posts to get their attention. One must work as an admirer of their content and not be a sales representative of a brand.
11. **Have a budget in mind:** Influencers expect to be paid for their work. Free promotion may work well with micro and nano influencers but for a larger influencer money is the driving force. Hence it is best to have a target budget in mind before approaching any influencer. While smaller influencers may be ready to compromise with their fees,

big influencers like celebrities and journalists may be stringent.

12. **Communicate through private channel:** A direct message is a good way to start when communicating with an influencer. Most of the influencers have their enquiry email ids public which can be found in their social media channel's description or about box. Email is also an effective way communication. Rather than bulk mailing each and every influencer it is recommended that personalized emails are written while reaching out to each influencer. Emails should not look like a sales pitch which will only hike the money charged by such influencers. To increase the chances of a reply it is recommended to give out as much information as possible. Tell them what is expected from your outreach campaign with them and how you both can create an effective social media campaign.

Once an influencer has been found and the budget has been decided the marketer should communicate how the traffic will tracked. Will the influencer share the numbers from his channel including engagement rate and other data after the completion of a campaign? Also measuring the numbers through tools like Google Analytics on campaign's landing page is an effective way to judge the success of any influencer campaign.

How to become an influencer? How to grow immediate network and acquire larger audience?

According to a study done by Tap Influence research in 2017, about 40% of people have purchased an item after seeing that it was used by an influencer on Youtube, Twitter or Instagram[7]. This is the reason why influencer marketing has increased several folds. According to Hostpapa.blog influencer marketing has increased by more than 90 times since 2013. The study was based on the analysis of Google Keywords and trends in 2016[8].

To become an influencer below are some points one should follow:

a) **Select a niche:** Before becoming an influencer or an expert in any niche, a user should select his niche by identifying his area of interest and expertise. The users who just started with social media expertise should aim at becoming micro influencer first. They have a strong connection with their small group of fans. According to curalate.com the micro influencers increase the sales by 200% when compared to paid advertising and have a 37% higher retention rate through word of mouth [9]. These influencers are also a good source for providing product reviews. About 70% of internet users want to learn about a product through content rather than traditional advertising. A topic should not be very broad, like digital marketing, which includes, paid marketing, social media marketing, email marketing etc. Doing a basic Google search or on any other social media platform will help in identifying popular trends and current influencers.

b) **Have a content creation strategy in place:** Post niche identification is the step of content creation there is no set template for content creation as deduced by

7. Influencer Marketing Statistics https://www.tapinfluence.com/influencer-marketing-statistics/
8. 10 Significant Influencer Marketing Statistics From Last Year https://hostpapa.blog/infographics/influencer-marketing-statistics/
9. Can't Afford a Kardashian, Use a Micro-Influencer https://www.curalate.com/blog/micro-influencer-brand-marketing

contentmarketinginstitute.com the content should instead focus on users needs and how the content can address those needs. Identifying user's requirements can be done through tools like Buzzsumo.com, Google Keyword research or even a generic search on Google search page. Don't forget to try Youtube search which is the second largest search engine in the world.[10] Once the needs are identified this should be documented as verbal strategy may lost or forgotten. Periodically referring to this document will ensure that the content generation does not lose its path. Decide a tone and audience which will be targeted. Then decide the frequency of content creation, daily, weekly or once per 15 days. The higher the rate of content generation on social media channels, the more are the chances of having a better engagement rate. Though quality should not be compromised with quantity. High quality content will always outperform low quality content thrown every few hours on social media channels by an influencer.

c) **Selection a social media channel:** Every social media channel has its own pros and cons. While some influencers may find Tik-Tok and Vimeo to be more effective others may chose Youtube. When it comes to numbers, Facebook is the most popular social media channel which had about 61% market share in 2016.[11] It had over 2 billion active users as on October 2018, followed by Youtube, Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger. Influencers should use an omni channel approach and share content on two to three channels initially, identify which channel works best for them and then change their strategy accordingly. If they are able to create high quality video content, Youtube is the best platform for them. If they are into textual content creation having a blog and sharing its information Facebook, Twitter is better. Similarly for image content creators Instagram and Pinterest are the best places to reside. Linkedin is another platform where it is easy to find professionals who are looking for a business to business connection. Some other noticeable social media sites where influencers can try their hands are quora.com which is a question and answer website. Reddit which is community discussion forum on diverse topics ranging from politics to sports and entertainment. If one channel fails to provide the results an influencer desires, he should try another channel or rethink his content creation strategy.

d) **Networking with others:** Sitting at home on the internet is not the only way to connect with other influencers. One can reach them at seminars, conferences and events. For example experts like Rand Fishkin is the CEO & Co-Founder of SEOmoz will be hard to connect with online, but if you meet him at some event like MozCon the chances of creating a connection are high. There are several awards and events happening in every city on a daily basis, do a Google search or use Facebook events to find such

10. Are you Taking Advantage of the 2nd Largest Search Engine in the World? https://www.walkersands.com/are-you-taking-advantage-of-the-2nd-largest-search-engine-in-the-world/

11. Social media brand used most often http://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/snapchat-seeks-entice-marketers-ad-platform-two-new-features-deep-linking-autofill/attachment/snapchat-statistics-2/

conferences and summits where influencers can be reached. Some of these events also offer chances to blooming speakers and experts to come on stage and share their views with the audience. These platforms should be used, apart from social media to create influence and gain fans.

e) **Create a blog or a website:** One should not restrict the conversation with fans on social media. While Twitter and Instagram posts have only a certain number of characters to tell a story that too in a certain format having a website or a blog opens doors to unlimited opportunities for influencers. They can sell their own membership, memorabilia or merchandise. A good example is Mark Wiens who owns a Youtube channel on food and travel while also running a blog called migrationology.com where he sells books, tshirts and other goodies to his fans, while also writing indepth articles about his videos. This way the fans get a better insight of the cities he visits and the food he is enjoying. The conversation extends beyond the boundaries of social media. There are several platforms which allow free blogs, like Wix, Wordpress, Blogger etc. Once a blog is setup influencers can share these links with their fans on their social media channels like Facebook, Linkedin or Twitter. According to a Socialpilot tweets with links have 86% higher engagement rate [12] while on Linkedin the engagement rate is as high as 200% for posts which have links in them. This way a link to the website or blog can increase the engagement on social media, helping a blooming influencer gain more fans.

f) **Stay in touch with the current event:** While creating content influencers will notice that there are two types of content one which is evergreen and will always remain useful to the readers while other is topical.Topical content gets in trend only when a certain event occurs for example exam results, election results. Deciding which team has a better chance to win a world cup. While it is better to write on ever green

topics, sharing updates on current topics will ensure that the fans are given something fresh to talk about and will increase the chances of going viral. Stay in touch with the current topics using websites like Google Trends, Trends24.in and the trends monitor on Twitter. Tools like Hashtagify are also helpful in keeping track of the social media trends.

g) **Understand all channels:** Even though one may not use all the social media channels having an understanding of which channel can give the best results is important, Snapchat for example has 203 million users worldwide as on July 2019.[13] Despite the huge numbers not many influencers focus on it. Since every social media channel requires a different strategy having knowledge of each one of them will be beneficial in becoming an influencer.

12. 217 Social Media Marketing Statistics to Prep You For 2019 https://www.socialpilot.co/blog/social-media-statistics

13. Snap adds 13 million daily active users as it gets serious about global expansion https://www.theverge.com/2019/7/23/20707569/snapchat-snap-earnings-users-added-filter-gender-swap

h) **Respond to comments:** Influencers who constantly respond to their fans comments are able to connect better in comparison to those who do not. Responding to comments and answering user's queries results in higher engagement rate. While responding to comments an influencer should be gentle and friendly. Responding to trolls and hate comments should be avoided. Influencers should also engage outside their community and feed to further increase their radius. Answer questions on Quora, post in groups, or on friend's fan pages, tag other influencers to engage with the community. Starting a facebook group around a Fan page or a social media channel will draw more followers. There are several well known groups on Facebook around influencers like Bhuavan Bam fans facebook group. Bhuvan Bam is an Indian comedian, singer, songwriter and YouTube personality from Delhi, India with over 15.4 million followers on Youtube.

i) **Generating Fresh Content consistently:** Consistency is the key when it comes to gaining publicity online. If an influencer sporadically creates content users may soon forget him and the engagement levels will drop. A good example is the Youtube Channel "Make Joke of" which makes funny 3D cartoon videos for Indian audience it has over 6.98 million followers as of November, 2019. It became viral instantly and received several brand marketing offers as well, but with low content generation levels his fans have to wait 4-5 months for a new video to arrive. This gave a chance to other content creators who started generating similar content and gained good fan following. It is not easy to generate fresh content on a consistent basis a team may be required to assist an influencer, research should be done before publishing new content online on social channels. The correct time, geographic targeting and

keyword research will ensure it reaches the right audience. Having a content calendar in place will ensure that blooming influencers are on track.

j) **Listen to critics and feedbacks:** Critics play an important role in helping a brand grow, read reviews about the social media channels, comments, and feedbacks given by users. Criticism cannot be avoided even the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi who has over 51.1 million followers has critics. No amount of money or power can over shadow this; users who can handle constructive criticism are the one who can mold themselves into becoming a more polished influencer. An influencer should not act as a dictator, rather listen to constructive criticism or feedbacks and work on them. For example if the users feel that a certain a travel blogger has been posting too many pictures of one place they may get bored and request him for something new.

k) **Be approachable:** It happens a lot of times that when micro and nano influencers gain popularity they tend to become inaccessible to their fans. They stop responding to their comments, fan messages etc. This is what got them publicity in the first place if they ignore these followers chances of having low engagement rates are high.
The more approachable an influencer is the more influential they can become. Influencers can organize question and answer sessions like Jay Lakhani who is a speaker on Spiritual humanism. He is the editor of two books related to the teaching of Hinduism in schools in the UK and has a Youtube Channel. He constantly organizes live question and answer sessions to engage with his subscribers on Youtube helping him gain new fans. Similarly Ravi Shankar who is an Indian spiritual leader and has 4.5 million followers on his Facebook page organizes frequent live sessions where he interacts with his followers answering his queries. Being accessible to the fans is a key for follower retention.

l) **Research topics daily:** Constantly generating new topic ideas is important in order to stay ahead of the competition in any niche. To get topic ideas, keep an eye on the popular news websites and blogs in the preferred category. Following the social media handles of the websites and setting up Google Alert for news on the desired categories will help in keeping abreast with the latest buzz. The more knowledge and well informed an influencer is the higher are his chances of being popular.

m) **Automating Posts:** Automation can greatly reduce the effort required in posting on various social media channels. It gives users the flexibility to schedule posts on timings when an influencer is not awake or away from the internet and may not be in a position to share an update. For example if you are in Indian time zone and wish to post an update on social media

keeping American audience in mind, these automation tools are of great benefit. Some of the automation tools which can be used to schedule posts and provide indepth social media reports are Hootsuite, Zoho social, Buffer, Sprout Social etc. Automation gives efficiency, and speed along with valuable data insights to various social media channels.

n) **Follow and tag influencers in the posts:** One needs to be aware of the influencers in his niche to become one. It is important to know whom to follow. While big influencers may not respond to the comments of blooming influencers due to the sheer number of followers they have, micro influencers will appreciate being tagged and followed. On twitter there is a hashtag group called #Teamfollowback which believes in following every user who follows them. Shoutout post is another great way to highlight an influencer on a channel. In this influencers request their fans to follow other's Youtube channel or social media handle through their videos or social media posts.

o) **Track the progress:** Each social media site has its own inbuilt analytics, which provides insight into audience engagement percent, followers, reactions and comments. For example Facebook has insights section for every Facebook Fanpage, similarly Twitter and Linkedin have analytics section. Users who wish to become an influencer should track their progress using these tools. If a certain post has outperformed other posts more such content should be shared. If a certain demographic or geographic location is doing well reason should be deduced for future enhancements. Repeat works and eliminate what does not.

If a user keeps the above points in mind becoming a successful influencer will be easier for him. Remember that everyone starts with zero followers and no one knows who they are. The micro and nano influencers gradually build their fan base and climb their way to success.

- **Strategies and practices followed by individuals to grow immediate network and acquire larger audience**

Influencers use various strategies and practices to ensure that they are up in their game. This helps them to grow their audience and fan base with each passing day.

Having a professional looking profile online is just as important as the influencer's offline behavior. A good profile creation could be a tedious task but it is one of the initial steps gaining more eyeballs on social media.

Some of the strategies that are followed by individuals to grow their network are:

1) **Updating social media accounts:** Incomplete or missing information about a content creator on social media may not be a hindrance in gaining a larger audience but having a

complete profile can surely ensure an increase in the faith, the fans lay upon any influencer. The fans or followers of any influencer get to know more about the experts who are giving them advice or sharing some informative content with them. Most of the well known influencers have completely filled profiles with well written Bio and an impressive picture. If an influencer is an expert in a certain field, he can highlight his skill set in the bio section. A good example of bio on Twitter is that of NASA - National Aeronautics and Space Administration both on Facebook and Twitter they have well written bio and about section with a perfect header image of the pilots from the NASA space programs. Depicting that this page is about space research. They have also filled out their profile with keywords and important contact information. Their Twitter page mirrors their Facebook page and they have same usernames or handles @NASA on both the platforms. Blooming influencers should make sure that they well written bio, with contact information, keywords and there area of expertise.

2) **They know their area of expertise:** Influencers are well aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They focus on creating content where they know they have a better chance of gaining larger audience, it could be music, dance, gadget reviews or travel blogging. Everyone is an expert at something. The influencers select their content niche very intelligently and create high quality content around it. If one niche is not enough you will find some influencers creating content across several areas. Youtuber Carryminati who is known for his humour and critic videos has over 8.9 million subscribers on his channel. Despite his great success he soon started his own gaming channel called Carryislive where he plays live video games and gained as many as 2.93 million subscribers. There are several other users like Robert Jefferson who run multiple Youtube channels as they feel they have expertise in several areas.
3) **Using apps to post information:** Content creation and dispersion is a tough task, fortunately there apps to assist in content dispersion and scheduling. In order to handle several social media accounts many influencers use apps like Sprout social, Buffer and Hootsuite to ease their work. For example remembering several passwords, auto replies to messages, cross posting on several websites, removing the need to login and open several websites at ones can be easily managed by these automated apps. These apps reduce the pressure from the shoulders of influencers and give them more time to focus on content creation.
4) **Regular content generation:** Keeping the followers waiting endlessly for new content to arrive may not be the best idea. The users soon forget the social media handles or tend to unsubscribe or unfollow such pages. While low content creation is an issue, over posting also leads to fatigue and annoyance of fans. Some of the well known influencers create content anywhere from 3-4 times per week. Primitive

Technology is one such YouTube channel which is run by an individual named John Plant. He is based in Australia, and demonstrates the process of making tools and buildings using only materials found in the wild. His channel started very well and has over 9.86 million subscribers but due to his low frequency of content creation the number of views on his videos keeps on decreasing. While the initial videos gained over 10 million or higher views in few weeks, new videos now have around 7 million views in similar time span. His topic was picked up by other Youtubers like Primitive Food Life HK, who now generate new content on consistent basis and have good following.

5) **Use Hashtags:** Influencers are often seen to create new hashtags which starts to trend due to their large number of followers. Using popular hashtags not only increases the chances of more views, it also gives a meaning to an update. Informing the users what the update is about. Tools like Ritetag can be used to find the best tags for each post.
6) **Interviews, Podcasts and Meetups:** Influencers do not restrict themselves to their social media channels they can be seen in various meetups being interviewed on video shows, or podcasts. There are several video shows which call for experts. The people at these conferences are relevant to the niche of an influencer and the chances of gaining new fans increases. The audience is highly motivated to follow them on social media. Good influencers always share their social media handles when they are out to speak in various conferences. Similarly guest posting is a popular trend where influencers write a piece of article for a website.
7) **Indepth Content:** One thing that differentiates the influencers from the normal users on social media is their indepth knowledge of their field. There content instantly gains huge number of likes and comments. The kinds of posts that increase the exposure of influencers are
    a. **Opinions:** They can be seen expressing a strong opinion about a topic, or a product. It could be a positive or negative. This is a risky preposition as there are chances of failure as well, but these posts gain a lot of engagement, social shares and exposure. A good example of opinion sharing can be seen on the Youtube channel of DhruvRathee. He is a Youtuber who shares his views on various day-to-day topics with indepth analysis. His opinion on the India's tallest statue, the "Statue of Unity" gained 4.8 million views where he explains his users how this statue is an expensive deploy and will not give the monetary returns, which the government thinks it will.
    b. **Data:** Everyone loves data backed content. People respond strongly to data and the engagement rate is high. Users share this data when they are in conversation with their friends on a certain issue. This data shared by influencers could be on any topic like, "has the employment rate decreased after Donald Trump became president?" or "which mobile phone is

the fastest in the market?"Neil Patel the creator of the website crazyegg.com and Brian Dean the founder of Backlinko.com are two digital marketing experts who ensure that all their posts are data backed. Influencers use data from different websites, case studies or authors and ensure that the sources are tagged. This helps them get more social shares from the originators as well.

c. **News and trends:** Some influencers are the first to create news and trends. They do their own tests, visits to places and find out if it is news worthy. For example the specs of a new mobile phone which is yet to be launched. Some users on Youtube can be seen testing mobile phones to see if they can survive harsh conditions like iPhone bend tests, burn and drop tests. This gets them good number of views.

14. Statue of Unity: The Harsh Reality | Analysis by Dhruv Rathee https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sbPGzrXbts

Similarly, these influencers keep an eye on trending topics and share the news before anyone else. Using sites like Google trends, trends24.in users can stay ahead of the competition. Monitoring the television set or newsworthy websites is also good source gaining new of information.

8) **Keeping in touch with the subscribers:** Influencers like Neil Patel, focus a lot on email marketing, there emails are short and crisp. Sending regular meaningful and less promotional newsletters to the fans and subscribers ensures that influencers are always in touch with their fans. Too frequent emails can result in irking a user. Hence these influencers focus on sharing weekly or bimonthly emails.

9.4 CONCLUSION

Creating a personal brand on social media is not a one day task, with more users and micro-influeners showing up each day the competition is stiff. A lot of research and hard work is required in order to succeed. The best way is to find a niche, and constantly share meaningful content. Users should think long-term and remember to note down the things working for them and which are not.

9.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is Influencer Marketing?

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2. What are the advantages for a brand in tagging with a micro-influencer over celebrities?

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3. How to measure the Return on Investment of Influencer Marketing?

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4. What are the popular tools for identifying influencers?

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5. What are the best channels for influencer marketing?

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Answers

1. Influencer marketing is a means by which brands and organizations expand their reach by reaching out to influential users on social media who share their messages from their social media channels like Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook etc. This helps brands to get new customers and enhance the buyer's faith in a brand.
2. The followers of Micro-influencers have a close connection with their followers. Followers have a high level of trust in their influencer. This is mainly because the group is small and influencer is able to connect with most of them. Apart from this micro-influencers mostly work more on niche based channels which makes allows their messages to reach the right target audience and generate higher engagement rate. On the other hand celebrities have a large number of followers usually in millions whohave different likes and dislikes which may not be inline with the brand's product the celebrity is marketing, resulting in low engagement rate.
3. Return on investment in influencer marketing depends on the cost of investment. This inlcudes identification and acquisition of an influencer, providing free samples to influencers and the resource and time spend in content creation and media outreach. The return on investment in influencer marketing can be measured by

a) Monitoring at the increase in the media value

b) Higher influencer engagement

c) Improved perception about the product, service or brand

d) Increased brand awareness and supporters

e) Increase in website traffic

f) Higher sales and enquiries

4. Some of the popular tools used to identify influencers are Upfluence, Post for Rent, HypeAuditor, Discover.ly, Social Crawlytics, Alltop, Podbay.fm, Klout, SEOquake, Hunter.io
5. The most popular influencer marketing platforms are Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, and Twitter. Choosing the best channel depends on the campaign's needs and the target audience. If a campaign demands more branding than conversions and clicks to a website, Youtube is the best place, where as if the campaign demands more clicks to a website Facebook, and Twitter are the best options.

