UNIT : 5 SPECTRUM OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Structure

5.0 INTRODUCTION

If the Internet and World Wide Web are the modern innovations in the technical aspect of the communication system, then the social media applications are the creative part of it. In the world of social media, every user has his/her world, in which s/he can communicate, interact, create and collaborate with others. Others may be few numbers of close friends, or thousands of like-minded people or an innumerable number of social media users. Particularly, the social media platforms facilitate multiple avenues of communication in terms of predominantly using text-based interaction like Facebook and Twitter, photo sharing like Instagram, or one may even like to share video messages. There are plenty of options available like YouTube which enable to you share your knowledge, and also another popular platform the Wikipedia provides a similar platform or you want to categorise all your online information and would like to share it with many, then Pinterest or Reddit facilitates these options.

Participation, sharing and collaborations are the main features of social media, and in recent times the proliferation of mobile devices has accelerated the adoption of social media at much faster rates. Facebook and Instagram

have more than one billion monthly users. The size and significance these social media entities have ramifications across the countries since it operates in the global contexts.

In this Unit, we shall explore the world of social media, its characteristics and particularly its utilisation in various fields.

5.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

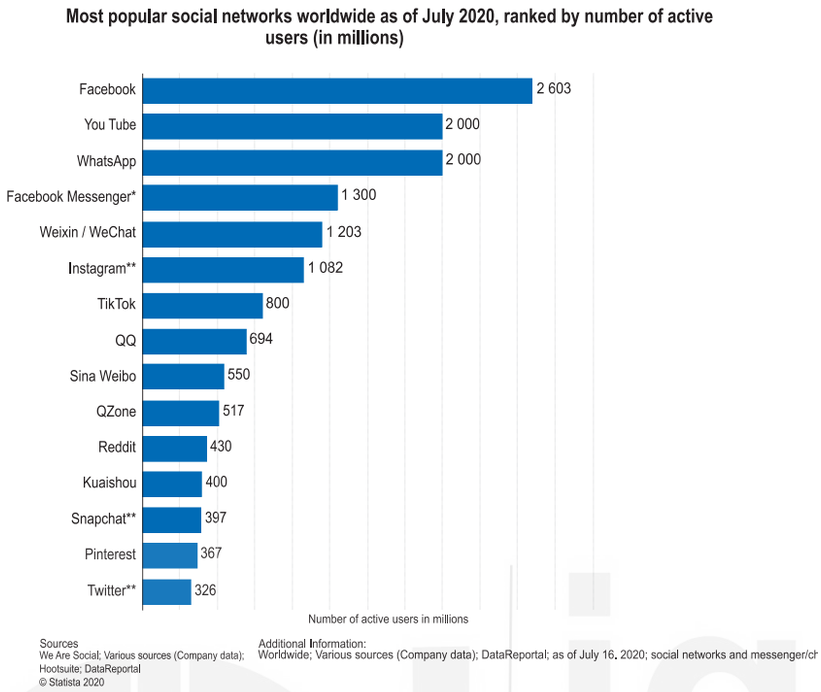
- understand the evolution, types of social media and its channels;
- differentiate between traditional mass media and social media;
- explain the right social media etiquettes;
- explore social media's utilization in marketing and advertising, crowd sourcing of information, crowd funding etc.; and
- understand the social, cultural and economic impact of social media.

5.2 UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MEDIA

The Internet is a network of networks, a global system of interconnected networks of computers. The term Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) are used interchangeably, but they are different. So while the Internet is a global system of interconnected computers, WWW also called the web, is a collection of interconnected documents and resources linked together using the resources of the Internet.

In the beginning, there was what was called Web 1.0, a static or read-only web. This was replaced by what we call a dynamic or interactive Web or Web 2.0. Web 2.0 led to the development of interactivity on the Internet and announced the arrival of social media. Web 2.0 is a term that has been used by many authors to mean many things from early to mid-2000s. The one aspect of Web 2.0 most views converge on is, that it was a more social, collaborative, interactive and responsive web unlike web 1.0. Among one of the many reasons that, web 2.0 became what it is known by is the use of certain software technologies.

The social part of the web meant users were just not consuming information from a static web, but they were also creating it. This was enabled by what is called social media platforms or what we know in the popular press as social media. One can then say that social media is a combination of Web 2.0 technology, i.e. interactive applications, user-generated content and media richness and Web ideology of transparency and availability of information and tools. To this mixture, if one adds the Information Technology (IT) and markets, i.e. smartphones, broadband, wifi and affordability, we arrive at the foundations of Social Media.



Social media is a highly interactive platform through which individuals and organizations can co-create, share, discuss, participate and modify user-generated content or self-curated content while also having control over the content that is created and its timing. All creation, sharing etc. of the content happens in a social context, i.e. users are a part of the society and its culture while producing new cultures. Social media provides people with pervasive network connectivity (Asur & Huberman, 2010) and allow the people to create virtual social networks which replicate the real social networks one has in the real world. Social media has been referred to as "social media sites" (Diga & Kelleher,2009), or a set of information technologies which facilitate interactions and networking (Kapoor et al., 2017; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013).

The virtual world mimics the real world because as would be logical, humans created the computers and the associated networks looking at the knowledge gained from the real world and its functionality. Hence, many parts of the way social media networks operate mimic the way humans create networks except that in the virtual world, you can create an anonymous identity, operate behind shadows and hide behind multiple avatars. The other thing about the virtual world is it speeds up whatever happens in the real world. Messages move in real-time as do responses. Social media allows humans to connect and share with other humans across space and time.

Why would humans seek a virtual social network in the presence of a real one? This is due to the concept of "Social Presence" which humans look forward to in their relationships. Social presence is defined as "the extent to which a medium allows users to experience others as psychologically present" (Hassanein & Head, 2005). Presence is the "illusion of being there or an experience of being in an environment while physically situated in another location" (Li, Daugherty, & Biocca, 2002). Media is perceived as

warm if it enables human interactions, sociability, and sensitivity (Hassanein & Head, 2005). Information seeking increases the perception of social presence (Hajli, Sims, Zadeh, & Richard, 2017) and Cheung, Chiu, and Lee (2011) find that social presence enhances users' continued use of social media.

5.2.1 Definitions

Social media is defined in many ways by various authors and scholars. We looking at some academic work in this area, Boyd & Ellison(2008) defines it as "platform to create profiles, make explicit and traverse relationships"; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre (2011) identified social media by the set of functionalities or "building blocks"; while Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) introduced the social media taxonomy by splitting it into six distinctive categories (Blogs, Social Networking Sites, Collaboration Projects, Content Communities, Virtual Social Worlds, and Virtual Game Worlds).

However, Carr and Hayes (2015) gave a detailed definition of social media, which gives a much better understanding. According to them, "Social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others."

While explaining this 'rephrased definition,' Carr and Hayes (2015) have identified *five* components, which summarise the whole gamut of social media - 1] Internet-based; 2] Disentrained, persistent channels; 3] Perceived interactivity; 4] User-generated value, and 5] Mass personal communication.

Internet-based: WWW is an application side of the Internet, the social media networks are becoming increasingly standalone, rather than web-based. These social media 'apps' more closely use other Internet tools in order to make its communication process complete in all aspects.

Disentrained, Persistent Channels: With mobile-based social media 'apps' gaining popularity, the individual users' interaction with the social networks is continuous in process, irrespective of that particular user being continuously 'present' online like Video chat. Messages are delivered continuously, and the same is being consumed continuously by others - more importantly, during these interactions, both the users need not necessarily to be in real-time (synchronous mode) online. This facilitates a better presentation of one's ideas and particularly one's 'self'. Communication may be in asynchronous mode, but the platform persists and facilitates the interaction round the clock. That is the second important feature of social media.

Perceived Interactivity: 'A social medium is inherently social in nature' as noted by Carr and Hayes, the social media facilitates parasocial interaction among its users. A user may subscribe to a personality over Twitter or Instagram, and while that particular personality may continuously be sending messages, the individual who is following perceives that s/he receives messages and communicates to him or her. Whether a social media user is posting a message or sharing information or commenting on others posts, the mere presence is an acknowledgement of being part of the communication process.

User-Generated Value: Social media itself is a product of Web 2.0, where every user is capable of interacting with any particular messages through comments, likes and sharing options. These inputs from various users collectively convey added information and value to the original message. More user-generated values give the popularity of that particular message, which either indicates the mass acceptance or acknowledgement or rejection of the original message. Any particular user derives significant interpretations from the original message along with the user-generated contents.

Masspersonal Communication: The nature of interactivity with social media allows a user to communicate with others in a multidirectional way, like Facebook or Twitter or Instagram may be used to communicate with the mass audience while at the same time these platforms can be used to interact on a one-on-one. This multidirectionality of communication flows allows the interaction between 'user to user, user to audience, audience to user, or audience to audience in social media'.

5.2.2 History

It is essential to understand the history of the present technology-mediated social media or social media networks as we know them today. Most students seem to think that the current technology of computers and the Internet are the reason behind social media. However, if we see the history of human beings, the precursor to the current social media networks using computers was laid way back.