9.6 REFERENCE

Further Reading

- 9 Proven Tips to Get More Social Media Followers

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/get-social-media-followers/208397/

- 24 Indispensable Ways to Grow Your Brand's Social Media Presence https://grin.co/blog/brands-social-media-presence/
- How You Can Build A Powerful Influencer Marketing Strategy in 2019 https://www.bigcommerce.com/blog/influencer-marketing/
- 10 Steps to Building Your Personal Brand on Social Media https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/en-au/blog/2017-11-09-10-steps-to-building-your-personal-brand-on-social-media
- 19 Strategies That'll Help You Become an Influencer

https://neilpatel.com/blog/become-an-influencer/

Videos

- How Influencers Have Transformed Modern Marketing | Rachel David | TEDxVancouver https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbbEXnRG9d8
- How to Leverage Influencer Marketing to EXPLODE Your Business https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhOrRQmQ-Z8
- Influencer marketing blueprint: how to use instagram influencer marketing (2018) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRdBgmS1EE4
- How To Find Instagram Influencers To Explode Your eCommerce Sales https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUqmH_WeCs8

UNIT : 10 EXPENDITURE ON SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

:: STRUCTURE::

10.0 Introduction

10.1 Objectives

10.2 Need for Social Media Spending

10.3 Social Media Spends: Statistics and Trends

10.4 Building a Social Media Budget

10.5 Conclusion

10.6 Check Your Progress

10.7 Reference

10.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media has engulfed multifarious spheres of life and businesses of various hues and sizes. It has evolved from being platforms merely for making new friends and connections to creating complete business hubs and avenues for promoting brand awareness, encouraging user content and generating income. With entrepreneurs realising the huge advantages offered by social media in the digital technology landscape, no wonder each business has social media interwoven as a critical marketing platform to showcase their services broadcast to a large audience in no time. Social media is in intrinsic part of an estimated four billion people in the world, who use the platform daily for an average 135 minutes, a figure which is going up by the day. The competition is so intense in today's world that those not advertising on social media risk falling behind their competitors. Paid social media outreach has become more powerful and encompassing in its reach with the usage of big data and AI tools at play. This reinforces the need for paid social media to become an integral part of outreach strategy of businesses for gaining customer loyalty and boost brand awareness through exquisite market insights. In this unit, we will study what informs the decision of marketers to choose social media platforms for ad spending and what goes into choosing the right budget among other related topics.

10.1 OBJECTIVES

- Understand the need for a robust social media spending strategy
- Learn different terms and terminologies used in the paid social marketing parlance
- Analyse factors and considerations to be taken into account while preparing a social media budget
- Read some case studies on how to develop a social media strategy

- Lean how different organisations and contextual settings determine spending limits and RoI calculations

On Completion of this Unit, You will be Able to:

- Understand the difference between organic and paid reach of social media content
- Learn the need for paid campaigns on social media
- Understand how big and small companies strategise their spending on different social media platforms
- Learn concepts used in social media marketing

Index of Unit Contents

- Need for Social Media Spending
- Social Media Spends: Statistics and Trends
- Terms and Concepts Used in Paid Social Media Marketing
- Building a Social Media Budget
- Case Studies on Social Media Spending
- Spending Strategy on Social Media Campaigns
- Trends in Social Media Paid Marketing

10.2 NEED FOR SOCIAL MEDIA SPENDING

Social media is a global phenomenon, with over two billion people logging in to one or another form of social media everyday. An average person spends about 135 minutes per day on social media. In this competitive arena, social media marketing has become a must-have tool for businesses to elevate their consumer satisfaction to a new level. In this regard, it is pertinent to put forward a question: is social media spending really required, and what are the returns on the investments done?

The point that social media outreach and campaigns are important to make a long-lasting impact on your end audience does not need any reiteration, as it has been established beyond doubt in many case studies. Apart from organic reach, there is a need for reaching out to a large audience mass through optimal usage of social media platforms. No wonder, with the growing number of platforms with which an increasingly social-savvy audience is getting connected, entrepreneurs only see it advantageous to hire companies to manage social media on their behalf. This is crucial in order to maintain an edge over their competitors.

Often the success of a business' social media outreach is determined by the likes, follows and conversations happenings around content initiated by its social media channels. This invariably helps in gaining public interest and trust outside of personal one-to-one interaction, which may take a lot of time to fructify at a large scale. This is often a starting point for your business to take your visibility to the next level. To think the immediate returns and re-positioning the expectations to a definitive time in the future, with intermediate return on investment calculations may be a better business strategy, rather than shying away from this section altogether, irrespective of the size of business.

In fact, small businesses have a social media advantage in the sense that it helps build them brand awareness, gives them a platform readily for customer engagement and help build loyalty quickly.

Paid social media marketing also comes in various cost-effective offerings, which are flexible enough depending on the end result and the customer reach. Businesses can make these campaigns effective by being creative and focussed on solving the consumer's pain areas and making themselves accessible and affordable, thus making their brand's offerings according to the customer's needs. This impactful medium from all the major social media bigwigs – Facebook, Google, Twitter, etc. – makes it a tough proposition to miss for any brand.

However, there is a caveat to promoting brands on social media: as with all technologies, there are no easy gains, as it may seem at first. The marketing strategy on social media requires deep insight, planning and strategy preparation that often takes time to establish the market reach which is envisaged at the start of each marketing effort. It usually takes time for the invested money to get translated into views, conversations, likes and engagements and may require tweaking more than once to obtain the desired result. With a plethora of options available, a late starter may often need to travel the extra mile in order to evince and maximise consumer interest – through greater investments and pitching for its product's USP in more concrete terms. There is a fine line between optimal social media spend and the returns obtained. This should be monitored often to gain insights, which can help businesses to stand the competition and stay ahead of the curve by not overspending than returns obtained, but, at the same time, not being overcautious and miss out on a golden platform offered by social media.

Determining the end audience, the level of engagement required, the key messages to be relayed to end users, the periodicity of engagement, the click-to-action items to be provided, follow-up actions in order to drive more engagement are certain questions which help businesses see value in paid social media investment. The power of personalised attention provided by social media cannot be understated, with the consumers being driven more by how the social media assists them in their product/service selection, with purchase just a natural extension of this assistance.

Social media spending is, thus, an indispensable reality which businesses have embraced, and the early starters are, in fact, the biggest beneficiaries of the boom brought about by the social media and consumerism spree on which social media has come to have a primary say. For businesses, getting potential consumers on their radar, and guiding their behaviour so that both groups benefit. This is how social media acts as a conduit for both businesses and their consumers.

10.3 SOCIAL MEDIA SPENDS: STATISTICS AND TRENDS

Now that the need for a well-charted social media spending model, contextualised according to the need, has been well laid out in the previous section, it is time to throw light on the underlying spending

trends. This will enable you to appreciate the importance of paid social media marketing in the contemporary world and ways and means to manage the spending to obtain the best return on investment.

Social media advertising has reached such large proportions that it is slated to overtake print ad spending for the first time in 2019. It amounts to about 18 per cent year-on-year boost in spending in social media outreach using social platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, with aggregate spending close to USD 90 billion. Though the social media spending contributes to 13 per cent of overall advertising spend, which only trails paid search (17 per cent), it is expected to achieve a CAGR of 8.7 per cent in the four-year period of 2019-2023, resulting in a market volume of USD 125 billion by 2023.

A major reason behind this is the recognition and trust reposed by corporates on the utility, reach and mass character of social media advertising and the flexibility that the platforms provide to optimise the campaigns for achieving key business objectives in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. With more and more people transitioning primarily to mobile devices to consume content, social media spending has primarily focussed on the mobile platform, and rightly so. The average ad spending per Internet user has grown exponentially between 2017 and 2019 – from USD 17.36 in 2017 to USD 21.40 in 2019. This is further slated to grow to USD 24.26 by 2023.

It is important to recognise that the current statistics and trends of social media spending vary greatly from region to region: as expected, the US leads the charts, but Asia-Pacific countries are fast catching up, given the huge consumer demand for online content and the need for personalised offerings according to their needs. This helps in the establishment of a trust factor between the consumer and the provider with provision and consumption of increasingly relevant and targeted content. With multitude options available, the need for ads' target audience has never been more important than today.

As on 2019, the US accounts for a lion's share of most ad spending, both by volume and market share, accounting for almost one-third of global ad spending. China, the UK, India and Germany are the other big spenders, listed in that order. Back in 2015, 38 per cent of all organisations had planned to spend more than 20 per cent of their total advertising budget on social media, whose share is consistently going up with each passing year.

Social media advertising budgets are slated to double in the five-year period from 2018-23. More specifically, the spending on video segment has been pioneering the boost in social media spending. Catering to the short attention spans and getting the message across using the visual sensory, video consumption is surely going to be on an upswing. According to Instagram, there has been an 80 per cent increase in time spent in watching videos from 2016 to 2017, thus resulting in about 60 per cent of marketers planning to increase their social video spending in 2018. This has been fuelled by the stories feature on Instagram, with almost one-third of top viewed stories made by business accounts, with an appreciative direct response from the viewers.

According to Adobe's 'State of Digital Advertising 2018' report, 50 per cent of Gen Z (18- and 19-year-olds) and 42 per cent of millennials (20- to 36-year-olds) think social media is the most relevant channel for ads. A majority of this group, which is most likely the largest chunk on social media, feels that ads are getting more relevant. However, it is a matter of debate on how the metrics used by platforms, such as reach and engagement, translate into specific business outcomes, which make greater sense for corporates like growth in customer loyalty, brand reputation, etc.

According to Adobe Analytics, social media ads drive three times more non-customers than existing customers to retailer websites as of 2018. This is up from 2.5 times in 2016. As of 2018, Facebook is the social media heavyweight with six million advertisers, with almost 90 per cent of their ads being targeted towards the mobile audience. The spending has been upped by almost 50 per cent, with the typical average video post reaching 15 per cent audience. An organic Facebook page post reaches eight per cent of page's audience, according to HootSuite's Digital in 2018 report. Paid reach, in comparison, reaches 27 per cent of the total audience.

YouTube is the big daddy when it comes to social marketing spending, especially with the advent of video content consumption. It hosts upwards of a billion users, and, on an average, one billion hours of video run on it everyday. YouTube drives almost 27 per cent of all digital video spending in the US and, given the large user-base which the platform hosts, 80 per cent B2C marketers value YouTube as a premium advertising platform. More specifically, the small businesses and start-ups are more prone to advertising on YouTube than on any platform. Almost 83 per cent of paid YouTube mobile advertising in mobile receives response from users, and almost 95 per cent ads are watched with audio on, resulting in greater brand awareness and brand recall.

All in all, the social media trends show the essential way forward – intelligent and prudent investments in social media advertising to reap rich dividends, in terms of return on investment and brand awareness.

Terms and Concepts Used in Paid Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing involves usage of a number of terms and terminologies, which are often misunderstood and, thus, the gains which can be accrued are never fully realised. This section focuses on making you aware of some commonly used terms, so that you may appreciate their usefulness in the overarching spectrum of social media marketing.

- *Boosted post:* a boosted post is a normal post on which money has been invested to increase its reach and take it to a specific audience. These posts start as organic posts and get additional paid reach based on the spend. This reach depends on boost duration and budget allocated.
- *Click-through rate (CTR):* it is the percentage of people who click on your post among all who see it. The definition of CTR varies among social networks and is usually calculated as link clicks divided by post impressions calculated as a percentage.

A higher conversion rate means more business, as there is a greater percentage of audience which sees the ads as meaningful and drives them to take specific actions, which add value to your business, like purchasing an item, visiting a website for completing registration, etc. Higher the conversion, the more the ad strategy is considered to be effective.

- *Cost per click (CPC):* it is a social media advertising metric that lets the advertiser know how much they are paying to the hosting platform for each click on their ad (on an average). Since most of the social media campaigns strive to drive the audience traffic to a specific page, completion of an action or purchase, CPC gives a broad indicator on how much advertisers spend to get the traffic. CPC depends on a number of factors like location, the target end audience, relevance of ad to the audience, etc. Facebook Ads and Google AdWords are prime examples of CPC strategies, and intelligent trade-offs need to be prioritised in order to drive traffic relevant to search keywords/target audience.
- *Cost per action (CPA):* On Facebook, CPA is the price you pay for each action the user takes on your website because of the source Facebook ad. The user interactions on the hosted ad can be tracked and also set the actions which are desired. Based on the interactions done, Facebook automatically optimises the ads as per the end-user actions.
- *Cost per like (CPL):* Another term which is specific to Facebook is CPL (Cost Per Like). This is the price that a user pays for each like on Facebook page which comes from the click on the ad run by you. This is often used to grow a fan base on Facebook for your business, and spread brand awareness and loyalty.
- *Cost per mille (CPM):* it is the price for obtaining 1,000 impressions on your ad. This metric tracks how many people see your ad and helps in spreading brand awareness quickly. Impressions are counted when your ad appears in somebody's newsfeed/viewable screen. This is similar to CPI. Different social networks have different criteria to calculate impressions.
- *Engagement rate:* it defines how much an end user perceives your ad as interesting and actionable and feels motivated to engage with it. It is calculated simply as the division of the number of people who interacted with an ad and the number of people who saw the post. Engagements are usually actions taken by users after seeing the ad, for example likes, shares, reactions, purchase, etc.
- *Native advertising:* it is a technique to show paid content to users as if it is organic. Promoted ads that show up in search result listings on Facebook and YouTube), user feeds and promoted feeds are examples of native advertising.

- *Pay per click (PPC):* it is an ad model where you pay each time a user clicks on your ad. This is often used when the intent is to drive as many users as possible to your website. This helps in driving new users to your resources, based on the set of keywords and in addition to on-page SEO customisation. This kind of advertising can help in making your business visible to your target audience.
- *Return on investment (RoI):* It is important to calculate the RoI of all the investments that have been made in propelling your business in the online space. Social media RoI is a measurement of how much revenue has been generated out of the expenditure done on those activities. This metric varies greatly, based on the purpose of adopting paid marketing.
- *User-generated content (UGC):* it is the content produced by people, which contributes towards generating a positive brand image for a business. This may come in the form of articles, videos or images and often contributes towards propelling the brand awareness to the next level.

10.4 BUILDING A SOCIAL MEDIA BUDGET

Since paid social media marketing is all about spending on targeted ads so that it brings about maximum brand advantage and profit, marketers should build a robust and sustainable social media marketing budget, which can help them achieve business objectives. This strategy should be flexible enough to accommodate compelling changes, so that it can be easily changed and benefits accrued in time. Building a comprehensive budget, thus, requires input and considerations from multiple sources – for example, the end audience, content strategy, social media metrics for tracking performance, competition analysis, etc. All these are indispensable inputs. Since social media marketing is not a one-size-fits-all recipe, it is often essential to internalise all such macro parameters in order to develop a remunerative social media budget. Such a strategy will lead your brand to achieve its goals and engage with your audience purposefully through optimal spending. Consider the following aspects before deciding a marketing strategy and budget:

- *Establish the goal:* a social media budget plan is as good as dead which does not have an end objective in mind. This objective may be more revenue, greater reach among audience, increase brand awareness or generating leads and sales through online platforms. Achieving a goal can make it worthwhile to set a higher goal and streamlining efforts, money and strategy accordingly. This also allows you to see how your strategy is aligning with the money spent on realising the strategy and the corresponding RoI. This often involves investing in starting conversations which aligns with your business, targeting ads to groups which have higher conversion and engagement rate and targeting consumers with ads for specific keywords and hashtags. User-generated content comes in handy to promote community engagement and promote web traffic.

- *Research target audience:* using the power of social media analytic tools and the collected demographic data, marketers can pitch their product/service to satisfy the gap currently in the market. A social media dashboard can provide an overview of who's following you, and how they interact with you on each channel.
- *Establish important metrics:* data should be the crucial input which guides the actions concerning your social media budget. You should focus on the social media metrics which align with your business goals. Rather than focusing on the vanity metrics, like impressions and likes, analyse those metrics that contributes towards real growth. These constitute metrics such as reach (number of unique users who saw your post/ad), clicks (users clicking on your ad) and engagement (number of social interactions divided by number of impressions). All these indicate how the end audience perceives your product and, hence, your brand. It also points towards understanding how users move through your marketing channel. It is important to understand both organic and paid likes to budget your ad spend and time optimally. An effective social media marketing methodology should always be rooted in numbers for calculation of RoI and reinforcement of business goals.
- *Analyze competitors:* you should have a good idea of who your competitors are and what their strengths and weaknesses are vis-a-vis their social media performance. In the contemporary world of cut-throat competition, it is indispensable to understand what your competitors are up to in order to adapt your marketing strategy according to business needs and benefits management and serve fresh content to the end users, which is laced with paid social marketing to skyrocket returns. The competitor analysis tools usually come in handy in informing how your competitors are placed in social networks and how you can adapt your own strategy to stay ahead of the curve. Creative approach, laced with personality traits and USPs of your brand, can help in setting your product line stand apart from your competitors'. Comparing and monitoring the competitor's social media performance with yours is a great learning opportunity to know where and how you should lead your social media performance and, accordingly, adjust your social media budget.
- *Engaging social content:* content should always revolve around engaging your audience, depending on your business goal and brand identity. It is difficult to create compelling visual content which can be effective in pulling traffic through paid ads. By building content themes consistently centered around business goals, marketers have a wide range of options to build their content – through memes, photos, user-generated content, etc. This is a sure-shot way in keeping a high engagement rate, which also provides an incentive for customers to interact with your content regularly. Populating user feeds as stories has been one of the favorite themes for

corporates and gives them the extra edge in tapping on the customers' needs. Social video is also one of the few rages which are picking up steam and soon are going to be the way businesses converse with the end users.

Since every action businesses (especially small ones) take on social media should be driven by a well-defined marketing strategy, it is pertinent that all the above factors should be kept in mind while preparing a social media budget. These help especially in cases when there is limited budget and appropriate decision is required to decide on which aspect of social media marketing needs more emphasis/money.

Case Studies on Social Media Spending

Knowledge about best practices in the field of social media marketing for obtaining maximum value is abundant. Contextualising the learning, benchmarking them according to own needs and requirements and imbibing them accordingly can often play an important role in quick adoption of best practices, especially for starters in this field. It is always worthwhile to obtain ideas from the big brands on how they leveraged the power of social media and user content to generate traffic and income.

Almost all the successful campaigns have few critical things in common:

- *High relevance:* they seem to touch a positive chord with the end user, in which he/she sees a personal connect or a positive value proposition.
- *Visual appeal:* in the era of infographics and short video teasers, it is often a make-or-break deal whether your product/service can make the cut in terms of visual IQ and convince them to understand your product on a single go.
- *Clear and concise message:* with a reduced attention span, people are more likely to skip your ads if the intended message is not clear. Choice of words should align both with your business needs and customer's value.
- *Call to action:* a customer who is interested to know about your offerings/purchase should have an action-oriented asset. This is the gateway for possible income generation.