For example, *Cursus publicus*, the state-run courier (and transportation) service of the Roman Empire was established by Roman emperor Augustus whose reign started in 27BC. Essentially the courier system or a postal system is nothing but a social message network as it moves messages from one person to another. The telegraph, telephone and radio were the precursors to the Internet. The earliest forms of the Internet, such as CompuServe, were developed in the 1960s. The 1979's UseNet allowed users to communicate through a virtual newsletter.

By the 1980s, home computers were becoming more common and social media was becoming more sophisticated. Internet relay chats, or IRCs, were first used in 1988 and continued to be popular well into the 1990s.

The first recognisable social media site as we know social media today was the "Six Degrees" created in 1997. It enabled users to upload a profile and make friends with other users. In 1999, the first blogging site "Blogger" became popular, creating a social media sensation. This was followed by the hugely popular sites like MySpace, which was the precursor of Facebook, and LinkedIn, which gained prominence in the early 2000s. This was followed by photo-sharing sites like Photobucket and Flickr, which facilitated online photo sharing. Then the video-sharing platform YouTube came in 2005, creating an entirely new way for people to communicate.

Facebook and Twitter became available by 2006 to users throughout the world. Other sites like Tumblr, Spotify, Foursquare and Pinterest came to fill specific niches.

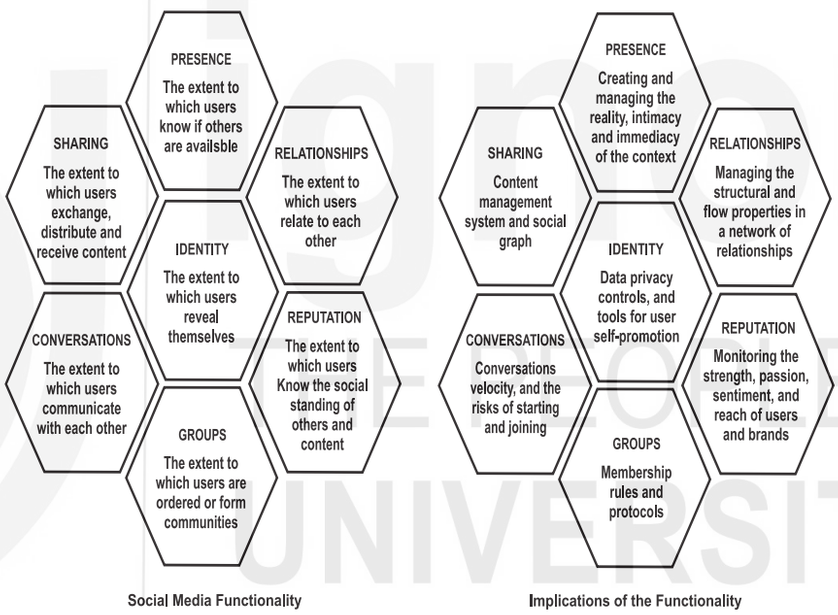
5.2.3 Types

Kietzmann et al., (2011) define seven functional building blocks for social media. These are present in varying quantities in any social media application and can be substituted and enhanced by the integration of applications.

Identity could be the profile of the user, including her display picture and her likes, hobbies etc. on Facebook or her biodata on Twitter, LinkedIn etc. The **relationship** is a visualisation of a user's social network. It could be as simple as whose post does the user "like" or who is she "following" or is "followed." It could also be a virtual representation of real-life relationships. These relationships could be unidirectional or bidirectional.

Reputation establishes the trust level between community members. The trust could be through verification by the platform or through the biodata and content provided.

Groups are where users articulate their affiliation and are also used to manage relationships.



Conversations allow users to interact with each other in a dialogic manner within real-time or in a time-lapsed manner. **Sharing** is how content is spread. A user does not need to be in a social relationship to share content. Sharing is also done cross-platform. **Presence** is about knowing about the other community members.

While LinkedIn is about reputation, Facebook will be about relationships, Twitter about conversations, WhatsApp about sharing, TikTok about identity and Foursquare about presence, all these social media platforms could be used as a combination of the above mentioned seven functional building blocks in varying degrees. To give an example, Facebook could be used for presence in a natural disaster when users mark themselves as "safe."

5.2.4 Mass Media and Social Media

Social media is also a type of media. Media is nothing but plural for medium. When commentators use the word media, they either mean mass media or traditional mass media. In the classic sense, the traditional mass media is a

one-to-many communication where the consumer is passive and isolated. It is message-driven and has limited targeted channels. It has limited reach with the fleeting impression which has an expiry date, i.e. content out of circulation after publication or broadcast. Social media, on the other hand, is one-to-one and many-to-many communication where the user/consumer is active. The user/consumer is both the user/consumer and producer of content and is called a produser/prosumer. It is conversation-driven and has unlimited targeted channels. It has no limits, i.e. can reach all the Internet-connected areas of the world, and social media conversations are lasting and can be discovered using a search engine.

Social media space is a disruption of typical media as unlike traditional media, and there are no cultural gatekeepers like curators, editors etc. disturbing the balance of control. The users now have the tools at their disposal to create their own culture, which impacts the consumer-producer relationship impacting the cultural and economic value of media.

Social media differs from traditional media like print and broadcast in many ways including reach, frequency, interactivity, usability, performance and even quality with the media being dialogic(many-to-many) as opposed to mono-logic(one-to-many) traditional media. Today the boundary between traditional and social media is a little blurred with traditional mass media also using websites and social media accounts to foray into user conversations which have access across the Internet world, and one can search the content using a search tool on their website or a search engine.

Check Your Progress: 1

Note: 1) Use the space below for your Answer.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. Explain the term 'perceived interactivity'?

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2. Give suitable examples of seven building blocks of social media?

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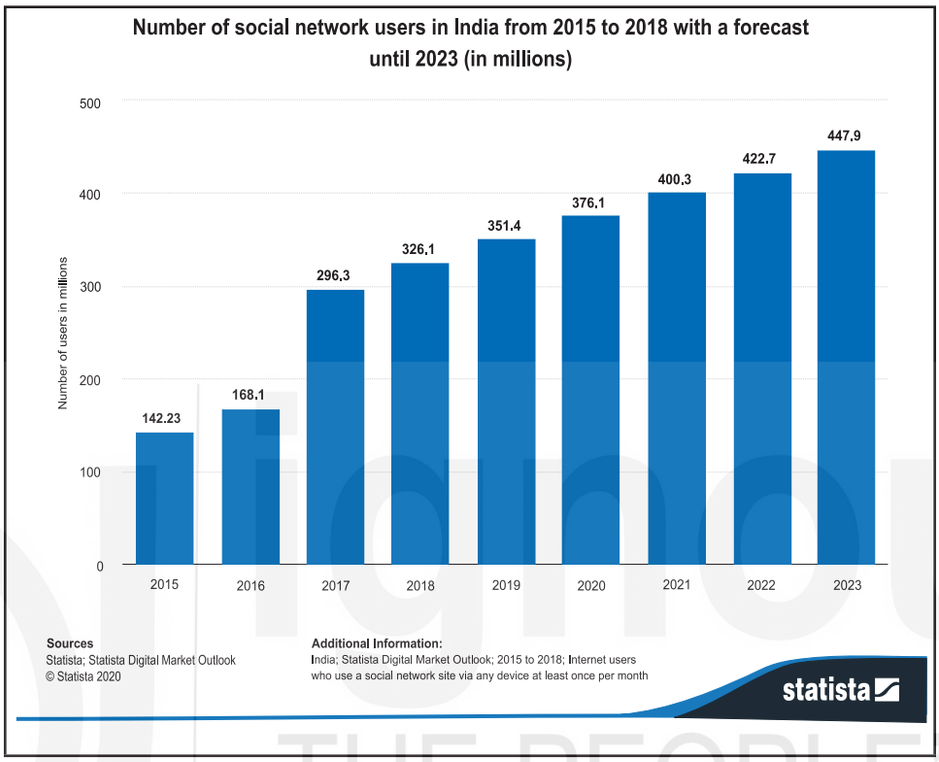
5.3 SOCIAL MEDIA IN INDIA