Obviously, these features will differ according to the audience and business types. Nevertheless, these guiding principles could be kept in mind while designing the social media expenditure strategy.

Let us see how these features are applied in real world scenarios by businesses to gain leads and converted them to sales and web traffic. Brands need to continually innovate and offer relevant ways for customer engagement:

- **Oreo: Smart content planning, timely delivery**

  Creativity is one of the major themes which stand out in all of Oreo's social media marketing themes. Consistent branding and linking with the real world events are their major forte.

Their simple, yet eye-catchy, tweet when the lights went out during the Super Bowl event was a rage: 'Power Out? No Problem. You can still dunk in the dark.' A clear, concise and effective branding strategy with an out-of-box thinking paid dividends, with over 15 thousand retweets. It is always recommended to plan out the budget in a manner that it can cater to major events coming up in order to align the content delivery and paid ads in line with them.

- **Air Asia: Social media contests and incentives**

  Air Asia often runs Facebook contests to increase awareness of its new routes and new aircraft fleets, which often go viral courtesy their pitching, contextualisation and competitive pricing models. Popularly known as 'AirAsia Friendsy Campaign', AirAsia took help of the digital marketing agency Publicis Mojo to launch a Facebook campaign in the form of a contest in 2012, where the winner could travel with 302 of their Facebook friends on Airbus 330, which is considered a high-end aircraft, and enjoy a three-day vacation along with friends. The USD 80,000 ad budget was well utilised by encouraging mass engagement, allowing users to view all the amenities which they can avail using a Facebook app. This whole activity could be shared, inviting others to participate. Such an interesting marketing campaign resulted in an all-time high brand awareness. Facebook ads, video posts and page posts all contributed to an estimated USD 1.7 million PR value, which is humongous considering the expenditure which was done. The fan base increased by 30 per cent, and 2.3 million people engaged with this campaign. Right messaging and innovative marketing techniques were more helpful in this case for achieving business objectives, rather than pumping in loads of money with low returns.

A customised social media case study for your business is a powerful way to inform users and potential customers of how your product/service was applied in specific situations by using a social media strategy, accompanied with statistics. The idea is to help the reader obtain a clearer understanding of how your product is essential to provide the value he/she is looking for, and how it stands out from market peers. It should answer the general queries about the campaigns undertaken, and clearly specify the end result for creating a positive impact.

Spending Strategy on Social Media Campaigns

Since organic content no longer has the same reach as the paid content, the paid social models in each social network needs to be leveraged to give your offerings the extra push it needs to stand out in the era of information overload. The rising social media ad spend is testament to this fact – businesses rely on paid social more than ever. Social media advertising is a way to target audiences on specific networks through their demographic information so that they can see your brand in their feeds. Random content push does not serve the purpose and can, in fact, do the opposite of the intent where users end up ignoring the content. Hence, a strategic approach is required on the

following parameters: with respect to ad spend, content selection, targeting frequency and audience demographics.

Identification of goals and prioritising them often helps in framing the right strategy. The goal can be one or more of the following: increase traffic to websites; increase visibility of your brand; achieve high brand engagement with shares, likes, tweets and comments; higher lead generation to promote gated content; bring future customers into the marketing funnel; increase sales through judging interest; publish exciting one-time deals to generate interest, etc. These considerations, in turn, determine the spending strategies for different industries, organisations and individuals according to their size, spending capacity, demographics and sectors that they operate in.

Choosing the right platform for ad campaigns can have a bearing on the cost and performance. Following factors are noteworthy while choosing the right platform to implement the paid social budget effectively:

- Does the channel's demographics match with the brand's intended end audience?
- What is the reach and presence of my brand's competitors in the network?
- How does my organic content perform vis-a-vis paid content on the platform?
- Is the audience engagement rate good enough?
- Compatibility of ad types with the platform (images suit well for Instagram, video for Facebook/YouTube, etc.)

Each platform has its own set of advantages, which when intelligently employed can give good returns for the invested amount. Facebook has inherent advantages for B2C and B2B campaigns. Instagram is essential for generating brand awareness with high B2C conversions. LinkedIn is more adept for B2B transactions and limited to a specific demographic. Thought leadership content and content drawn around learning can help generate leads and boost traffic. Snapchat's filters and lenses are often useful to promote user engagement and achieve product awareness, especially among younger audiences. It is always better to invest some amount to see which platform suits your business before starting to establish a greater presence.

Social media component in an average marketing budget features about USD 250 to USD 300 per day, which is about 12 per cent of the total average marketing budget, according to 2016 estimates. To put this figure in perspective, this is a 3x jump from 2009 estimates. Since spending should always calculate the commensurate benefits, the uniqueness factor in spending should cater to the end audience and achieve business goals. This obviously depends on the type of business, whether it is B2B or B2C. The pertinent logic of spending more money should be driven by the type of business and whether the social media route is expected to drive more sales/leads.

Visuals should form a good chunk of the spending strategy because photos, graphics, video posts and infographics bring forth the idea

clearly which is seldom possible through a text-heavy ads. A melange of platforms (as detailed above) may be used depending on the business need, managed though a social media management tool to track and monitor performance through analytics. This is helpful to perform timely course correction and keep your marketing and subsequently spending strategy dynamic in line with changing needs. Though all the networks do provide some metrics by default, it can be a nice idea to invest in third-party analytics to deep dive on audience behaviour to tweak offerings accordingly.

Paid partnerships can be an exciting way to drive leads too. From Instagram's partner tag feature to YouTube influencer partnerships, there are many collaboration possibilities which can be explored to tap into the world of possibilities. Audience research could be a major input towards this exercise.

Trends in Social Media Paid Marketing

There are some trends whose understanding is essential in order to completely decipher the evolving landscape of social media paid marketing. This serves as a crucial input in order to prepare a relevant social media budget and introduce a degree of flexibility to achieve business goals in the times of uncertainty and consumer choices:

- *Big data analytics:* big data is the in-thing today and useful asset for corporates and individuals alike to scale up their marketing efforts in the right direction, based on demographics and user behaviour, even to the level of predicting what call to action items will be required to trigger the expected behaviour.
- *Messenger and chatbots:* with the advent of super smart chatbots which learn from user interactions, immediate business advantages – like quick responses, less waiting time, providing recommendations and positive user experience – accrue to businesses when they invest in these technologies. Their use can be considered in the PPC strategy.
- *Live streaming:* it has become a *sine qua non* for reaching out to large audiences. Major events, like product launches, sneak peeks and provision of exclusive premium content, give businesses a platform to connect with potential customers and build engagement with non co-located audience groups.
- *Ephemeral content:* tapping on people's FOMO (fear of missing out), ephemeral content is available for only a short period of time. A prime example being Instagram stories. The end user's interest is kindled, so that they can follow up and see what is in store by following other details.
- *Social media listening:* serving content based on interests of the user is one of the key features of an advanced social media strategy, and chances of an increased positive RoI. It is important to 'listen' to them and trigger ads accordingly in order to improve CTR and increase brand awareness.

10.5 CONCLUSION

Social media is here to stay, and it is for businesses to invest in them early in a prudent, sustainable manner. Given the positive trends for

paid social marketing, it is a no-brainer to invest in platforms suitable to business need and types and reasons for marketing to gain customers and generate income. A deep understanding of all the major terms and the social media strategy should underpin the preparation of social media budget. This should also reflect the considerations which are often ignored, like business type, size, spending capacity, audience demographics and sectors that they operate in. Marketers should also look out for major upcoming trends in social media marketing in order to incorporate them in their ad offerings and improve the performance of marketing deliverables.

10.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Questions

1. What is need for paid marketing on social media when organic posts are also publicly accessible?

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2. What is click-through rate in the context of social media marketing?

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3. What factors should be considered before deciding the social media budget?

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4. Describe how Air Asia used ‘AirAsia Friendsy Campaign’ to create a buzz on social media.

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Answers

1. While social media platforms thrive on user-generated posts and pitch themselves as a democratic way of connecting with like-minded people, in reality each platform restricts the organic reach of user posts. Most figures floating around on the Internet about the actual number of people an organic post can reach are in the realm of speculation, but this fact is established that

organic reach is a limited idea. Therefore, for brands there is a need for reaching out to a large audience mass through optimal usage of social media platforms in the form of paid marketing. No wonder, with the growing number of platforms with which an increasingly social-savvy audience is getting connected, entrepreneurs only see it advantageous to hire companies to manage social media on their behalf. This is crucial in order to maintain an edge over their competitors.

2. Click-through rate (CTR) is the percentage of people who click on a post among all who see it. The definition of CTR varies among social networks and is usually calculated as link clicks divided by post impressions calculated as a percentage. A higher conversion rate means more business, as there is a greater percentage of audience which sees the ads as meaningful and drives them to take specific actions, which add value to your business, like purchasing an item, visiting a website for completing registration, etc.

3. The following points help a social media manager or agency to decide the budget for a brand's positioning on social media:

- *Establish the goal:* a social media budget plan is as good as dead which does not have an end objective in mind. This objective may be more revenue, greater reach among audience, increase brand awareness or generating leads and sales through online platforms. Achieving a goal can make it worthwhile to set a higher goal and streamlining efforts, money and strategy accordingly.

    - *Research target audience:* using the power of social media analytic tools and the collected demographic data, marketers can pitch their product/service to satisfy the gap currently in the market. A social media dashboard can provide an overview of who's following you, and how they interact with you on each channel.

- *Establish important metrics:* data should be the crucial input which guides the actions concerning your social media budget. You should focus on the social media metrics which align with your business goals. Rather than focusing on the vanity metrics, like impressions and likes, analyse those metrics that contributes towards real growth.

- *Analyze competitors:* the manager should have a good idea of who the client's competitors are and what their strengths and weaknesses are vis-a-vis their social media performance. In the contemporary world of cut-throat competition, it is indispensable to understand what your competitors are up to in order to adapt your marketing strategy according to business needs and benefits management and serve fresh content to the end users, which is laced with paid social marketing to skyrocket returns.

- *Engaging social content:* content should always revolve around engaging your audience, depending on your business goal and brand identity. It is difficult to create compelling visual content which can be effective in pulling traffic through paid ads. By

building content themes consistently centered around business goals, marketers have a wide range of options to build their content – through memes, photos, user-generated content, etc.

4. Air Asia started a social media intervention called 'AirAsia Friendsy Campaign' in 2012. It offered that the winner of this campaign could travel with 302 of their Facebook friends on its high-end Airbus 330 aircraft. Such an interesting marketing campaign resulted in an all-time high brand awareness. Facebook ads, video posts and page posts all contributed to an estimated USD 1.7 million PR value, which is humongous considering the expenditure which was done. The fan base increased by 30 per cent, and 2.3 million people engaged with this campaign.

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UNIT : 11 EARNING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

:: STRUCTURE::

11.0 Introduction

11.1 Objectives

11.2 Content Creators and Social Media Platforms

11.3 Supplementary Income

11.4 Working with Brands

11.5 Cost of Influencing

11.6 Conclusion

11.7 Check Your Progress

11.8 Reference

11.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media is a platform through which millions of people connect with each other and share among them various types of content over the internet. This content can be in the form of vlogs, blogs, text posts, photographs or videos. When a user shares interesting or entertaining content on social media and it is viewed multiple times, it gets a sizeable viewer base and the content creator adds to their followers. The aggregate of these followers and views are then used by third parties to promote their products over social media and the content creator gets paid by the third party in the process.

In the preceding decades, the traditional media, like television, radio and print, was the principal sources of entertainment and information. National and provincial newspapers and radio and television channels, which had the sole attention of readers and viewers, would then advertise various consumer products on their medium for the advertiser. The value of the slot of a particular TV programme would be measured by its target rating points (TRP), which is a system used in marketing and advertising to indicate the percentage of target audience reached by a programme through a communication medium. The corresponding audience measurement tools for print products are their circulation and readership numbers.

With the rise of social media, there has been a shift in the audience's preferences with literally billions of people having access to the internet who use social media as a source of infotainment. This has led to brands effecting a change in their promotional strategies. Social media sites, like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc., earn primarily by allotting spaces for advertisement on their portals and users' timelines. Not only that, these sites also allow original content creators to advertise a product on their video content and share ad revenue with them.

In this unit, we will learn in detail how content creators earn on social media and ways to monetise their follower base.

11.1 OBJECTIVES

- Understand how social media generates revenue
- Understand how social media channels share revenue with content creators
- Learn how much money social media influencers earn by endorsing brands
- Learn how influencers can build on their social media popularity for monetary gains

On Completion of this Unit, You will be Able to:

- Identify earning opportunities on social media
- Learn strategies influencers use to increase their income
- Know the expectations of brands in dealing with social media influencers
- Know the scale of income-generating opportunities on social media channels
- Learn about the tools offered by channels to help influencers gain most out of their content

Index of Unit Contents

- Content Creators and Social Media Platforms
- Supplementary Income
- Working with Brands
- Cost of Influencing
- Monetisation Requirements

11.2 CONTENT CREATORS AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Even though it is a relatively new industry, there are already a number of ways to make money on social media. Every major social media outlet has, in some ways, helped users turn their hobby into a business or turn their business into a bigger business. With the rise of social media, advertisers have now spread their outreach to the whole world, thanks to billions of users of all kinds of demographics, social classes, etc. The majority of the income of the social media platform, like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc., is through advertisement.

Most social media platform have created provisions for content creators to monetise their content by providing tools that connect them to advertisers. YouTube is considered the top choice of content creators globally, as it is known to share a sizeable portion of its revenues with content creators. A *Forbes* report claims that between 1

June 2018 and 1 June 2019, YouTube gave USD 162 million to its top 10 content creators by revenue. However, its revenue for 2018 was estimated to be between USD 9.5 billion and USD 14 billion. The top YouTube earner in this period, according to *Forbes*, was eight-year-old Ryan Kaji, whose YouTube channel 'Ryan's World' had around 23 million subscribers in 2019, who helped him take home an impressive sum of USD 26 million in the said period. The rise of children YouTubers has caught the imagination of the social media users, making them some of the top earners on social media. A Pew Research Center study found that videos posted by high-subscriber channels which had content around or featuring children received more views than other videos.

The extent of YouTube's dominance on social media when it comes to sharing revenue with its creators can be gauged from what its CEO Susan Wojcicki said in November 2019, 'Compared to last year, the number of creators with a million or more subscribers has grown 65%, and creators earning five or six figures [in USD], annually, has increased more than 40%.' The primary reason for the continued popularity of YouTube is that video continues to dominate the internet traffic, which stood at 75 per cent of all internet traffic in 2017 and may touch as high as 82 per cent by 2022. YouTubers in India may find these figures heartening since YouTube gets the second highest number of visitors from India at 8.7 per cent in January 2020. The US continues to dominate its visitor base at around 15 per cent.

The popularity of YouTube among content creators has also made other platforms take note and device their own strategies to attract them. Facebook, being the most popular social media channel, adopted video in a big way with the launch of Facebook Watch in August 2017. By June 2019, Facebook had reached more than 720 million users monthly and 140 million users daily who spend at least one minute on Facebook Watch, though it is still less than half of the YouTube figures of that time at 1.9 billion monthly users.

Facebook also launched many innovative features to attract more content creators and facilitated their interaction with potential advertisers for a fee. Its Brand Collabs Manager feature allows partnerships between creators and brands, where creators can offer their follower base to brands for targeted advertisement. YouTube also has a similar feature, called Preferred product option, which allows collaboration between top YouTubers and big brands. Facebook also offers creators to collect subscriptions directly from fans.

By 2016, the other social media behemoth Twitter also acknowledged the role video content had come to play on all channels. It made significant changes in its creator engagement policies and allowed video creators to analyse and monetise their content. With an improved dashboard and insights offering, larger size limit on video content and options to add pre-roll ads and branded content, Twitter began to attract video audience on its platform and share ad revenue with creators. Since Twitter was a late adopter of revenue-sharing practice in the social media landscape, it tried to make up by offering a better deal to creators. In 2016, it proposed sharing as much as 70 per cent of its ad revenue with video creators, as against almost 50:50

option offered by YouTube and Facebook. However, the actual revenue offered by social media channels to creators depends on a number of factors, including the changing policy of these players, in which creators usually have no role to play.

It should be noted that major social media platforms consider only video content worthy of revenue sharing with its creators. However, many companies have tried and partly succeeded in sharing revenue with other content formats too. Medium.com leads the list in this category. It is a social media platform that encourages users to post full-length articles, which are then upvoted, shared or recommended by other users. Apart from sharing ad revenue with creators through its Partner Program feature, Medium also allows creators to upload premium content which becomes available to readers at a monthly subscription. Similarly, there are many photo-sharing platforms, which offer revenue sharing to creators. For example, Clickasnap.com offers to pay creators when their pictures are viewed by general users. It also allows creators to earn through Google AdSense on their creative works.

11.3 SUPPLEMENTARY INCOME

Since social media engages a large number of digitally active population across the world, it has given rise to social media entrepreneurs whose main occupation is to create content on these channels and earn money on it in a variety of ways. As described above, established social media channels share their ad revenue with video content creators, but there are other ways too in which both video and other content creators can gain from their popularity on social media. Delineated below are some such ways a content creator can apply to increase their revenue:

- A**ffiliate promotion:** A social media content creator can earn by affiliation to a certain product just as bloggers and other website owners did in the past. This concept can be described well in the words of Pat Flynn, considered by many as a whizz of passive income phenomenon: ‘Affiliate marketing is the process of earning a commission by promoting another company's product (or service). You find a product, promote it to others, and earn a piece of the profit for each sale that you make. In other words, when you help another company generate sales, you get a cut!’

  An affiliate chain usually has three components – the creator (not to be confused with content creator) or merchant, the affiliate and the consumer. The first component is the creator of the brand or service that is to be sold through this affiliate chain. It could be an established brand, an individual selling their service or advisory or a start-up, which just wants some brand recognition. The social media content creator is the second component in this chain, namely the affiliate, sometimes also called the publisher. A social media influencer working as an affiliate can earn anything between a few hundred dollars to millions of them depending upon the following they command on their favourite social media

channels. The third component in the chain, the consumer, of course, is the most important part of the chain, since no affiliate earns a commission on the product being marketed unless the consumer buys that product.

The fourth component in the chain is the network, which does not exist in all equations and hence is sometimes left out of the chain descriptions. The affiliate network serves as an intermediary between the merchant and the affiliate. It is typically a portal which manages payments and tracks sales which are generated by the affiliate. The big players in this category include ClickBank and Commission Junction. On the other hand, many merchants have their own networks with which the affiliate can directly interact. The best example in this category is Amazon Affiliate program, which allows the affiliate to use Amazon APIs or URLs on their websites or social media pages.

The affiliate marketing world is divided on whether the affiliate should inform their social media followers about the arrangement they make with the affiliate network or the merchant. Some people feel that it is just another form of advertising, and there is no need to tell followers about posts being sponsored. Others feel that the social media influencer should clearly inform followers about the paid nature of posts they share on their pages. The trend seems to be shifting towards the latter option for the sake of transparency. Thus, the chances of promotion of a product are more if the promotion is organic, instead of just existing as spammed links on social media accounts. The more effective way, therefore, is to promote affiliate products by using them personally and then give an honest opinion about them.