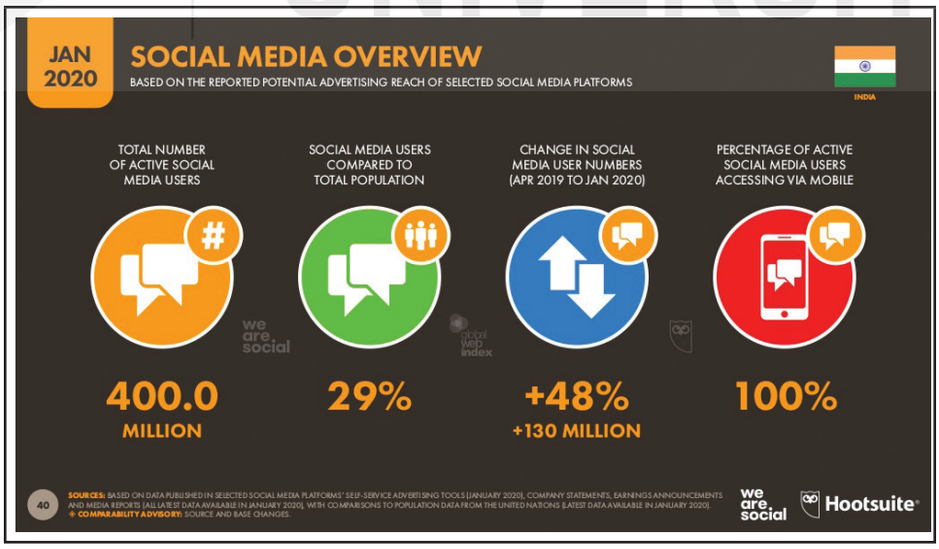
A channel is nothing but a path along which information passes. The various social media channels through which 'users network' are the various social media platforms. Some of the most prominent and most popular social media websites, with over hundreds of million registered users, include Facebook and its associated Facebook Messenger, Instagram and WhatsApp, YouTube, WeChat, QQ, QZone, Weibo, Twitter, Tumblr, Telegram, Baidu Tieba, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Pinterest, Viber, VK, Reddit etc.

India currently has a total population of over 1.36 billion people, of which 604 million are Internet users with about 400 million social media users as of 2020. According to a recent World Bank report year on the status of social

media, "India has more Facebook users than any other country. YouTube's Indian audience has grown 85% in the last year. And WhatsApp has reached 400 million users. The subcontinent is now the largest market for all three networks. Instagram boasts of 69 million Indian users, while LinkedIn has racked up 56 million users. Twitter and Snapchat have relatively small audiences (though Snapchat is growing in popularity)."

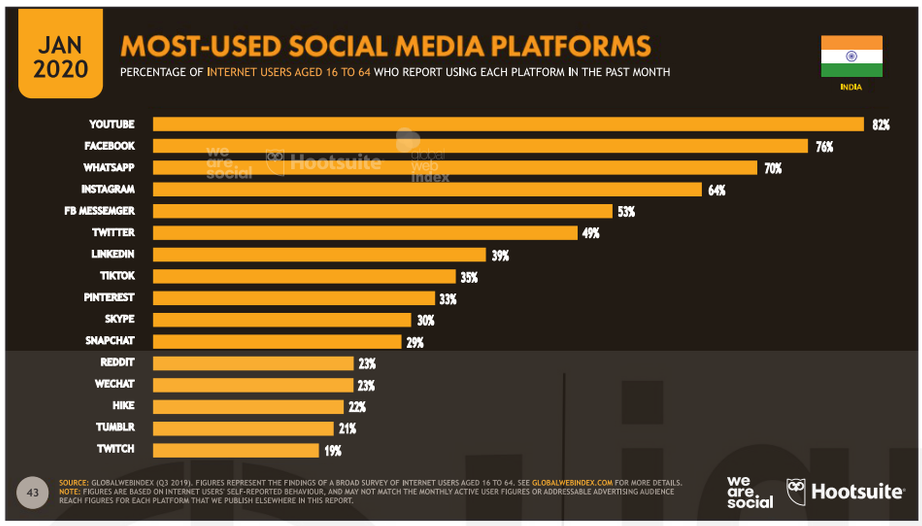


The usage of different channels as a percentage of the total social media users can be seen in the following graph. Youtube leads the pack with 82% of the social media users using this channel followed by Facebook and Instagram. With 49%, Twitter is one of the sixth most popular social media outlets in India, which is quite active in public matters.



The Internet has a reach of 51% in India, while the social media has close to 29% penetration level. Most importantly, all social media users have a mobile data connection. One of the reasons for the popularity of the YouTube

channel could be that it involves creating video content without requiring a user to be literate or know how to write any language, just by using visual cues, youngsters with a smartphone in villages and small towns of India can consume YouTube channels and simultaneously be a producer of content. Video is anyway a more popular format for social media than text which can be seen from the chart below of the most active social media platforms.



5.4 SOCIAL MEDIA ETIQUETTES

The most important thing to remember is that social media networks mimic real-world networks and etiquettes as a code of behaviour within the context of our society. Even if it is a virtual medium one is operating in, the people in the network are real, and they know you, and you know them. Hence the way one operates on a social media network, remains similar as some of the etiquettes remains the same as in real-world networks.