- I**nformation products:** A blogger or social media influencer who has demonstrated their expertise on a subject over a period of time usually accumulates content that has a value other than what it exacts on social media or the creator's website. Most creators, however, are oblivious of this reality and do not know the monetisation potential of their content outside of their immediate areas of influence. Thee influencers should look to collect their posts, videos, etc. into ebooks, audio programmes or a video study courses and sell them to their audience. The platforms like GumRoad, Sellfly and Amazons KDP programme make it easy for the creator to sell their content through PDFs, epubs, MP3s or video files for a percentage of the earnings.

  While self-publishing remains an option for social media influencers, many mainstream publishers have also wooed such creators on their conventional platforms. In fact, the intersecting space between Twitter and conventional publishing has been lucrative for both the conventional publisher as well as social media influencers. Twitter novel has become an established genre of literature, where Twitter users create literary works within the character limits set by the social media channel through a series of posts done over a

specified period of time. These kinds of series have found their way into the publishing world. The musician John Roderick's *Electric Aphorisms* is considered the first book published entirely as a compilation of tweets. HarperCollins published the academic Chindu Sreedharan's *Epic Retold: #Mahabharata #TwitterFiction #Bhima #140Characters* in 2015, which had originally been published on Twitter as a series of tweets.

- **Use visual media to promote** products**:** For a person who is manufacturing handicrafts, art pieces or any other product, there may be an opportunity to showcase the products on social media. Instagram and Pinterest are two of the top choices, but Facebook and Twitter are also great channels for sharing visual media. A social media content creator can encourage such organisations and individuals in their immediate social networks to promote such products using their follower base. This option works well for micro-influencers, who can find manufacturers of products whose philosophy aligns with the creator's overall content themes.
- **Promote coaching or consulting services:** Experts in various creative fields, like music, dance and language, can conduct coaching classes online and promote it over YouTube. Social media is a great place to generate leads for consulting businesses. If a content creator has creative inclinations, they can create more interest for their services by connecting with potential customers on social media. This strategy can work in unison with selling information products, as those who want the creator's advice are more likely to be interested in the ebooks and courses they create.
- **Licensing:** Content creators on social media are already popular within a segment and most likely post on niche issues and hence have a dedicated set of followers. The creators who operate in creative fields and are popular on Instagram, Flickr, SoundCloud or similar social media channels that are built around creativity should motivate their followers to license their content for commercial products. Commercial entities are always looking for creative inputs for their products for which they do not want to hire a celebrity artist due to monetary constraints. Social media influencers offer a cost-effective alternative in such situations. For example, many content-generating agencies tap on a platform like Medium.com or Flickr for creative content. The creator must announce prominently on their pages that their content is available for licensing to be able to use these options.

11.4 WORKING WITH BRANDS

In most social media platforms, the user timeline consists of posts which are not displayed in any chronological order. Instead, platforms prefer a mix of the chronological factor, engagement rate of posts and the relevance or topicality of their content. This means that the social media creators who have a high engagement rate on their posts and

take into account popular hashtags while posting tend to command a higher value on the campaigns or brands they promote.

Social media influencers should find common ground with brands and companies they want to promote and agree on a long-term strategy with them, whose aspects are described below:

- Both brands and social media influencers should carefully research each other's strong areas and ascertain the common ground before embarking on a campaign. Brands should not be lured by the number of followers or celebrity status of the social media influencer they want to engage, since for them, finding the right audience is of utmost importance. They should research whether an influencer's audience is the audience they want to engage. On the other hand, the influencer should be careful in endorsing brands. Choosing a brand for the sake of fee attached with it may boomerang in the long run, as their following is tied to them for the trust factor and it should not be broken.

- Brands should also research on what their competition is doing on social media. Using tools that track online mentions on social media platforms, a brand can decide on which platform their competition is winning. Influencers on that platform, then, automatically become a choice to target. The reverse equation holds true for influencers. If they are actively seeking to endorse brands, they should target a company whose competition is already winning on the platform where they hold sway.

- Influencers should ensure that they take a brief from the brand but devise a creative post, video or picture story around it on their own. They should avoid simply relaying ready-made posts that some PR agencies or brands offer. Influencers are known for being creative, original and incisive. They should not surrender creativity for a few extra rupees and insist on originality of the content they publish.

  However, there is space for exceptions, especially when brands devise their campaigns around not one, but a series of influencers. In 2015, the retailer Lord & Taylor devised a social media campaign around a USD 88 dress that it made 50 top Instagram influencers wear and post their pictures. It proved to be an instant success despite the fact that many users questioned the fact that the influencers and the company had hid the fact about being paid for this campaign.

- Brands generally prefer to engage a series of social media influencers for each channel to maximise their reach. A drawback that influencers have in this regard is that they operate as individuals or solitary pages and are constrained by the expanse of their fan base to their individual accounts, which can be further restricted for micro-influencers. Influencers should look to organise themselves as like-minded entities which deal in the same subject matter and have an overlapping audience. This way, they can become more attractive for brands and cut a better deal with them.

The other way to become more relevant to brands is to tie up with influencer marketing agencies. On the one end of such agencies are the brands which outsource the whole influencer marketing exercise, including influencer discovery, influencer management, content creation, impact measurement, pricing, etc.; and, on the other are a large number of influencers on different social media channels. For social media influencers to be readily available for brands, they should tie up with national and international agencies and allow them to be the intermediary with brands.

- Since content arrangement between influencers and brands involves a significant fee, influencers should set terms about reuse of the content they create clearly with brands or the intermediary agencies. Copyright management is an area of legal and financial confusion for many content creators. They should take care to research properly or obtain legal advice on setting the terms of reuse of the content they create. This becomes particularly important for musicians, photographers and writers, whose content can have a long shelf life, surrendering whose rights may impact the financial value they can draw from it.

11.5 COST OF INFLUENCING

Social media influencers tend to underestimate their importance in the marketing world, especially in developing economies, where social media branding has taken time to take roots. However, given the number of users a country like India has on social media, it is a matter of time before influencer marketing catches on as a developed idea. In the Western world, analysts believe that an influencer can earn anything between USD 500 to a staggering USD 30,000 for a single post, totalling the size of the influencer market to be up to USD 10 billion in 2020 or even up to USD 20 billion, according to some estimates, in which the Indian market commanded a share of up to USD 75 million to USD 150 million in 2019. Every year, the Instagram planner and scheduling tool Hopper creates a list of top Instagram influencers by the title 'Instagram Rich List'. In the 2019 list, it put the TV personality, model and entrepreneur Kylie Jenner at the top spot, who charged USD 1,266,000 for taking each sponsored post to her over 139 million followers and was estimated to be worth USD 1 billion.

Hopper divides the list into various categories, like celebrity, fashion, sports, travel, etc. Apart from Jenner, its celebrity list has big names like the singer and actress Ariana Grande, the model Kim Kardashian and the singer Justin Bieber among others. This list also has the actor Priyanka Chopra at the 16th spot, who is said to command a cost of USD 271,000 per post due to her popularity among her over 43 million followers. She stood at the 19th spot in the overall list. Similarly, its sports list is dotted with international stars like the footballers Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and David Beckham. It also has the Indian cricketer Virat Kohli at the ninth spot in the sports category and the 23rd spot in the overall list. The list mentions Kohli

commanding a price of around USD 196,000 per post at the back of his 36 million followers.

This list features celebrities prominently and may give the impression that only they make money in the influencer marketing chain. While it is easy for celebrity influencers to build a following on social media and charge a huge amount for product promotion, social media influencers, who build their following from scratch, have also understood the rules of the business and are known to charge anything between USD 1,500 to USD 33,000 per post, according to estimates made in 2018.

Indian social media influencers have also started to realise the worth of their following and started demanding an appropriate price for brand association. For example, the 1993-born Prajakta Koli is a leading woman YouTuber in India, who started her channel MostlySane in 2015 and had built a subscriber base of around 4.7 million by January 2020. Many people make estimates about the earnings of social media influencers based on the number of subscribers or followers they have. There is no finality to such data, but it can give an idea about earning of an influencer. A community of chartered accountants Sarcastic CA made an assessment of Koli's earning based on the views of her videos and the subscriber base. In 2019, it deduced that she earned between Rs 28 lakh to Rs 38.5 lakh yearly. Similarly, it estimates the annual earning of another YouTube star Amit Bhadana, who commanded a subscriber base of 18.3 million in January 2020, at between Rs 70 lakh to Rs 84 lakh in 2019.

Monetisation Requirements

Different social media channels have different requirements for allowing monetisation on video and other content. The creator should regularly visit partner program pages of each channels from time to time to see if they qualify for revenue sharing. Below are some details about how different channels allow monetisation:

- **Facebook:** Facebook started the revenue-sharing programme in 2017, which allowed users to earn revenue by placing advertisements in their videos through in-stream advertisements, with the condition that the ads must be published from a page, and not a personal profile. This condition practically disqualifies individual creators unless they decide to start pages in their or another entity's names.

  A video uploader on Facebook needs to have at least 30,000 one-minute views in the last 60 days on videos that are at least three minutes long. These videos must be published from a page that has at least 10,000 followers.

  The ads on these videos can be pre-roll, mid-roll or images. Image ads are static image ads that display themselves under the content. Image ads help you earn money from videos that do not have a good place for mid-roll ads, such as music videos. Mid-roll ads are most remunerative, since most videos are still being discovered in news feeds. Revenue from the advertisement depends on the number of followers, engagement and the amount the partner is willing to pay per 1,000 visitors.

- **Twitter:** This micro-blogging platform expects users to adopt the monetisation program in its Media Studio by verifying their identity through showing address proof and filling a tax form. It asks the creator to tag video categories so as to serve contextual ads and gives the creator option to disqualify certain categories too. The creator can also exclude certain advertisers or a class of advertisers from advertising on their videos.

  Twitter allows creators to tie up with brands for certain campaigns, through which creators can choose if they want to make exclusive videos for them and earn as affiliates. Its Amplify Publisher Program also acts as a bridge between the creator and brands to that both can choose if they align with each other's messaging. Twitter allows adult creators who by and large play safe on the principles of sexual content, hate speech, contraband, violence, profanity, copyright violations, etc. to enrol for the amplify program and benefit monetarily.

- **YouTube:** The biggest social media channel in terms of revenue sharing with creators also has peculiar eligibility criteria for channels in its YouTube Partner Program. It has set a criterion of 1,000 subscribers and at least 4,000 hours of watch time within the past 12 months for a channel to be eligible for the monetisation arrangement. Once approved, a channel can integrate its Google AdSense account with YouTube and deliver keyword-based advertisements on its videos. YouTube also expects its creators to honour its strict community guidelines, which change from region to region and keep local cultural sensitivity in mind. It has also experimented with a 'Shop' feature, where a channel can sell its branded merchandise. Though strictly not part of content monetisation, creators should explore this feature if they have products like ebooks, art works, codes, T-shirts, etc.

- **Instagram:** The most important feature for creators to remember while monetising content on Instagram is that the company expects the creator to tag the brand if there has been a beneficial relationship between the two for a video post. Instagram encourages partnership between the creator and the brand. It allows the brand to turn the creator's post into its advertisement if it so wishes to advertise. The creator should remember that each video they create in partnership with a brand can end up as an advertisement in the Instagram's Ad Library section.

- **Medium:** Creators can participate in the Medium.com's Partner Program simply by linking their user account to a bank account and open their stories up for metered paywall. This process submits a story for curation review. Once it meets the Medium Curation Guidelines, the company starts pushing the story on its app, email digests and curated lists. Depending upon the amount of time a reader spends on each story and if it is offered as premium content, the writer gets paid at the end of each month. Its curation guidelines expect a good writer to

worry about the depth of the subject being dealt with, the right tagging, use of images and videos and interaction with readers to gain the maximum out of the Partner Program.

10.6 CONCLUSION

Social media influencing may be dominated by celebrity influencers who earn in millions, but as this market develops, brands will begin to see the use of micro-influencers or those who have become celebrities just out of social media. Such influencers bring with them the depth of knowledge in their niche areas and a dedicated set of followers who are more lucrative for brands and campaigns. This scenario has already opened up earning opportunities for social media influencers and, with time, they are set to get bigger. Market research has shown that brands tend to do better when they engage influencers whose growth is organic, even if their following is much smaller as compared to that of celebrity influencers.

The popularity of social media has also crowded the influencer segment. It has become more difficult to gain the same number of followers now in a segment than what was the case few years ago. Therefore, an emerging influencer has to be strategically sound and be present at the right place at the right time to multiply their earning opportunities. In this unit, we have understood the concept of earning through social media and how to develop strategies for organic growth within social media accounts and pages. These approaches will become useful for budding influencers as the sector grows further and throws up newer challenges and opportunities.

10.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Questions

1. What factors affect a creator's earnings on YouTube?

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2. How can a social media influencer earn through affiliate marketing?

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3. Can one make money by writing articles on social media?

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4. Which Indian celebrities earned the most in 2019 on Instagram?

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Answers

1. The amount a creator earns on YouTube depends on the following factors:

- *Location:* Generally, traffic from countries like the USA and the UK gets higher cost per click (CPC) as compared to that from Tier 2 countries, like India, Brazil, South Africa, etc.

- *Demographics:* The age, gender and other demographic factors of your traffic also influence earnings. Although there is no fixed rule for the income based on demographies, generally traffic that includes working professionals earns more than the traffic which includes teenagers and other lower-income groups.

- *Niche:* YouTube displays the ads to viewers that are connected to the video they are watching. Hence, the niche of the video is another critical factor that decides the CPC. Technology videos generally get better CPC than political and news videos.

- *Ad types:* Various types of ads are displayed on YouTube. The TrueView and Bumper ads get you money per view, while the pre-roll ads pay you per click. There are generally two kinds of ads – skippable and non-skippable. Skippable ads, when skipped, are not charged to the advertiser. Similarly, for CPC ads, unless the viewer clicks on the advertisement, you earn nothing.

- *Audience retention:* The video which is viewed till the end will have higher CPC ads. Also, longer views ensure more frequency of ads, resulting in higher revenues.

- *Popularity:* A popular YouTube channel with billions of views will get better CPC advertisements as compared to a new YouTube channel with fewer views.

2. A social media content creator can earn by affiliation to a certain product just as bloggers and other website owners did in the past. An affiliate chain usually has three components – the merchant, the affiliate and the consumer. The first component is the creator of the brand or service, for example an established brand. The social media content creator is the affiliate. The affiliate network serves as an intermediary between the merchant and the affiliate. It is typically a portal which manages payments and tracks sales which are generated by the affiliate. Social media influencers can tie up with these networks to promote brands and earn revenue.
3. Writers can earn through Medium.com. It is a social media platform that encourages users to post full-length articles, which are then upvoted, shared or recommended by other users. Apart

from sharing ad revenue with creators through its Partner Program feature, Medium also allows creators to upload premium content which becomes available to readers at a monthly subscription. Depending upon the amount of time a reader spends on each story and if it is offered as premium content, the writer gets paid at the end of each month.

4. The Instagram scheduling platform Hopper listed the actor Priyanka Chopra at the 19th spot in its list of Instagram Rich List of 2019. She is said to command a cost of USD 271,000 per post due to her popularity among her over 43 million followers. She stood at the 16th spot in the celebrity category of the list. The cricketer Virat Kohli was the other Indian in the Hopper list, who stood at the ninth spot in its sports category and the 23rd spot in the overall list. The list mentions Kohli commanding a price of around USD 196,000 per post at the back of his 36 million followers.

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Books

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- *Social Media Marketing 2019: Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter Advertising Guide for Influencers in 2019 Through 2020* by Gary Clarke
- *Instagram Influencer Secrets: The Ultimate Strategy Guide to Passive Income, Social Media Marketing & Growing Your Personal Brand or Business* by Charlotte Sterling

UNIT : 12 SOCIAL MEDIA, LAW AND ETHICS

:: STRUCTURE::

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12.0 INTRODUCTION

As is true for any other medium, social media is also governed by its set of laws and ethical conventions, some of which are self regulatory in nature. Because social media is a recent phenomenon, the laws have often been in a state of flux in order to adjust to the constantly changing dynamics of this medium. Each day new users are added to an already existing mammoth user base, and its technology is rapidly evolving every day. Information technology has provided people with unrestricted access to any data, anywhere and anytime. This has also led to the inevitable misuse of technology, because of which legal and ethical framework were urgently needed to combat this problem. A large number of policy decisions and trial and error methods have been adopted globally in order to create some modicum of control over this misuse. Apart from this, various landmark judgments have been given by courts both in India as well as in the global scenario that have immensely impacted the usage of this medium. In this unit, we will study how law shapes the social media reality in India and how community standards operate on these platforms.

12.1 OBJECTIVES

- Understand the relevant provisions of the Indian IT Act and the copyright law
- Learn platform-specific guidelines that govern social media
- Understand the debate between freedom of expression and ethical behaviour on social media
- Appreciate privacy issues on social media

On the Completion of this Unit, You Will Be Able To:

- Comprehend the legal framework binding the use of social media
- Be able to comprehend the concept of copyrighted material and free-to-use material
- Understand the components of social media regarding privacy and data protection
- Analyse global scenarios in different forms of social media
- Understand various aspects of content management that can create brand devaluation
- Analyse potential pitfalls of censorship

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12.2 COPYRIGHT LAW

The laws and rules regarding the matter of copyright in India are incorporated in The Copyright Act, 1957, which contains all the requisite rules regarding copyright of creative work. This act is compliant with most international conventions and treaties in this domain.

The basic premise that the copyright law exists upon is that the intellectual property rights of an owner of an original work is protected. The copyright law has been fairly watertight with regards to traditional mediums, such as books and movies. However, it has been fluid to the point of being volatile where the internet is concerned and by virtue of its inclusion extends that to social media. Copyright protection, usage and often its transgressions have been a source of much contention, debate and legislation. At the end of each discussion, the basic point that comes up is who owns the content on social media.

A very common misconception amongst the general internet-using populace is that everything on social media sites and thereby on the internet is free to use. This is clearly not the case. For example, social media has made it extremely easy for us to download images from anywhere and post them with the assumption that since they were already in the web, it is perfectly fine for us to put them up on social media. However, what has happened here is a clear case of copyright infringement. Once a user uploads a piece of work, it becomes automatically protected by copyright. Hence, it is imperative to

understand the purview of the copyright law in the domain of social media to avoid any legal pitfalls.

If one downloads and posts any user-generated content, it constitutes copyright infringement. This also holds valid in case where the original holder of the work is linked in your post. Infringement also occurs when one takes material or images from other businesses to promote one's own. The best way to avoid copyright infringement is to seek permission from the copyright holder of the work in the form of a formal contract that allows the user to use their content. This could, of course, mean that you shell out perhaps a large amount of money, but it is the legally and ethically correct way of conduct. Also available on the internet are many free-to-use sites that host materials, which can be freely used. However, one has to read the fine print and ensure that it is actually free.

Though seeming to be clear cut and precise, the issue of copyright infringement has been somewhat murky primarily due to these factors:

- determining who is the owner of the content in question; and
- affixing liability of the culprit.

Therefore, users who post their personal data on social media believe that they own it, but that is considered to be actually factual information. Factual information does not come within the purview of intellectual property rights. Personal information about a user in posts on social media is not considered secret, and, therefore, it cannot be subjected to trade secret law protection. So, if anyone owns the information of users, it is the social media companies and not the individual user. Many times, it is difficult to fix the liability, and, hence, laws become ineffectual.