Behave as One would do in the Real World: Do not behave with people on social media in a way one would not behave in real life: Many a time users forget social media works on the concept of a social network of real people, people whom one might encounter in the real world. Just because one operates on the virtual world anonymously, one feels that anonymity allows us the freedom to say or do things which would be frowned upon in the real world. This assumption is wrong, one lives in a real-world with relationships with real people whom one could meet in one's personal or professional life. Hence, the number one etiquette is to behave on social media networks with the same civility and courtesy as one would behave in the real world. Bad Behaviour is generally frowned on. One should not spam and troll or cyberbully as it could lead one into trouble. Abusing and threatening are troll behaviours. If done under one's own identity it can lead to grave consequences, including legal cases.

Context not Understood: The most important thing to understand while on social media is that it is difficult for users to understand the context. For example, in case a user is sarcastic on social media because in real life the user is going through a stressful situation or has undergone a relationship problem, the other users on his her social media network will not know

about it or will not understand this because they cannot connect physically but are connected virtually. What other users see are just words or pictures, and there can be a misinterpretation of the message being conveyed, leading to either loss of a relationship or other consequences which may be difficult to control. It is essential to be clear, concise and direct in communication while on social media networks.

The case study of Justine Sacco, a 30 years old senior director of corporate communications at InterActiveCorp, a US-based company, is significant to understand social media etiquette. During her long flight between New York and Cape Town, she was tweeting sarcastic little jokes about the indignities of travel. As she boarded her flight from London to Cape Town, she tweeted.

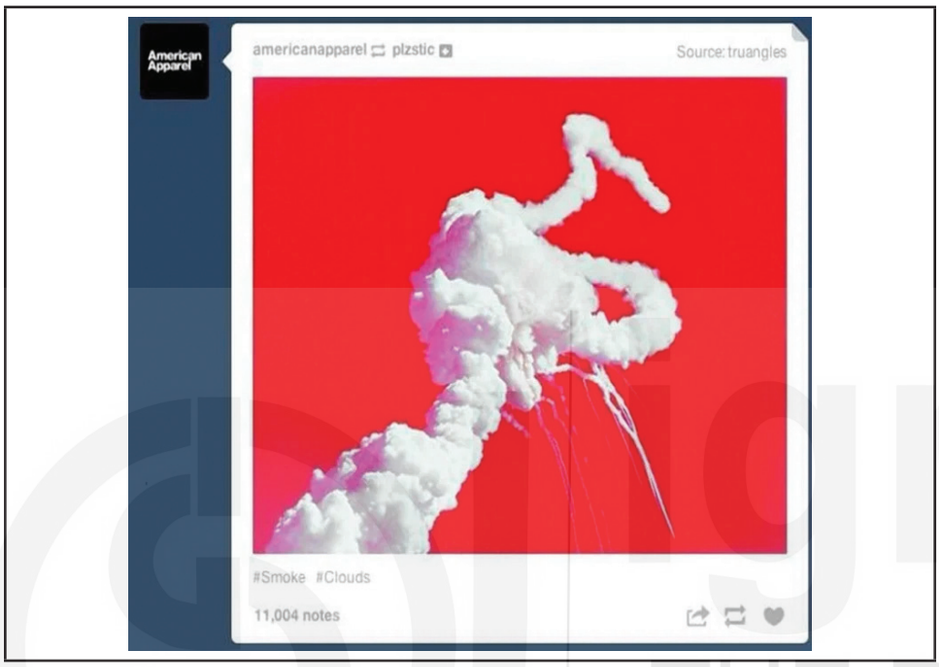
Most viewers of this tweet will not know the context of this tweet, that she was travelling and is tweeting sarcastic jokes. They will also not know whether she is being racist or is raising awareness about AIDS. All the users will see are her words which appear out of context and racist. That is what happened, and she lost her job as well as became a hated person because of this tweet because people thought she was racist and culturally insensitive.

Posting Inappropriate Content: Similarly posting inappropriate content or posting pictures of friends, coworkers or colleagues without taking permission could harm personal or professional relationships. It is essential to understand the privacy settings of each social media platform. Every piece of information about oneself or one's family should not be in the public domain, and hence privacy settings must be set so that personal information should be restricted. One should not take privacy lightly as posting personal information for acquaintances, or the random public can put one at harm's way as well as get people to judge harming relationships.

Copyright Laws: All material on the Internet is subject to copyright even if it explicitly does not say so. Using pictures, text, graphics and videos without appropriate citation or acknowledging sources can lead to relationship trouble or worse legal trouble. When in doubt, better not to share or post.

Excessive use of Hashtags: Hashtag is a method available on social media networks for collating topics or keywords for easy search. For example, searching for #Covid19 will bring up all posts related to "Covid19" as well as user accounts posting on this topic along with related news on the topic. It is bad etiquette to use trending hashtags for one's post to make it part of the trending topic as well as bad practice to use a hashtag for every word of your post.