Another important facet to the question of copyright infringement is the aspect of trademark infringement and dilution on social media platforms. Today, more than ever, discussion about every brand, every product and every service takes place between the users on social media platforms often without much regulation. It leads to a potential situation where, more often than not, the negative information about a brand/product/service can result in a complete loss of goodwill for that brand/product/service. Social media can severely damage the reputation of the brand or lower its market value. Because the internet is such a speedy medium, information spreads like wildfire, and it can become challenging to stop it. This was seen in an incident where the news that a fried rat was served at a Los Angeles outlet of KFC, instead of fried chicken, became a top trend on Facebook in 2015. However, it was later found out that it was indeed chicken and the restaurant kept the option of suing the customer who posted the picture open.

The scale of the problem becomes so big in a short period of time that it becomes difficult to control damages. There is remedial recourse available with most major social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, but they seem inadequate to deal with the enormity of the problem. There is a general sense that the current trademark and copyright laws are not adequate, as of now, to deal with this area of infringement.

To sum it up, we can safely say that the copyright law is still nascent in the realm of social media. It is still in the evolutionary process. However, we should keep in mind the fundamental saying in jurisprudence *"Ignorantia juris non excusat",* which means that ignorance of the law is no excuse. Hence, it is prudent to equip oneself with legal knowledge.

12.3 IT ACT IN INDIA

Social media law India falls under the regulation of the Information Technology Act which came into effect in 2000. This act was intended to regulate, control and oversee issues arising out of the IT Sector. After it was felt that this law was insufficient to handle the magnitude of the issue, an amendment was made in 2008 and Section 66-A was added to the existing law.

Section 66-A of the IT Act reads as under:

> ***66A. Punishment for sending offensive messages through communication service, etc.***
>
> *Any person who sends, by means of a computer resource or a communication device,—*
>
> *(a) any information that is grossly offensive or has menacing character; or*
>
> *(b) any information which he knows to be false, but for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience, danger, obstruction, insult, injury, criminal intimidation, enmity, hatred or ill will, persistently by making use of such computer resource or a communication device,*
>
> *(c) any electronic mail or electronic mail message for the purpose of causing annoyance or inconvenience or to deceive or to mislead the addressee or recipient about the origin of such messages,*
>
> *shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and with fine.*
>
> Explanation.— *For the purpose of this section, terms "electronic mail" and "electronic mail message" means a message or information created or transmitted or received on a computer, computer system, computer resource or communication device including attachments in text, images, audio, video and any other electronic record, which may be transmitted with the message.*

Section 66-A was brought in to control the misuse of social media and for the government to have sufficient regulatory powers to govern this medium. It was based on the premise that Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution being a fundamental right that guaranteed the 'right to freedom of speech and expression' was however not an absolute right and that in case of abuse or misuse of this right in the social media, the government needed to step in to prevent exigencies.

However, in a landmark judgment in 2015, the court in *Shreya Singhal & Others V/S UOI* struck down Section 66-A. The court held

that this section was unconstitutional owing to fact that it restricted the freedom of speech of the Indian citizens. The backdrop of the case was that two women Shaheen Dhada and Rinu Srinivasan were arrested by the Mumbai Police in 2012 for expressing displeasure at the fact that a strike had been called by the Shivsena due to the death of its leader Bal Thackeray. The two posted their opinion on Facebook, which created a furore and subsequently led to their arrest. They were later released, and it was decided to close the criminal cases against them. But, this incident sparked a huge wave of protest across the country. It was seen as a misuse of power by the authorities through the use of Section 66-A of the IT Act. The judgment of this case is indeed a watershed moment, as to quote from the judgement delivered by Justices Jasti Chelameswar and Rohinton Fali Nariman, 'liberty of thought and expression is not merely an aspirational ideal but it is also a cardinal value that is of paramount significance under our constitutional scheme'.

Despite the repeal of Section 66-A, various provisions of the Indian Penal Code are applicable to offences committed online. These include:

- Pornography and obscenity
- Hate speech
- Outraging the modesty of a woman
- Intention to hurt the religious sentiments of a community
- Defamation

In September 2019, the Supreme Court asked the government to consider devising guidelines on social media that address the twin issues of curbing misuse of social media and also to ensure user privacy. The court also observed that a person who is 'trolled' or 'defamed' on social media must have mechanism to seek redress short of filing a criminal complaint.

12.4 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is an amalgamation of various types of platforms. It has broadly been classified into the following categories. Each category has a different set of rules and its rules of engagement as well as different policies that define the workings of it. A social media user or manager of accounts of other entities should keep these standards in mind for ethical conduct as well as to keep the accounts operational all the time.

Social networking

Social networking is an online network on platforms with like-minded people or people with similar interests. It provides features such as chat, photo sharing, instant messaging, posting updates and other views, etc. Social networking sites are the most popular and used component of social media. The most popular sites in this segment are Facebook, Instagram, etc.

These social media sites have various settings, the most important ones being privacy settings. It is important to read the company policies of all the social networking sites to understand issues such as copyright infringement. For example, posting images taken by another person constitutes copyright infringement.

Facebook has created a detailed list of copyright-related discussion points which caution users against using copyrighted material in their posts. It cautions that

- simply downloading content on to your local device does not give a user right to post it
- attributing a creative work to its original creator does not make it legal for the user to post it
- using copyrighted content for non-profit does not make it legal
- modifying creative works does not make them copyright free or takes away the rights of the original creator

Instead, Facebook suggests that users should create and post their own content, obtain permission from original creators before posting them or use creative works which are already in the public domain. Google, in fact, allows searching of images which are issued under Creative Commons or similar licenses or are in the public domain.

Blogs

Blogs are content pages which primarily contain a user's own content. These may include text, images, videos or links to other websites. Blogs provide a platform for users to articulate their own views and a medium for readers to comment and give feedback.

In all cases, blogging sites have their own terms and conditions which govern the publishing of material, use of their content and using third-party links. However, there is an assumption on these sites that users upload their own content or insert links to other creators' works. In both these cases, they are on the right side of the law and copyright policies of blogging platforms. In cases where bloggers upload their own content, they own the copyright even they it is not openly stated. However, for the sake of clarity, bloggers should mention in the About Us page or other places the copyright information and reuse conditions. If bloggers want to use the more liberal open licensing or copyleft regimes, they should mention the name of the license and conditions under which their content could be liberally reused.

Microblogs

Microblogs have the same character as that of blogs except that the word limit is small, such as 140 characters or more. Twitter is the most common microblogging site and even many heads of states have Twitter accounts to communicate with others.

Microblogging sites, too, are governed by terms and conditions set by companies which run them. For instance, Twitter's policy states:

> *You retain your rights to any Content you submit, post or display on or through the Services. What's yours is yours — you own your Content (and your incorporated audio, photos and videos are considered part of the Content).*
>
> *By submitting, posting or displaying Content on or through the Services, you grant us a worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty-free license (with the right to sublicense) to use, copy, reproduce, process, adapt, modify, publish, transmit, display*

and distribute such Content in any and all media or distribution methods (now known or later developed). This license authorizes us to make your Content available to the rest of the world and to let others do the same.

Twitter, thus, allows users to keep copyright of all material posted on its network but takes the right to redistribute it on other channels or through APIs. Even after the publishing of user content on other channels which have an arrangement with Twitter, the copyright stays with original creators.

Vlogs and video-sharing sites

Video blogs or vlogs are blogging sites that mainly use videos as the main form of content. The biggest video sharing site is YouTube.

The vlogging sites have their own set of terms and conditions in order to circumvent copyright infringement. YouTube, in fact, has an elaborate section on its website informing users how to protect their their creative works against infringement and how not to be on the wrong side of law and community standards by posting only original and legal content. YouTube uses the digital fingerprinting route, called Content ID, to allow protection of original video content against copyright infringement. Every time an original media file is uploaded on the YouTube platform, it gets a unique digital identity. When another user uploads a similar media item, YouTube runs checks on it using the Content ID system and informs the original owner about the copyright violation. The original creator then has the option of either asking the secondary user to remove the media file from their account or run ads linked to the original creator's account. In 2016, Google, the parent company of YouTube, announced that it paid USD 2 billion copyright holders using the Content ID system.

Content creators should keep in mind that if they use copyrighted material in part or whole on platforms like YouTube, it could ban the user after running automatic checks on the videos. Some creators have lost their lucrative videos after they have invited copyright strikes from the YouTube community. One famous example in this category is that of the singer Pooja Dhinchak, whose videos were very popular and who was estimated to earn up to Rs 50 lakh per month at the height of her popularity in early 2017. However, by the end of 2017, all her earning was wiped out as another YouTube user reported her for copyright violation and the platform, in all likelihood, removed her videos.

Another popular video-sharing website TikTok, which as become popular with young users, puts the onus of copyright violation on them and asks them to indemnify the platform for any misuse of publicly available content. The terms it wants users to accept before they can start using the platform contains the indemnity clause, which states:

Indemnity

You agree to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless Tiktok, its parents, subsidiaries, and affiliates, and each of their respective officers, directors, employees, agents and advisors from any and all claims, liabilities, costs, and expenses,

including, but not limited to, attorneys' fees and expenses, arising out of a breach by you or any user of your account of these Terms or arising out of a breach of your obligations, representation and warranties under these Terms.

These examples make it clear that no matter which platform a user of social media is using, it is important to understand the terms and conditions under which it expects the user to operate, so that they are able to protect their content from being stolen, misused or misquoted and also ensure that they do not get entangled into issues of copyright infringement.

12.5 DATA AND INFORMATION SECURITY

With the advent of the internet, and more so social media, a paradigm shift has occurred in the way we communicate with others. There is a democratisation of communication primarily due to the fact that accessibility is at our fingertips. With even the heads of states having Twitter accounts, it has become extremely easy and convenient to share information with others.

However, this freedom has also brought with it certain drawbacks. Social media has enabled leaking of protected data; it has become a tool for people to pry into others' personal lives; and, at a more critical level, it has led to activities such as hacking for *mala fide* reasons. It has also become an easy tool for people to create trouble through misinformation and distortion of facts.

Social media has influenced everyone to such a tremendous extent that our way of thinking has become aligned to how we project ourselves on social media. Taking selfies is no longer about making memories. Instead, the best app is ready to upload the selfie with the best possible angle instantaneously on social media. Because our thought patterns have altered so drastically keeping in mind the public persona that we present on social media that inadvertently we have become not just open but often compulsively so about a lot of things in our life, including our workplaces. Thus sharing confidential information about work is often also put into public domain unknowingly. This sort of culture has led to a lot of information across the net and has made it extremely easy for hackers to breach into organisations.

Criminals have been found using IDs of legitimate persons and businesses to cheat unsuspecting people into providing personal details that can then be used for crimes mostly financial but also others, such as identity thefts and creating phoney identities for stalking and harassment. The risk is grave and most people do not really verify into the authenticity of the person or the business that soliciting the information.

People also inadvertently may post personal messages on a public platform or unknowingly leak out sensitive information due to wrong usage or a lack of clarity of the domain. Thus, individuals and businesses must be extremely vigilant about sharing sensitive information online. All businesses must draft social media policy, which makes their employees aware of the information that they are

allowed to share. They must train their employees to ensure that no data is leaked. Individual users must ascertain the authenticity of the medium before they share personal information. They must be vigilant about sharing information and also not succumb to peer pressure where social media is concerned. Remember, privacy is protection. What someone does not know, someone cannot destroy.

Privacy and Content Management

The right to privacy and freedom of speech are the two sides of the same coin. It is a delicate balance between the two aspects. One person's freedom of speech could infringe upon another's right to privacy. Because of the immense influence of social media in our lives, the concept of privacy has become a subject of a raging debate. Is privacy in today's times really a valid concept is a viewpoint of some. They contend that in this day and age when users share their location, pictures of their children's birthday parties and the details of the latest holiday they went to on social media, the question of privacy becomes rhetorical. However, the other side of the coin is that privacy is still valued by social media users, but they do not completely understand the implications of the invasion of privacy that their posts can lead to.

It is an indisputable fact that a large number of social networking sites have as their default setting a particular privacy setting where anyone can see a person's personal information unless it is changed. Hence, many users are unaware of the fact that they need to change privacy settings. However, this problem still persists even though you may have changed your privacy settings but if you have been tagged by your friends in their posts. A user has then no control over how that data is used.

Another area where there is a major violation of privacy is that a user's information is permanently stored in social networking sites even if the account is deactivated or deleted. For instance, in the case of Facebook, even if the account has been deleted, the site may retain user's information as per the company's privacy policy in the form of log files or other formats.

The most worrisome part of the whole debate around piracy revolves around the now-established norm of companies tracking users for the purpose of advertisements. It is a well-known fact that even a giant like Google has been found to be tracking consumers and sharing their personal data. Google changed its privacy policy in March 2012, which enabled it to share data across a vast spectrum. This has created a huge debate about privacy and how companies store information of millions of users and can even build a profile of the user based on their search histories, keywords used and email addresses. Google has been accused by the Privacy International of being 'hostile' to privacy. In 2016, Google made some changes to their privacy policy, but the concern over privacy remains real and a threat to the principle of freedom that the internet was based upon.

Thus, people using social media platforms must be aware of the privacy policies of the companies, and it is up to the user's discretion on how to maintain the privacy of their data. If the user feels that

certain data could be used on social networking sites, they must use caution and common sense before uploading that data.

12.6 GLOBAL SCENARIO

Globally many important issues have erupted due to the massive intrusion of social media in our lives resulting in a number of events and judgments that have become instrumental in giving a shape to the digital policy, even though the policies are in a constant state of flux. With every new innovation or every new incident or even a new problem, the digital platform is confronted with a fresh new challenge and therefore predictably so an adequate response to the situation.

Social media has seen its shares of numerous *faux pas* that show us more than clearly of how social media platforms become places for huge controversies. Some of these include:

- *Dove's controversial Facebook advertisement:* Dove launched an advertisement on Facebook which was a three-second GIF image and featured three women each removing their T-shirts to reveal the next one. The transition shows a black woman transitioning to a white one. The advertisement came under intense criticism from Facebook users, who termed it racist, as it promulgated the view that a black woman had to be cleansed to become white. The company apologised and took off the advertisement.
- *Dolce and Gabbana's co-founder calls customers fat and stupid:* known for his often controversial comments and opinions, D&G's co-founder Stefano Gabbana created a stir in 2017 with an aggressive and insensitive marketing campaign on Instagram. He posted a picture of a sneaker which had 'I'm thin & gorgeous' written on it. Instagram users blasted him for body shaming and fat shaming people who did not have body weight considered ideal by social conservatives. Gabbana added more ammunition to an already epic fail campaign by insulting those users who had commented on the picture calling them 'stupid' and 'idiot'. Clearly this was a misadventure of epic proportions and a lesson to learn that adding foolhardiness to existing foolish behaviour is not the way to go forward for a brand.
- *Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data scandal:* this was a major political scandal in 2018 when it was revealed that Cambridge Analytica had taken the data of millions of Facebook users without their consent and used it for the purpose of political advertising. This incident is considered as a huge defining moment in the concept of personal data and its potential misuse and led to huge fall in the share price of Facebook, with the company facing huge criticism leading to Marc Zuckerberg having to testify before the United States Congress.
- *The Snapchat self goal:* not all publicity helps, and it will do well for companies to remember that. Snapchat started a seemingly innocuous enough game to grab more eyeballs as its

base was shrinking. The game was 'Would you rather?'. The idea behind it was to get users' attention to make them answer impossible questions. However, the choice of questions was extremely problematic. They referred to the rapper Chris Brown hitting the singer and his then girlfriend Rihanna, thus trivialising domestic violence when a question in the so-called game asked 'Would You Rather: "Slap Rihanna?" or "Punch Chris Brown?"' This predictably led to a backlash against the company, and it lost USD 650 million with Rihanna refusing to accept their apology.

Thus, it is clear that one cannot be outrightly offensive on social media and certain grave issues, such as domestic abuse or discrimination based on ethnicity, cannot be taken lightly by companies to sell themselves.

12.7 OFFENCES AND PREVENTION

The era of the internet has led to various cyber crimes, and a number of innocent people have been at the receiving end of these crimes. Cyber bulling and harassment has been a major downside of the internet invasion. Cyber bulling has been defined by the US National Crime Prevention Council as occurring when the internet, cell phones or other devices are used in cruelty to others by sending texts or posting images intended to hurt or cause embarrassment to the other person.

The major reason for cyber bulling is due to the fact that internet provides anonymity to the bully who is easily able to harass the victim. This anonymity gives more courage to the harasser who is able to bully to a greater degree than he/she would in a real life situation. Easily available personal information of persons on social media becomes a tool for bullying, stalking and harassment. A lot of bullies create fake profiles to create havoc for innocent persons by using their profiles to post problematic content.

Other very grave forms of cyber crime include child sexual exploitation, public abuse and trolling and even cyber grooming and online job fraud.

It is extremely important to safeguard ourselves and our families from the threat of cyber crime in its various forms.

Here are some ways that users can protect themselves from the threat of cyber crime:

- *Privacy settings:* ensure that all data on your social networking sites is locked and is not accessible to just anybody.
- *Strong passwords:* using strong passwords will make it more difficult for hackers to access your personal accounts. Always use complex passwords by using various combinations of alphabets, symbols and special characters. Also, keep changing passwords regularly and have different passwords for different accounts.

- *Suspicious programs:* Be aware that hackers are constantly trying to find new victims and hence being alert is of paramount importance.
- *Have a secure VPN:* Have a secure VPN in order to add more security to your network even if your internet service provider promises to offer state-of-the-art security.

In India, the government has established a National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal where a user can report crimes committed against them. Various categories of crime have been listed where complaints can be filed.

Censorship of Content

Social media, as has been previously mentioned, has led to democratisation of communication, and, therefore, it means that every voice has found its way online. The internet and social media was essentially designed and intended to promote free speech, which was otherwise curbed in many areas. Thus, it is imperative that free speech not be curbed as the internet is the only medium where one can voice their opinion immediately and also reach concerned officials. Twitter is one site that has been effectively used in many cases. The late Sushma Swaraj as the minister of foreign affairs used Twitter to facilitate governance on issues related to her ministry. Many people who needed the government's support were able to directly connect with her to air their grievances and seek resolution to them.

Globally, it has been the endeavour of the courts to step in to ensure that the internet, and particular social media, does not become a casualty of censorship, which will stifle the voice of the ordinary citizen. The repeal of Section 66-A by the Supreme Court of India and declaring it unconstitutional was a means to that end, since the public outcry against censorship and government control was real and tangible. In the United States, the district court in New York ruled in July 2019 that when President Donald Trump blocks people on Twitter, he violates the First Amendment to the US constitution – which protects freedom of expression of US citizens – since blocking his critics from participating on his Twitter page is akin to discrimination.

However, in the recent time, platforms such as Facebook, have been actively used by terrorist organisations to commit crimes. Hence, many people argue that freedom of expression cannot be absolute. Some bit of monitoring is essential if there is a chance that social media can be used to create havoc in the society.

In India, many arrests have been made of people who have posted views on social media platforms opposing different political ideologies, which has led to public debate on the question of freedom of speech and thought.

But, the question remains as to how much is too much. And, who gets to decide the limits. With regards to the issue of censorship, there is always a threat looming that even legitimate opinions which might be anti-establishment may also be censored thus stifling the only platform that is effectively an equalizer in society.