Inappropriate Comment or Marketing Pitch: Making a comment or a marketing pitch in a difficult situation by an individual or company is looked at as being in bad taste. The image of the 1986 tragic explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger was misused by US clothing company 'American Apparel' on social media Tumblr. The image was tagged 'smoke' and 'cloud' for the 4th July Independence Day festivities in the USA. Social Media Users immediately pointed it out, and it was considered in terrible taste with the company having to apologise.



Text Format: Using ALL CAPS, **Bold** or large text is a sign of shouting and rage, highly inappropriate for social media networks which are based on relationships, sharing and conversations.

5.5 USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

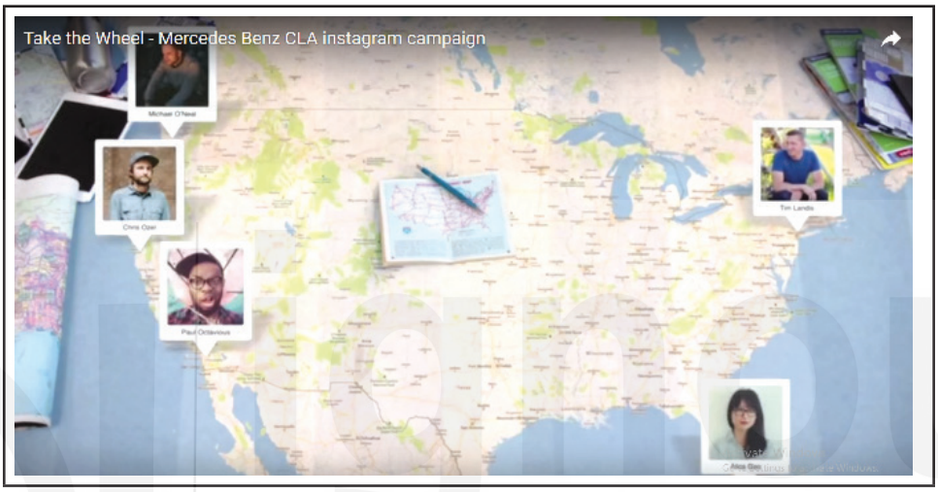
Social media is used by individuals, governments, organisations and businesses today in multiple ways. While individuals may use it as news sources, make new friends and social networks and use it to publicise oneself in terms of skills or other aspects; businesses use it for crowdsourcing ideas and funding, marketing and marketing research, advertising and promotion, publicity and PR, relationship development and organisational development; organisations use it for communications, employee development and outreach; government use it communicating with citizens, promoting government policies and analyse/monitor public opinion. Following are three case studies to understand the scope of social media engagement by businesses and organisations.

5.5.1 Case Study: Advertising

Take the Wheel - Mercedes Benz CLA Instagram campaign. In 2013 Mercedes used the social media platform of Instagram (it was not a subsidiary of Facebook then) for the marketing campaign for its new car. For this, they hired five top Instagram photographers to take the wheel of the new car and hit the road for five days each. Every post they share would

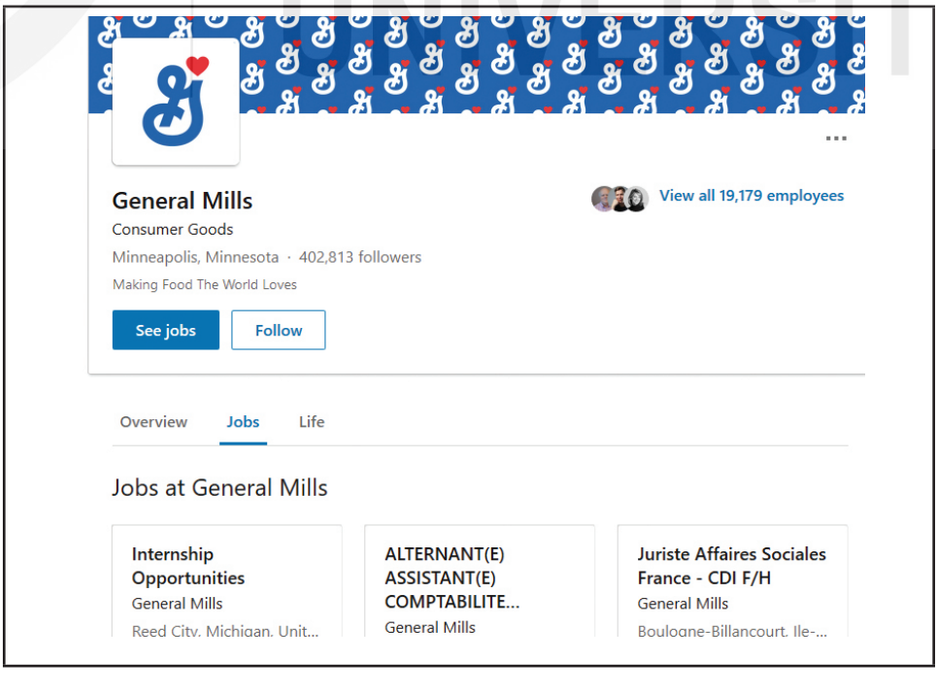
count and whoever gets the most likes on their post during the week keeps the car.