12.8 CONCLUSION

Throughout the study of the legal aspect of social media, one thing that we find of paramount importance for any user of social media is the knowledge of law to at least comprehend the terms and conditions of usage and also identify potential risks. In several studies across the globe, it has been found that cyber crimes and violations occur mostly due to the ignorance of the users to the potential threats. Terms and conditions must be understood carefully by users so that they are fully aware of the usage of a particular site. With the world becoming almost completely digitized and social media becoming intrinsic to our lives, it is not just important but something that cannot be avoided.

The world is moving at an astonishing pace and so is technology. What was supremely important yesterday has no meaning today. Thus in all this fluidity the compass of ethics remains extremely important. Certain things may be legally valid but if they are ethically not correct it goes without saying that they should be avoided at all costs. That is the correct sense of attitude that we must imbibe and also promulgate.

12.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Questions

1. According to the copyright law, is everything available on the internet free to use?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Why was Section 66-A of the IT Act repealed?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. What are microblogs? Does the character limit on these websites deter users from expressing themselves?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. Why are privacy settings important on social media sites?

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   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

5. How was the Snapchat advertisement a lesson in following social media ethics?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Answers

1. Not everything that is available on the internet is free to use. The original poster of the content becomes the owner, and to use someone's content, one has to take permission from the owner. There are some sites available on the internet where content can be freely used. If a user wants to recycle content, they should look for images, videos or articles which have been made copyright free or put under liberal licensing regimes, like Creative Commons and GNU General Public License, by the owner. Many search engines provide options to search through only open content to help users find reusable content. There are many websites dedicated exclusively to reusable conent with or without attribution. The examples inclue Unsplash.com, Pixabay.com, Wikipedia, Ezinearticles.com, etc. Many universities, non-profits and even corporates like Facebook have sections within their websites where they offer reusable content to users.
2. In the *Shreya Singhal vs Union of India* case, the Supreme Court of India felt that Section 66-A of the IT Act was unconstitutional and infringed on the right of freedom of speech and expression of the citizens guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India.
3. Microblogs are like blogs with the difference that they have a word limit which is very small. For example, Twitter, the popular microblogging site, allowed 140 characters per tweet, but later increased it to double the characters in 2017. Though many people find microblogging to be restrictive due to character length, Twitter said in 2018 that only one per cent of tweets worldwide hit the 280-character limit and only 12 per cent were longer than 140 characters. The average character length of a tweet was only 33 characters.
4. Privacy settings ensure that personal data of the user is not leaked out to everyone else. It provides some modicum of privacy for the user of social media. Users should carefully check all privacy options available on popular social media sites. Though, by default users are the owners of original content they post, they should decide how much of their content is shareable.
5. Snapchat started a seemingly innocuous game to grab more eyeballs. The game was 'Would you rather?'. The idea behind it was to get users' attention to make them answer impossible questions. However, the choice of

questions created controversy and raised issues of ethics. The question about the rapper Chris Brown hitting the singer and his then girlfriend Rihanna was seen as particularly in bad taste by social media users. It asked 'Would You Rather: "Slap Rihanna?" or "Punch Chris Brown?"' It offended users as it trivialised the issue of domestic violence.

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- *Social Media Law: A Handbook of Cases & Use* by Ursula Furi-Perry
- *Information Technology Law and Practice- Cyber Laws and Laws Relating to E-Commerce* by Vakul Sharma
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UNIT : 13 SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS: CASE STUDIES

:: STRUCTURE::

13.0 Introduction

13.1 Objectives

13.2 Importance of Social Media Campaigns

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13.0 INTRODUCTION

The implementation of a planned strategy for social media campaigns is used to enhance brand awareness and user interaction as well as hitting business/campaign goals in time. The success of these campaigns is measured through analytics, revenue generation and other targets. Analysts, researchers and campaign managers create case studies out of these campaigns to further the understanding of marketing as an idea as well as the expansion of social media channels. Case studies offer insight into the campaign manager's mind and how they woo audiences in different sectors and across demographics. In this unit, we will study cases where campaigns have given desired results to the brands or individuals in question.

13.1 OBJECTIVES

- Understand the concept and significance of case studies in social media campaigns
- Learn how Facebook allowed developers to customise and host apps on its platform to engage audiences
- Analyse the use of cross-channel integration of a brand campaign
- Understand how social media channels came to be political in nature in India

On the Completion of This Unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the features a case study should have
- Learn how communications agencies further social causes with a mix of offline and online campaigns
- Analyse the role young audiences play in social media strategy of brands

- Learn how politics has adopted branding strategies and got dividends

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13.2 IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

An effective social media campaign is a well-organised and coordinated marketing or outreach activity reinforcing or promoting a business objective, public cause or individual branding by using one or more social media platforms, which increasingly focuses on business or campaign goals as well as target audience. Social media advertising reaches audiences in a low-cost, impactful and effective way, making campaigns crucial marketing techniques for businesses everywhere. The necessity of social media outreach can be gauged from the fact that 78 per cent of businesses have dedicated teams for social media in order to achieve business goals. In 2012, it was 67 per cent. Other sectors, like political campaigning and social cause campaigns, have also registered a similar growth over the years. This shows how important it is to make use of social media campaigns and engage customers through it.

The use of social media platforms and websites to promote a product, service, cause or individual is known as social media marketing irrespective of the goals set. Before social media became an all-encompassing form of digital outreach, marketers and academics preferred the terms 'e-marketing' and 'digital marketing'. Now, social media has become widespread in terms of user engagement and technically a much refined space in terms of measuring the impact of campaigns. Most social media platforms have developed data analytics tools, which allow marketers to analyse user engagement on parameters such as user demographics, engagement rate of posts, success across post category, like photos, text or videos, organic or paid nature of posts, etc. Similar measurement tools exist from third parties, which build fetch data with the help of APIs provided by social media platforms or use data fetched from website servers, which build the basis of web traffic analytics. These tools also allow campaigners to study the user group that engages most effectively with the campaigns, which could be their employees, general users,

targeted users, people belonging to a specific business or social community, etc.

This background enables marketers and researchers to study from examples of both successful and failed campaigns, which offer learning for effectively launching newer campaigns, avoid mistakes made by other players in the market and adopt improved tools offered by both social media platforms as well as third-party developers.

Why Case Studies Matter

Researchers and marketers study social media campaigns for a variety of reasons. Researchers use this method to study the changing nature of marketing and branding and even how social media as a digital intervention is spreading among different types of users and societies. On the one hand, they take their learning to academic journals, classrooms and scholarly seminars; on the other, even social media platforms and governments engage them to study the sociological impact of the widespread phenomenon of social media on society.

Marketers, however, have a more targeted expectations from writing and reading case studies. They want to showcase their own achievements to existing and prospective clients and industry leaders. They create data from the campaigns they have run on social media presentable using infographics and texts – sometimes, even videos – and make them available freely on their websites for their own branding.

Apart from researchers and marketers, many data-gathering agencies also develop social media case studies across sectors, since they are in high demand among researchers and marketers who are willing to pay a handsome price for accessing them. Case studies often carry data about lead generation, user engagement, cost incurred per click, etc., which leading marketing agencies find useful while preparing their own pitches to their clients.

The importance of social media case studies can be gauged from their following features:

- A social media case study offers details about a real-life campaign and its target audience;
- A professionally prepared case study usually gets data from the company that runs the campaign, thus providing authentic information about a real-life digital scenario;
- A social media case study analyses data within usable metrics, so that the reader does not have to spend time to make sense of competition;
- Many a times, a case study carries user surveys about how they perceived a campaign. This information can only be available in the case study and is useful for both the marketer who ran the campaign as well as their emerging competition;
- Case studies often build on data and strategies of a campaign by including secondary analysis of industry experts and watchers;

- Case studies usually analyse impact and return on investment of a campaign on different social media channels, thus letting marketers decide which channels work better for which type of campaigns; and
- Case studies generally put the purpose of a campaign in context by comparing it to available data and trends from the sector to which the campaign belongs.

13.3 CASE STUDIES

Kentucky Fried Chicken

KFC, also known as Kentucky Fried Chicken, is a well-known brand in the food business and is a subsidiary of the American giant Yum! Brands. It offers fried chicken as its essential dish. Its other sister subsidiaries include Pizza Hut, Taco Bell and Wing Street chains of restaurants. It derives its name from the American state of Kentucky, where it was founded in 1930. Since then, it has expanded to almost every corner of the world to include 22,621 locations in 136 countries (2015 figures) and is the world's second-largest restaurant chain after McDonald's.

KFC entered India at the dawn of economic liberalisation in India in early 1990s and immediately made a name for itself among foodies, especially early and mid-career youth who had come to acquire disposable income due to inflow of foreign capital. In its early days, KFC depended on traditional forms of marketing to reach potential and existing customers, using print and TV ads, billboards, etc.

With the advent of private FM radio channels, it became a trend to play radio channels inside restaurants. KFC launched its own radio channel Radio KFC, which played international and Indian music in all its restaurants in India. To attract a young customer base, it launched many campaigns on Facebook, including 'Design your won bucket' campaign, in which the company invited customers to design its trademark bucket, which could be used for two months at its outlets. However, its one of the most successful campaigns on Facebook was an RJ hunt campaign that it launched in 2012.

Back then, Facebook allowed page owners much more customisation than it does now. Brands could make their Facebook pages look like their web pages and align them with their brand messaging. Facebook also allowed developers to create third-party apps and integrate them into the Facebook platform, which could be used on brand pages. KFC created one such app through its campaign partner Blink Solution and asked its Facebook community to record their own clippings as auditions to be an RJ on Radio KFC. To keep its followers hooked on, the company offered food coupon worth Rs 500 to a winner everyday and the ultimate prize of hosting a show on the radio

channel at the end of the campaign. Much like the social media apps of today, especially TikTok, this Facebook app offered users the option to superimpose their recording on background music from hip hop, rock and pop genres. By the end of the campaign, KFC claimed that around 3,000 people across 30 cities had uploaded their audio recordings on its Facebook app.

KFC entered India with an outlet in Bangalore in 1995. This act was seen by many as a major development, since till then the policymakers in India has resisted allowing foreign brands into the consumer market. While its entry marked a breaking point for this policy, it also faced hostility from many quarters which opposed its entry into the country for promoting consumerist culture, not aligning with the Indian values due to its non-vegetarian offerings, being a representative of American capitalism, etc. and actors across the political spectrum opposed it. In such a scenario, an aggressive branding campaign came to its rescue despite many momentary upheavals. With the advent of social media, its campaigns grew innovative and pro-active in wooing a younger consumer base, as is exemplified by the RJ hunt campaign discussed above.

Though it is difficult to measure the success of one social media campaign for popular brands, especially when concurrent campaigns are going on, KFC claims to have benefited greatly form its sustained social media engagement with its followers. Its social media agency Blink Solution claims:

- **The campaign led to an addition of 170,000 new fans on its Facebook page;**
- **Social Samosa featured the app as one of the Top 10 social media campaigns of 2012; and**
- **The campaign was widely featured in national and local newspapers across languages and regions.**

Kolkata Knight Riders

The Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) is a foremost cricket franchise in the Indian Premier League (IPL) run by the Board of Control for Cricket in India, popularly know by its acronym BCCI. The actor Shah Rukh Khan's company Red Chilies Entertainment, in partnership with the actress Juhi Chawla and her husband Jay Mehta of the Mehta Group, own the franchise and had the former Indian captain Sourav Ganguly as its prominent member for the first three seasons. Its brand valuation stood at USD 104 million in 2018.

This star cast ensures that the KKR already has a huge fan following on social media. Its official Facebook page had over 16 million followers in February 2020 and had many fan pages dedicated to the team. A crucial feature of this fan base is that it comes from all cricket-playing countries, especially South Asia. It has a particularly high support base from social media users of Bangladesh. A social customer service platform Simplify360 found in 2014 that its Facebook page over 1.4 million followers from Bangladesh, which one-fifth of its followers in India. It even had followers in Turkey, the

company claimed, which it attributed to the popularity of Khan in West Asia.

The popularity of its Facebook page rests on the high-resolution images and videos it shares of cricketing and celebrity moments, apart from live match coverage when the IPL is being played. This page has made its Bengali tagline *'Korbo, Lorbo, Jeetbo Re'* quite famous. It uses various competitions to engage fans. A crucial feature of the Facebook strategy of the KKR is that it specifically gave campaign credit to its sponsors, thus allowing them the benefit co-branding through its popular page.

On Twitter, the KKR official handle had over 4.3 million followers in February 2020. A comparative look at its accounts on Facebook and Twitter shows that it has not tried to cultivate a separate identity for itself on Twitter. Most content is shared on both the channels, which partly explains why its Twitter presence is rather muted in comparison. A 2013 study of the KKR's tweets shows that its social media agency posted most tweets between 9 am and 6 pm, with a large proportion being posted before noon. The IPL matches take place in the second half of the day after most people return from work. This could partly explain the mild response the team's handle gets on Twitter since there is a long gap between the match enthusiasm building up and tweet activity.

In 2018, the KKR realised the importance of video content on social media and engaged a video content agency What Works, whose mandate was to create engaging video content for the team's social media channels. The team management felt confident enough with the result to extend the contract with the same agency in 2019 as well. A vast number of posts on its pages on Facebook and Twitter and its official YouTube channel are video stories now, with dedicated shows like 'Fun Diaries', '#KKRFanTank' and 'Auction Strategy'. In 2019, the agency deputed a large number of producers, cinematographers and editors to create over 300 video stories in the IPL season, which indicates the scale at which social media campaigns work in the cases of big brands. The CEO of the team Venky Mysore claimed in 2019 that his team 'garnered more than 100 million views on social media platforms [in 2018], which was the highest for any IPL team'. The KKR's official YouTube channel slowly grew in popularity and came to acquire over 325,000 subscribers by the end of February 2020.

A report from the financial advisory firm Duff and Phelps notes that an IPL franchise spends between five and 15 per cent of its revenue on marketing and promotion activities.

An important feature of IPL teams is that they have sought to endorse social causes as part of their branding exercise. The KKR is no exception to this trend. It picked up the cause of environment protection and offered to plant a sapling for each sixer hit in the games involving the team. This initiative of corporate social responsibility was widely popularised by the KKR handles across social media channels.

Bajaj Avenger's #RideYourIndependence Campaign

A campaign created by the advertising and marketing agency Mullen Lintas for Bajaj Avenger develops out of Gandhi's notable quote in

addressing the prominence of women in society and the need for their right to unencumbered mobility. The campaign was titles #RideYourIndependence and launched on the Independence Day in 2017, thus symbolically equating the freedom of the country with women's liberation. The video campaign ends with a powerful quote from Mahatma Gandhi, 'The day a woman can walk freely on the roads at night, that day we can say that India has achieved independence.'

The prime objective of this social media marketing campaign was to increase the sale of the motorcycle in India by appealing to a young women audience and influencing them through a powerful message, even when traditionally in the Indian scenario the motorcycle marketing campaigns are not targeted at women customers.

The video opens with a shot of a truck driving on a highway and giving way to the rider who is seen swaying at the truck driver. Then comes the all important voice-over: 'The day she can make friends with who she wants', which immediately establishes that the subject of the campaign is the motor-bike-riding woman. The video shows the women rider taking an array of roads to find her way using digital maps, stopping at *dhabas,* interacting with other road users, who are mostly male and getting down at a water pump to wash her face. One could call it a stereotypical motorcycle advertisement, but for the fact that it inverts all brand messaging by putting a woman at the centre of these acts. The messaging is complete when one notices that the advertisement was played around the Independence Day and with Mahatma Gandhi's quote and music from his favourite *bhajan 'Raghupati Raghav Raa Ram'.* The campaign video ends with the company logo and tagline 'Feel like God'.

While the connection between women's liberation and the country's freedom is the direct purpose of the video, the discerning audience would also have noticed that the Bajaj group had a close association with the Indian freedom movement, and its founder Jamnalal Bajaj was a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi. The trope of independence in Bajaj Group campaigns in general and this campaign in particular is premised on this association.

Though a video campaign like this is never restricted to one platform, the company received a great response on its social media channels and reached the target audience. Bajaj Avenger's YouTube channel, which hosted the video five days before the Independence Day in 2017, showed a viewership figure of almost 12 million in January 2020. Similarly, this video received over 192,000 reactions and over 2,700 comments on Avenger's official Facebook page.

#LaughAtDeath Campaign of *Indian Association of Palliative Care*

Medulla Communications created two successful video campaigns for the Indian Association of Palliative Care (IAPC) for healthcare awareness and spreading the message of the organisation. The second campaign **#LaughAtDeath** was released in 2017. It started as a stand-up act performed by four terminally ill patients Pooran Issarsingh, Janice Powell, Narendra Mhatre, and Manudevi Singh in Mumbai. They were trained by the professional stand-up comedians Kunal

Kamra, Kashyap Swaroop, Vinay Sharma and others. The idea behind teaming up with comedians was that terminally ill patients deserve happiness in the last phase of their lives, and death should not be seen as a topic to be avoided in everyday discussion.

The stand-up act was successful enough, but it earned great popularity on social media when its excerpts were released online, which went viral. The fact that the stand-up comedians who coached the patients already had a big following on social media helped the campaign grow immediately big. This campaign went on to win awards and appreciation at the Cannes Lions Health festival.

An immediate impact of this campaign was that the participants became popular within the stand-up networks and on social media apart from the IAPC getting well-deserved visibility on various social media channels. The success of this campaign can be measured from the fact that most major Mumbai-based newspapers published feature stories about it. At the same time, Radio Mirchi popularised it among FM radio listeners in the city. On social media, the campaign was also endorsed by the media platform The Logical Indian, which covers social and progressive issues. This allowed the IAPC to take the campaign to the young followers of The Logical Indian.

The #LaughAtDeath campaign started trending on Twitter within minutes of its launch and stayed as one of the top trends for over three hours. It had also generated about 140 million impressions 31 March 2017.

Reliance Communications' 3G Tab Campaign

Reliance Communications launched a first-of-its-kind social media campaign in 2012 which saw a mashup of the major social networking channels Facebook and Twitter. The campaign was an online treasure hunt, wherein the participants had to uncover the location of the hidden 3G tabs.

Reliance Communications introduced three bundled offers to enrich the value and customer experience for its 3G Tab customers. The new offers included a 500 MB data usage free per month for three months, a two-month full subscription pack from BigFlix, the OTT platform from Reliance, and free international calls. On 19 July 2012, Reliance Communications launched the 3G Tablet on Android platform. The television commercials featuring brand ambassadors Anushka and Ranvijay created a buzz, thus giving a solid platform for a campaign of this scale to take off successfully.

Conceptualised and executed by the digital agency Social Wavelength – which has been rechristened as Mirum India – the idea of 'Tweet-a-Tab' was developed from the global trend of mashups on social media.

Reliance Communication's campaign ran in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chandigarh and Indore for five days. It asked users to log in to the Facebook app of Reliance Communications and unlock the location of a Reliance 3G tab using Twitter and Google Maps. The winners of the treasure hunt were promoted on social media by the company.

Tweet-a-Tab is one of the few social brand-engagements event in India to have been taken to above the line (ATL) with promotions on

TV, radio and social media. To give the campaign a broader range, Reliance Communications partnered with Bindaas for television publicity and Big FM, Radio One and Fever FM for radio promotional for the campaign.

The decision to involve Radio One and Bindass paid instant dividends, as both of them had active presence on social media and allowed city-centric hashtags, like #Reliance3GTabInMumbai, trend at top spots on all the five days for which the campaign ran.

The brand managers asked users to log on to Facebook.com/RelianceMobile and access its Tweet-a-Tab application. (Facebook allowed developers to build their apps on its platform, a practice which was discontinued barring for gaming developers.) Once logged in, the user would see a live map of one of the five city the competition was going on on that specific day. Each city had a unique hashtag – for example, Mumbai had #Reliance3GTabInMumbai. Users needed to tweet using this hashtag. With every tweet, the map of that city zoomed in. Once the map zoomed in at 100 per cent, the location of the hidden tab was shown. The first person who reached the actual location won a Reliance 3G Tab.

Reliance Communications hid the 3G Tab at a particular location within each city. They also created the Facebook application which incorporated Twitter and Google Maps in such a way that after every few tweets, the map zoomed in to disclose the location.

The Tweet-a-Tab campaign was a beautiful and effective amalgamation of Facebook, Twitter and Google Maps. The branding agency put many things together that formed a noteworthy difference to the complete user experience and the campaign vitality. The best part for the winning fan, other than the keeping the tab, was a special mention on radio featuring them.

The hashtag #Reliance3GTabInMumbai trended at the No. 1 spot in India on the first day of the campaign. However, that is not what made it distinct: instead what was notable was the way it influenced the company's Facebook users to tweet, thus facilitating inter-channel movement.

It is crucial to note that after revealing the location of the tab, Reliance Communications Twitter handle did not stop its activity. Instead, it launched a quick-fire quiz to engage users and give them an opportunity to win more merchandise. These questionnaires focussed on Reliance Communications' merchandise and campaigns.

***Prashant Kishor*, CAG and IPAC**

The politician and election strategist Prashant Kishor rose to instant limelight after Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the 2014 General Election with a massive mandate. Till then Kishor was known within a small group of national and international policy circles as a young professional who could enrich policy discussions with insights obtained from his international assignments, including one at the United Nations. By 2013, he had floated an ostensibly non-partisan group called the Citizens for Accountable Governance

(CAG), whose members were not allowed to become active members of any political party.

CAG soon aligned itself with Modi's 2014 election campaign and its team of a 1,000-odd members and over 100,000 volunteers mined demographic and election-related data, studied policy gaps and the mood of the electorate in different regions and designed campaign components under Kishor's leadership.

More than any other aspect of election campaigning that Kishor's team has mastered, it is the unprecedented use of social media which has become its defining contribution to the Indian election landscape. It is estimated that over 10 crore first-time voters joined the electoral rolls for the 2014 election. Thus, social media became a preferred route to reach out to them for Kishor and Modi's teams. In its avatar as CAG, Kishor's team used free and paid tools to study social media analytics and synergised on-ground campaigns with social media activity, much like the former US president Barack Obama managed his social media campaign. Kishor's team used data mining tools to study and track social media posts to be able to influence these conversations about voters' concerns in favour of Modi.

With this election, one can say, social media platforms also came of age in India. This statement particularly holds true in the case of Twitter, which had more than 49 million election-related conversations after the seventh round of polling in 2014, which was more than the double of such conversations in the whole of 2013 – which stood at around 20 million. From 2009, when the Congress politician Shashi Tharoor was the only politician of national importance to be on Twitter with 6,000 followers, to 2014, when almost every politician joined the social media channel, it was a great leap. By May 2014, Modi was already the most followed person in India on Twitter with 3.89 million followers, while Tharoor stood second at over 2.16 million followers. Apart from this, Modi also had 14 million followers on Facebook in this period. This massive spike that Modi got after being declared the prime-ministerial candidate of the BJP in 2013 is largely attributed to Kishor's CAG. The success of social media campaigns run by Kishor and his team can be gauged from the fact that only Obama had more Facebook followers than Modi in the world.

The BJP's 2014 electoral strategy included novel campaigns and features like the Chai pe Charcha campaign which used social media, satellite communication and DTH tehcnology to hold discussion on good governance, women's security and other issues; 3D hologram rallies, where Modi's message was taken to far-flung areas using technology; the Run for Unity campaign, where youth were mobilised for the giant Statue of Liberty in Gujarat; the Manthan contest, in which youth deliberated on national issues and presented their solutions to Modi and other leaders; and, the Mere Sapno Ka Bharat campaing, where citizens were asked to make short videos on their vision for India and share it with the BJP on email, WhatsApp, etc., which were then published on the India272 portal. Kishor is seen as the architech of these campaigns and his team as the unit behind taking them to the maximum number of people on social media.

With CAG's intervention in the national election, the concept of Western-style campaign strategy arrived in India so much so that by the time the Delhi Assembly election were held in February 2020, almost all major political players who could afford Kishor's team – which had metamorphosed into the Indian Political Action Committee after dissociating with the BJP – had either engaged it for election strategy, candidate selection process, reaching out to the electorate and media outreach. Apart from the Congress, these parties include the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi, the Janata Dal (United) in Bihar, the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, Y S Jaganmohan Reddy's YSR Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu.

13.4 CONCLUSION

The cases studied in this unit explain that social media has become a viable option of outreach for businesses, political parties, social causes and even individuals for taking their message to the target audience and brand positioning. It establishes social media as a dominant communication medium whose popularity is set to rise with time, just more conventional media forms decline in influence. The case of India shows that even when literacy and economic levels are low, social media can influence audiences across demographies. These case studies only some of the numerous successes of social media in our lives. As more channels emerge and internet penetration grows in India, we can expect a more diverse set of narratives emerging on this medium.

13.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Questions

1. Why do stakeholders create social media case studies?

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2. Describe the social media success of KFC in India.

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3. Explain how Reliance Communications' 3G Tab campaign amalgamated multiple social media channels.

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4. What was the impact of the Citizens for Accountable Governance's efforts on Narendra Modi's social media presence?

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Answers

1. A social media case study is important because:
    - it offers details about a real-life campaign and its target audience;
- a professionally prepared case study usually gets data from the company that runs the campaign, thus providing authentic information;
- it analyses data within usable metrics, saving time for the reader;
- it carries user surveys about how they perceive a campaign. This information can only be available in the case study and is useful for the marketer and their competition;
- it includes views of industry experts;
- it analyses impact and return on investment of a campaign on different social media channels; and
- it puts the purpose of a campaign in context by comparing it to available data and trends from the campaign sector.

2. **KFC launched Radio KFC in India, which played international and Indian music in all its outlets. It then started an RJ hunt campaign on Facebook in 2012. It created a Facebook app through its campaign partner Blink Solution and asked its Facebook community to record clippings as auditions to be an RJ on Radio KFC. To keep its followers hooked on, the company offered food coupon worth Rs 500 to a winner everyday and the ultimate prize of hosting a show on the radio channel at the end of the campaign.By the end of the campaign, KFC claimed that around 3,000 people across 30 cities had uploaded their audio recordings on its Facebook app.**

Though it is difficult to measure the success of one social media campaign for popular brands, especially when concurrent campaigns are going on, KFC claims to have benefited greatly form its sustained social media engagement with its followers. Its social media agency Blink Solution claimed the following successes:

- **The campaign led to an addition of 170,000 new fans on its Facebook page;**
- **Social Samosa featured the app as one of the Top 10 social media campaigns of 2012; and**
- **The campaign was widely featured in national and local newspapers across languages and regions.**

3. Reliance Communications also used a Facebook app to attract users. It asked them to log on to Facebook.com/RelianceMobile and access its Tweet-a-Tab application. Once logged in, the user would see a live map of one of the five city the competition was going on on that specific day. Each city had a unique hashtag – for example, Mumbai had #Reliance3GTabInMumbai. Users needed to tweet using this hashtag. With every tweet, the map of that city zoomed in. Once the map zoomed in at 100 per cent, the location of a hidden tab was shown. The first person who reached the actual location of the hiddend tab won it.

The company hid the 3G Tab at a particular location within each city. They also created the Facebook application which incorporated Twitter and Google Maps in such a way that after every few tweets, the map zoomed in to disclose the location.

The Tweet-a-Tab campaign was a beautiful and effective amalgamation of Facebook, Twitter and Google Maps. The branding agency put many things together that formed a noteworthy difference to the complete user experience and the campaign vitality. The best part for the winning fan, other than the keeping the tab, was a special mention on radio featuring them.

4. **During the 2014 General Election, social media platforms came of age in India and developed full-fledged political identity. Twitter seems to be the biggest beneficiary of this trend. It had more than 49 million election-related conversations after the seventh round of polling in 2014, which was more than the double of such conversations in the whole of 2013 – which stood at around 20 million. In 2009, the Congress politician Shashi Tharoor was the only politician of national importance to be on Twitter with just 6,000 followers. By May 2014, Modi was already the most followed person in India on Twitter with 3.89 million followers, while Tharoor stood second at over 2.16 million followers.**

   Apart from this, Modi also had 14 million followers on Facebook in this period. This massive spike that Modi got after being declared the prime-ministerial candidate of the BJP in 2013 is largely attributed to the politician and election strategist Prashant Kishor's Citizens for Accountable Governance. The success of social media campaigns run by Kishor and his team can be gauged from the fact that only Obama had more Facebook followers than Modi in the world at that time.

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UNIT : 14 FUTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

:: STRUCTURE::

14.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media is the present and the future of the internet, as its existing numbers indicate. Its users stood at a staggering 3.5 billion worldwide in January 2020, Facebook being the most popular channel among all the platforms, which has nearly 68 per cent of all social media users.

Social media has changed our lives. We are now more connected to people around the world. News reaches us faster than earlier. Users do not have to rely entirely on traditional media houses for news delivery. Instead, any common person can be a source of breaking news, no matter what their location is. People of all ages can be found using social media, starting from 18 year olds or younger to those beyond 60 years of age.

Social media has grown manifolds since its inception and transcends into every aspect of a user's life, ranging from helping them make decisions about what to buy online to their political choices. Social media not only provides users options to communicate with each other but also empowers them to create and share user-generated content.

Every big brand wants its presence on the social media platform so as to reach the widest number of users. The future of social media is, thus, bright and the organisations investing their time and money on social media are sure to reach their target audience and reduce the communication gap between them.

In this unit, we will study what future has in store for social media users and how technologies like artificial intelligence, virtual reality and augmented reality will define its future strides.

14.1 OBJECTIVES

- Understand why users are concerned about the future of social media
- Study user concern for privacy and data security
- Understand how video content dominates social media
- Learn the long strides made by artificial intelligence on social media platforms

On the Completion of This Unit, you will be able to:

- Learn how users are becoming aware about usage of personal information
- Grasp the spread of fake news and deepfakes

- Understand the rise of social commerce
- Analyse how computer-generated imagery has changed the concept of influencer marketing

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- Present and Future of Data Privacy
- Dominance of Video Content
- Augmented Reality
- Artificial Intelligence
- Fake Content and Deepfakes
- Rise of Social Commerce
- Influencers

14.2 SOCIAL MEDIA MATTERS

Nearly every American checked their phone to open a social media website each day in 2018. Even when data in other regions of the world is not as commonplace, anecdotal evidence suggests that this trend is true of these areas too. Social media has become an important aspect of our everyday life. Looking at the trends, these numbers will keep on increasing with each passing day. There are various ways in which users are hooked on to social media for their daily needs: whether they are searching for a life partner or want to know about a product which they wish to purchase, social media provides them information in a fun and informative way. For example, users often visit YouTube for a product review before making a final purchase of any electronic item, like a cell phone, a television set or a washing machine.

Some of the common reasons why people use social media are to:

- *Stay connected:* the main aim of social media sites is to help users socialise with each other. It helps them to connect with friends and family or even find a life partner. Social media sites like Instagram and Facebook allow advanced messaging features which are best suited for communication with other users. Functions like auto reply help businesses connect with their buyers even in the absence of a customer care executive.
- *Stay updated:* micro-blogging sites like Twitter are the main source of news and current events in today's era. News spreads like wildfire and has far greater global reach than any other traditional media. Whether it is news about the spread of coronavirus or the death of the popular NBA player Kobe Bryant, social media sites are usually the first to report these stories. While traditional news websites may not allow users to express their views through comments, social media sites let users express their opinions and share news with other users in their circle. This creates a ripple effect and helps any update reach a wider audience than through word of mouth. In future,

we will see more such social media sites emerge which focus on the news aspect and will empower users further.

- *Spend free time:* people access the internet to spend their spare time. Social media has become another arena where people can get latest updates about movies, games and politics. However, on the flip side, users who become addicted to social media spend little time in the outside world and are restricted to their rooms, leading to health and socialisation issues.
- *Find humorous content:* many users on social media sites spend time searching for new and humorous content. This helps them keep their minds calm and relax after a hectic day's work. Technologies like virtual reality and artificial intelligence will power the future social media sites to further enhance this type of experience.
- *Share photos and videos:* modern social media sites thrive on user-generated content, which comes in the form pictures and videos. More the number of likes, comments and engagement a user gets on such type of content, the more they feel empowered and popular. Sites like Facebook and YouTube allow users to share longer videos and more pictures, hence they are more popular in comparison to other competitive sites like Twitter.
- *Network with users and professionals:* the most powerful use of social media is that it allows us to connect with other users. While most of these social networking sites, like Facebook, focus on finding friends, there are specialised sites, like LinkedIn, which help users connect with professionals working in diverse fields, which even allow them them to find jobs.
- *Buy and sell products:* Facebook reintroduced the functionality of Facebook Marketplace in 2016, which allows users to buy and sell products from other users in similar geographical locations. Some users come to social media websites to sell their products and reach out to potential buyers. Before Facebook Marketplace came into existence, users followed several groups dedicated to online buying and selling for specialised shopping needs, like buying used gadgets, clothes, books, etc., which prompted Facebook to bet heavily on the marketplace feature.
- *Share their opinion:* people want their voice to be heard, and social media sites have given them the platform where they can reach out to famous people and businesses that directly impact their lives. A good example is where a user shares the concern about a local issue with their political leaders or with a company about a faulty product. The user can remain anonymous and still have their voice heard by others. This makes the user feel that their concern is being addressed.

- *Check friends and family members:* social media sites not only allow users to update and share their personal information with others but also help them to see what is happening in the lives of their friends and family members. Pictures from birthday parties, videos from travel blogs or arrival of a new family member are some of the things which users access to learn about others on these websites.

14.3 PRESENT AND FUTURE OF DATA PRIVACY

Data privacy has become crucial for every website especially after the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data scandal broke out in early 2018, where personal data of millions of users was harvested for political and other purposes without their knowledge. Increasingly, user have become aware about the information they share on social media sites. Going forward, data security and privacy will continue to play a key role on social media sites.

Some observers argue that it is not possible to have data privacy on social media sites. The only way to stop social media sites from tracking a user, they argue, is to delete an account, something which most users cannot afford to do in this time an age. The #DeleteFacebook movement gained popularity briefly, mostly on Twitter, after the Cambridge Analytica data breach in 2018. At the height of this movement, even the WhatsApp co-founder Brian Acton tweeted: 'It is time. #deletefacebook.'

There is a common saying: 'Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are.' The same goes for social media. Everyday friends and family of a user leave traces about them. Even if a person decides to delete a social media profile, the previous or future conversations with a friend will leave traces behind.

Similarly, brands analyse networks of people to customise advertisements for users. Search engines use cookies and other methods to provide specific results to users based on their friend circle and geographic location. On the other hand, an authoritarian government might be able to crack down on a group of political dissidents with the help of advanced machine learning programmes based on a user or their network's social media activity. Since everyone is connected over the internet, a wrong person can be held responsible for the activity done by someone in their social media network.

A bigger problem that users face on social media is that no matter how careful they are, they cannot remain completely anonymous, which shows that privacy is not a choice for the individual user on social media. Friends share personal information about a user and even if the user has done everything to protect their information, their data may be revealed to persons outside of their network and through social media APIs.

A worrisome aspect of social media presence is that platforms like Facebook not only collect information about users from their own platforms but also from other websites or apps using cookies, login features that allow access through social media IDs and general data mining. For example, if a user mentions the name of their grandfather

on Facebook despite the fact that the grandfather is not registered on it, his dummy profile may be gathered by the Facebook algorithm, after which it may start collecting information about this shadow profile. Similarly, when a user visits a website where Facebook's tracking code has been implemented, their information is collected without their knowledge.

There is no way to ensure foolproof security and privacy on social media. The door to the future is open. As websites implement tight security norms and focus on the user's privacy each day, the attempt to gain access to a user's personal data may not be as easy as it was earlier. Progressive regimes have even started enacting laws to protect user privacy. For example, the European Union enacted the General Data Protection Regulation in 2018 after the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal broke out to ensure that such companies do not run away without answering to the law.

14.4 DOMINANCE OF VIDEO CONTENT

Video is the most consumed form of data on the web these days. With the advent of affordable fast internet connections and mobile devices, everyone prefers to watch video in comparison to reading long articles. According to estimates, people watch videos five times longer than the time they spend on reading or watching a long, static piece of content, which is either text or images on sites like Instagram or Facebook. The rise of sites like YouTube and video-streaming and sharing apps like TikTok can be seen as the gateway to such content.

Video content has grown several folds in recent years. According to reports, views of branded content has grown by 99 per cent on YouTube and 258 per cent on Facebook from 2016 to 2017. On the other hand, a video on Twitter is six times more likely to be retweeted in comparison to a photo.

Facebook has the largest share among all social media sites on the internet, with more than 3.5 billion users as on 2020, which is more than one third of the world's population. A large number of these users consume video content on Facebook. People spend around 100 million hours watching videos on Facebook. Similarly, YouTube, which is entirely based on videos, was the second largest search engine on the web and the second most visited website in India in February 2020. Much like YouTube, Facebook has a varied audience base, and most of the users who visit the site come with a purpose of connecting with friends and to get entertained. Their viewing preferences also vary in different demographics. Some users visit the social media channel to watch cat videos, while others may like watching food shows. Amidst this plethora of options, businesses try to create their marketing strategy so as to reach their audience on these channels and generate leads. Out of the 79 per cent marketers who used video as their medium to communicate with the audience, 85 per cent of them said that their campaign was a success. The popularity of video content can be understood by the fact that 45 per cent of people watch more than an hour of video on Facebook or YouTube each week and more than 500 million hours of videos are watched on YouTube each day.

Google acquired YouTube in 2006 for USD 1.65 billion. While earlier video hosting sites suffered from lag and space crunch, YouTube never showed any such signs. It ran smoothly without any hassles and with a big name like Google behind it, its popularity and resources increased tremendously.

YouTube not only allows users to create and share videos, it also allows them to make money through advertisements, which is one of the key reasons behind its success. Each minute, 72 hours of video are uploaded on YouTube. One third of the online activity on of any internet surfer is spent on watching video. YouTube had over two billion users worldwide in 2019.

Musical.ly was a popular video streaming app which allowed 15-second video sharing. The Shanghai-based app had over 100 million users until August 2018. It allowed users to create videos on the go without much hassles of going into video editing; it had the option of music, dialogue and special effects insertion in it. Users could do lip syncing and create funny videos on this app. In August 2018, the app was merged with another popular Chinese app TikTok. All content and users were moved to TikTok. The new app has since become a trend worldwide.

TikTok is widely popular among teenagers and young adults. Around 41 per cent of the users on TikTok are between the ages of 16 to 24 years, according to a GlobalWebIndex 2019 report. The app has become a rage amongst the youth. The app allows users to showcase their talent and create and share funny videos while they sing, dance and lip sync to their favourite tunes or dialogues from popular films.

TikTok had most number of users in India by the end of 2019. It had over 466.8 million users followed by China, with over 173.2 million users, and the USA with 123.8 million users. This popularity can be attributed to the design of the app. The videos are short with little or no advertisements to disrupt the flow of the user, which makes the user engagement rate high. Viewers can connect with videos, as they can easily identify with popular songs or dialogues used in them. Unlike Instagram, TikTok has made common users popular, who do not necessarily come from known influencers. The app has become so popular among the youngsters that nine out of 10 users use it multiple times a day. According to reports by TikTok, 90 per cent of its users access the app everyday. Around 68 per cent of the users watch someone else's video and 55 per cent upload their own videos. TikTok also has over one billion video views per day.

TikTok has not only replaced apps like Vine and Musical.ly, it is also a social media app which entirely relies on videos. It competes with big players, like YouTube and Facebook, where videos are more professionally designed and large teams may be involved in their creation. The app has given a new platform to content creators who can generate new videos with ease. TikTok has shown that the power of videos is what will drive the future of social media in years to come.

The impact of videos on social media is huge, and very soon a large number of users could be seen communicating just with videos, including live streaming. They will communicate with each other

using private videos or while engaging with a brand. Snapchat is one such example, which allows users to send messages with its live video tool.

Augmented Reality

Augmented reality (AR) is fast taking over the internet, and social media is prime space where it enhances user experience. One may not easily notice but it is already a part of the modern-day social media platforms, and it has been around for years. It is now taking over the popular social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. Brands and marketers are also experimenting with this form to decipher how they can exploit its use.

Augmented reality – which is sometimes misunderstood as virtual reality – is a technology that adds virtual elements to enhance real-life experiences of users. On the other hand, virtual reality implies that a whole new world is being created from scratch using computer-generated graphics or other tools. There are many popular video games which help users immerse in the world of virtual reality: its examples include No Man's Sky and Vader Immortal. A gamer gets in the shoes of the player and gets to see a three-dimensional world around the character they are playing. Virtual reality is a simulation of the real world.

Augmented reality enhances real-world projects with computer-generated augmentations for a better user experience. Some examples of augmented reality include special effects filters for images and videos. For example, a user takes their picture with a fake moustache or bigger eyes, like those of animated characters, and share them with friends on social media or messaging apps. Its another example is when a doctor shows a 3D projection of the working of a human organ to a patient for making them understand an ailment they may be suffering from.

For most of us, augmented reality is nothing more than a source of entertainment, especially on social media. However, the potential of this technology is huge, which can be used in various industries, like healthcare, navigation, security forces, education, manufacturing or marketing.

On social media we have seen an increase in the use of augmented reality. One can call Snapchat as the pioneer in the field of augmented reality on social media. It provides users the power to share the use of augmented reality filters and lenses, using which they can make their updates livelier. Snapchat users can play games with their friends using Snappables-based augmented reality. It can also turn a picture into a three-dimensional emoji. One of the most popular AR feature on Snapchat is the Shoppable AR, which allows brands to promote their web pages, share a video and allow users to install their apps. Users can get a real life view of the product before they decide to buy it.

Snapchat has inspired competitors to emulate its novel use of augmented reality. Instagram has become the other popular social media channel to use this technology effectively. Facebook has developed a powerful Facebook AR Studio tool to enhance user

experience. It allows developers to build interactive apps and augmented camera experiences.

As augmented reality becomes more refined and a larger number of professionals and developers adopt this technology, businesses and marketers will be able to take its advantage more than anyone else. They will have new ways to promote their products and services. Consider the following examples:

- *Virtual stores:* AR virtual stores on social media can help users get a 3D view of a product or store, where they can engage with the product before buying it. This will make the user experience more engaging and they will no longer have to visit a store in order to experience a product. This will be a massive upgrade over staid e-commerce portals which only put pictures of products to lure customers. This will lead to infinite possibilities for users, for example visiting several stores siting in the comfort their room.

- *Live events:* social media sites like Facebook and YouTube provide features to broadcast live events. In near future, we can see airing of augmented live events, where users will be able to attend an event with simple AR gadgets and immerse in a concert or any conference from their home and even participate in it. They may also be able to watch live sports events and engage with other users, participate in quizzes, offer their own commentary, etc.

- *AR videos:* interactive AR videos will be used by brands to engage with their customers and increase their sales. Brands will create interactive videos of their products and find out how customers will react to those products. They may also show how a product or a service can change a customer's life. For example, a real estate company can give an AR tour to its customers so they can get an experience of the home before they decide to purchase or rent it.

- *Brand awareness:* AR experience will enhance the life of users and create highly shareable content. A great AR experience is bound to get more shares and engagements from users. Brands will start investing in such technology to stay ahead of the competition.

Social media has been the backbone of modern day marketing, and augmented reality is closely linked to social media. Its adoption by top social media sites, like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, shows that big technology companies are ready to showcase it to users. While some big brands, like IKEA and ZARA, have already started using this technology for their benefit, the day when all kinds of consumers are able to test new products from anywhere in the world is not far.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence, more commonly known by its abbreviation AI, is the simulation of human intelligence by computer programmes or machines. They are programmed to take decisions similar to that of a

human like possessing cognitive skills, problem solving and decision making capabilities.

The internet can be said to be the reason behind the rise of this technology. The internet has had a huge impact on our daily lives, and every decision we make online is recorded somewhere, through which machines are learning about our actions. Thus, it is not wrong to say that AI will rule the future, since now nearly every business uses it to make better marketing decisions and study consumer behaviour. In this sense, AI has come a long way from its inception in 1950s.

Social media sites are the biggest platforms where users reside, and companies are eager to take advantage of this. This is where the role of artificial intelligence comes into play. A good example of AI-driven social media behaviour is how a single click of the user decides what notifications, posts, pop-up advertisements and friend suggestions they wish to see on their mobile phones. On most social media platforms, developers incorporate AI in their algorithms to decide about the most appropriate user experience.

Following are some of the ways social media platforms use to leverage AI to refine user experience:

- *Recommendation engine:* if a user adds a co-worker to their friend list, they may see more people from their office in the list of recommended friends. This is how recommendation engines work on social media sites. A recommendation engine makes use of machine learning to make logical decisions and filter information based on users' past actions and preferences. Similarly, when a user likes a video or a picture of a specific kind, the recommendation engine suggests them similar content. For example, a user who likes or interacts with a video of pets will most likely see more such videos in their video timeline on Facebook. YouTube is another site which highly relies on artificial intelligence to offer suggestions to users. If a viewer watches a video of a niche, YouTube suggests similar videos in its suggested videos list, which will be different for other users even if they are watching the same video. Sites like Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter rely on similar machine learning algorithms to improve the user engagement rate.

- *Customer support chatbots:* businesses have started using automated software, called chatbots, to fill the time till a customer care executive gets online and resolves a user query. When a user tries to connect with a business on social media website for support, they may see automated replies from the other end. If these replies are insufficient to help the user, a human may start assisting the user. Else the issues are usually resolved by chatbots, which are powered by artificial intelligence. Chatbots provide instant replies to the user's queries and reduce the lag time which businesses had earlier. This enhances the overall user experience. The brands like Spotify, PayPal, eBay and MasterCard are already using this feature to resolve customer issues on Facebook Messenger.

- *Image recognition:* it is another popular use of artificial intelligence technology on social media sites. When a user uploads a group photo on their profile, the faces are matched with those of the user's friends or network members. Sites like Facebook suggest the best match among the friends for tagging. This type of facial recognition feature requires multiple layers of neural networks which use machine learning to identify users in the picture. In future, we may see brands use image recognition software to scan photos of a user so they can recognise them and create a marketing strategy based on their likes or dislikes registered in the past. Pinterest has been using the image recognition on its website to find similar images and suggest users the best results.

- *Sentiment detection:* sentiment analysis has been present on social media sites for some time now. Facebook has been using it to monitor the sentiments of a user. A user's emotions can range from being happy to being annoyed or in sorrow. Businesses use this data to see how their products are performing among users. If a product or service is not getting the desired response, they can quickly address it and respond to the user's complaints.

In the modern age, artificial intelligence is present everywhere on the web, even if the user is unaware about its use in the background. Their data is being gathered by large social media sites to make a decision about their future purchase, updates and other aspects. As social media platforms and developers more time and energy into artificial intelligence, we can contemplate a social media world with possibilities of data analysis, news prediction, virality analysis, etc. where human interaction may not be required. In fact, experts believe that artificial intelligence is the future of social media to such an extent that once it develops fully, it may not be possible to imagine a social media platform without AI where 'an AI has the potential to act as a 24/7 meme machine'.

Fake Content and Deepfakes

Just as technology develops enough to mimic human behaviour and even goes beyond to analyse big data, which a human mind may not be able to do, it throws up the challenge of its misuse. One of the biggest challenges faced by social media sites today is to identify fake news. The source of information can be anyone, from a recognized media house to an anonymous user, thus making a logical decision a difficult task even for a human.

Social media channels create gigabytes of data everyday, but the time to process this information is little. End users do not have any means to analyse facts, identify true information and differentiate from the false one. According to a study conducted by the US-based research university Massachusetts Institute of Technology, it takes six times more time for factually correct news to reach 1,500 people in comparison to a false news item. For example, death reports of popular actors and actresses can often be seen circulating on Twitter and other social media platforms. One such news item was about the

death of the famous wrestling star Hulk Hogan, which he later denied on his official social media account.

Fake news generally originates from a coordinated campaign run by a well prepared team which has propaganda on its mind. It usually tends to trigger human emotions of grief or anger. Despite the fact that social media behaviour across the world can be traced, no strict action or law has been enforced against those spreading fake news. Fake news is also spread by opposing parties to gain an upper hand over their competitors. This pattern can be seen before elections or product launches. Social media *per se* does not create fake news but becomes an enabler for its creation and distribution on a large scale. Even though the blame does not fall on social media platforms directly, users have started to put pressure on them to devise methods and tools to stop the spread of fake content, especially when it targets vulnerable group of people.

According to a discussion at the European Commission's multi-stakeholder conference on fake news held in November 2017, most of the fake news is spread through bots and artificial intelligence technology, so even if the user is identified, not much can be done about them.

Artificial intelligence and augmented reality have coalesced now to produce an even more controversial technology called deepfaking, which is increasing being employed on social media. Deepfakes are synthetic media where audio and videos are manipulated to show a real person speak or do things that appear real. The level of finesse this technology has already achieved makes it impossible to tell a fake video from a real one. While there are many cases where unscrupulous elements have produced deepfakes – even deep nudes – of unsuspecting celebrities, there is at least one case where the person appearing in a deepfake video consented to be a part and used this technology to reach out to a large number of his supporters. Experts expect more refinement in this technology in future, which can make it accessible to a much larger audience. The opinion is divided on whether deepfaking can have positive use cases.

Hopefully, in future we will see social media sites develop better artificial intelligence to identify sources of fake news, pin-point them and bring down the accounts that propagate such content before the damage is done by them.

Rise of Social Commerce

The large number of users that social media sites have has enthralled brands for years. They have been finding ways to connect with these users and increase their sales. Whether it is the Facebook fan page or Twitter handles, brands want their presence on every channel where they can make a sale or reach a potential customer. Instagram is not far behind in this race as well-known influencers endorse brands and promote products on this platform. Video ads are another great medium which brands are harnessing to reach the potential users. Snapchat's visual search feature shows us the future of e-commerce and social media. Users can now point at any product or bard code and they are redirected to the Amazon store where they can get to

know more about the product and complete their purchase. This establishes a direct business relationship between a social media channel and an e-commerce portal.

Despite the technical innovations of social media and e-commerce, the impact which consumers should have about a product from social media sites has still to reach its full. According to a survey by the digital commerce consultancy SUMO Heavy, 82 per cent of the shoppers have not used social commerce in any form.

Businesses are still optimistic and feel that social media will be the future of e-commerce. Security and privacy have been the main concern for users who wish to adopt social commerce. Cash purchases are declining with each passing day, which works to the advantage of social commerce. As the social media adoption increases further, there is no surprise that users will accept social commerce sooner or later. The transition from social media sites to e-commerce sites will become a lot smoother and safer in future to improve the consumer experience.

Brands should understand that the use of social media will increase, and consumers want better ways of making purchases which are safer and efficient. It may be possible that in future we will see e-commerce sites selling their products directly from their Facebook business pages. To be able to reach at that point where users are comfortable spending money, a lot of marketing efforts and data security is required from the end of social media giants and businesses.

In the era of globalisation, the same marketing priorities may not work for every region. For brands to tap into multilingual markets, different approach is required to connect with users from different locations. To resolve such issues, several brands have local and global social media handles. One prominent example is Amazon, which has the @amazon handle for the US audience and the @amazonIN for the Indian audience on Twitter.

Social media and e-commerce may merge in future to provide users a better experience and ease of purchase. It will become much safer and users are likely to show more trust while buying products directly from social media sites. Users may also be able to make purchases with voice or video commands.

Influencers

Influencers are users on social media who have large number of followers. Influencers may be a well-known celebrities or sports stars or they could just be subject-matter experts whose fame and influence holds in a limited area on just one social media channel.

Influencers have long been the face of marketing. They have a deep impact on the decision-making aspect of a consumer. When an influencer says that a product is good, their followers believe that the product is good. However, while traditional influencers give the initial push to a brand, users are 9.8 times more likely to make a purchase after seeing a peer’s post as opposed to earlier influencer marketing strategy. Hence, user-generated content is more likely to impact a purchasing decision.

While influencers tend to charge a large sum of money from brands for endorsements, their followers are also beginning to demand more transparency from them. There is already a trend in the West where advertising bodies and even government agencies mandate influencers, social media platforms and brands to declare when a post or ad has been paid for. The industry regulatory body Advertising Standards Authority in the UK created guidelines for the industry in 2018 for disclosures on such payments. This trend has hit at the heart of celebrity influencer industry on social media and given more prominence to micro-influencers, since apart from being sectoral experts, and thus knowledgeable people, they also tend to establish a direct line of communication with their followers.

Just as virtual reality is taking over other aspects of social media, influencer marketing is also emerging as an area of intervention for this technology. Slowly, but steadily, virtual influencers have created a niche in this domain. Termed CGI influencers – or, computer-generated imagery influencers – they have individuality and following which matches their human counterparts. These virtual characters are backed by dedicated marketing teams, including copy editors and creative producers, who decide how these characters navigate the world of sponsors, respond to real events and sustain a faithful following. The popular CGI influencers include Lil Miquela, who endorsed Prada and Diesel; Bermuda, who endorsed Donald Trump; and Shudu, who has been featured in *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines. As the technology and marketing strategies around CGI influencers develop further, they are likely to acquire cultural diversity and respond to regional tastes of their followers and endorse localised brands.

Apart from the above-mentioned categories, organic influencers are likely to continue their sway over followers. They are real users who have bought a product and give genuine advice to others. They do not get any monetary or other benefits from brands for leaving a review either on social media channels or e-commerce websites. They may have 10 or up to 1,000 followers on social media sites which may not even be mainstream, but what is important is their authenticity and unbiased review towards a brand or a product.

14.5 CONCLUSION

Social media has come a long way since its inception, with changes happening every few years which completely alter its character. These changes continue to take place, and there is not likely to be any let up in this trend. While many think that social media platforms are saturated with a high instance of competition, new sites and apps will still emerge, which may be better than the ones already existing in the market. TikTok and Tinder are such examples which arrived late in the game but have still become massively popular among users. At the same time, some older features or even whole platforms may disappear with time due to a paucity of investment or change in user preferences. As more and more people rely on social media each day for decision making and connecting with others, these sites will continue to evolve technologically, in terms of content creation and on

account of user experience and, thus, define our everyday lived experience even more decisively.

14.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Questions

1. What are the popular ways in which social media is used?

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2. Why is data privacy and security a big concern for users on social media?

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3. Why should brands focus on generating video content?

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4. Explain the rise and functioning of deepfaking.

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5. How do chatbots help brands on social media?

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Answers

1. Some of the popular usages of social media are
   i. Social networking, where social media sites allows users to connect with his family, friends and colleagues. He may also be able to connect with new users with similar interests.
   ii. Stay updated with the latest news and events from around the world.

iii. Spend free time and for entertainment

iv. Share his opinion, photos and videos with the world

2. Most were unaware of the fact that their data could be misused until the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal occurred. It became an eye-opener for most social media users. Their data was used without their agreement. This raised a huge concern among users about the security and privacy of their data. Similarly, hack attacks on social media sites like Twitter have often exposed passwords and personal information, putting users at risk. These and similar incidents have led to an increased focus on security and privacy concerns.

3. Video content has seen exponential increase in the recent years on social media sites like Facebook and YouTube. Brands wish to leverage this opportunity and turn it into profit for their businesses.

4. The controversial technology deepfaking is an offshoot of artificial intelligence, which is increasing being employed on social media. Deepfakes are synthetic media where audio and videos are manipulated to show a real person speak or do things that appear real. Mostly it becomes impossible to tell a fake video from a real one. Many unscrupulous elements use this technology on unsuspecting celebrities and common individuals to either embarrass them or making money on social media platforms through popularising such videos. However, there are also cases where the subjects of deepfakes have consented to the use of their imagery. An example includes the use of political messaging in multiple languages by the Bharatiya Janata Party in the Assembly election of Delhi in 2020.

5. Automation and chatbots help reduce the load on human customer care executives and allow brands to respond to several customers at once. The wait time for customers, which used to be hours, now has been reduced to a few seconds. With artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms powering these chatbots, users can experience human-like responses from these chatbots, thus improving their trust in the brand concerned.

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- ‘7 social media predictions that will happen by the end of 2019’: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qw_1jGlpV9Y

Books

- *Own the A.I. Revolution: Unlock Your Artificial Intelligence Strategy to Disrupt Your Competition* by Neil Sahota and Michael Ashley
- *One Million Followers: How I Built a Massive Social Following in 30 Days* by Brendan Kane

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સ્વાધ્યાયઃ પરમં તપઃ
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સ્વાધ્યાયઃ પરમં તપઃ

શિક્ષણ, સંસ્કૃતિ, સદ્‌ભાવ, દિવ્યબોધનું ધામ,
ડૉ. બાબાસાહેબ આંબેડકર ઓપન યુનિવર્સિટી નામ;
સૌને સૌની પાંખ મળે ને સૌને સૌનું આભ,
દશે દિશામાં સ્મિત વહે, હો દશે દિશે શુભ-લાભ.

અભણ રહી અજ્ઞાનના શાને, અંધકારને પીવો ?
કહે બુદ્ધ આંબેડકર કહે, તું થા તારો દીવો;
શારદીય અજવાળાં પહોંચ્યાં ગુર્જર ગામે ગામ
ધ્રુવતારકની જેમ ઝળહળે એકલવ્યની શાન.

સરસ્વતીના મયૂર તમારે ફળિયે આવી ગહેકે
અંધકારને હડસેલીને ઉજાસનાં ફૂલ મહેંકે;
બંધન નહીં કો' સ્થાન સમયનાં જવું ન ઘરથી દૂર,
ઘર આવી મા હરે શારદા દૈન્યતિમિરનાં પૂર.

સંસ્કારોની સુગંધ મહેંકે,મન મંદિરને ધામે
સુખની ટપાલ પહોંચે સૌને પોતાને સરનામે;
સમાજ કેરે દરિયે હાંકી શિક્ષણ કેરું વહાણ,
આવો કરીએ આપણ સૌ
ભવ્ય રાષ્ટ્રનિર્માણ...
દિવ્ય રાષ્ટ્રનિર્માણ...
ભવ્ય રાષ્ટ્રનિર્માણ

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