The five journeys and the respective Instagrammers were coordinated through by @mbusa on Instagram. Interested users were given the option to register on the company's website, and the users' Instagram posts became part of the portfolio for the company on which one lucky user also won a car based on his/her posts. The target audience was the younger audience, and by the end of the campaign, Mercedes had received 87million organic Instagram impressions, 2 million Instagram likes and 150 new digital marketing assets.



5.5.2 Case Study: Career

Makers of the American brand of cereals, Cheerios, General Mills, a Minneapolis USA based company, have addressed its recruitment challenge through social media. Not only does this endear the company to the youth on social media, it makes the company stand out with the right talent, but it also conveys the right message to prospective employees.



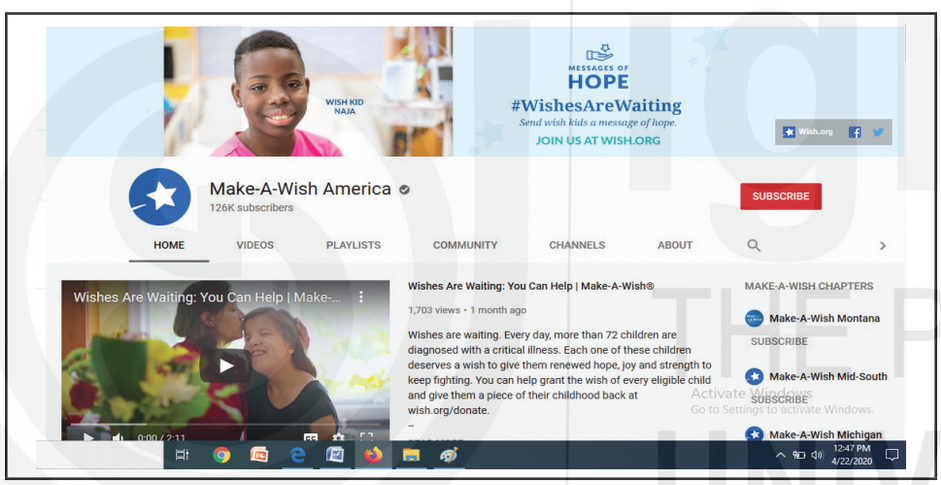
General Mills social media team shares content about what it is to work in the company and what prospective employees can expect on social media channels like Facebook, LinkedIn and Youtube.

For example, the careers page on LinkedIn, as shown above, with over 4lac followers, including over 19 thousand employees, is a way to build relationships and source candidates. There is a discussion on the company and industry topics including employee testimonials, current job opening etc. Information is also available for job seekers to contact GM recruiters.

5.5.3 Case Study: Crowdfunding

A collective effort by a network of people to collect funds for a cause, creative work or a business idea is called crowdfunding. Social media becomes the perfect platform for crowdfunding as it is composed of a virtual network of people of similar ideology or passion. The return on crowdfunding for the people contributing could be monetary or an intangible item like being morally right.

Make –A –Wish Foundation has the goal of fulfilling wishes of ill and vulnerable children of a tour to Disneyland to meet Hollywood celebrities.



The social media page consists of personal stories and experiences, making for compelling content which helps in converting supporters to donors. The social media account leads people to their website shown below to help them donate thus helping fulfil wishes of children.

5.6 SOCIO, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Cultural Production is the process of creating artefacts,with media being one of them and the product represents the society for the time frame when it is produced, for example, a movie, video, photograph or book. Cultural production is challenged when new players emerge to disturb the existing norms and governance structures. For example, digital technology in the form of social media is leading to significant changes in the way culture is produced, consumed and disseminated as it disrupts by removing traditional gatekeepers like editors, curators, critics etc. impacting the producer-consumer relationship. In the traditional media world, cultural production was done by specialists and controlled by institutions but not so in the world of social media.

Social media is a space where content is being produced, remixed, reproduced, reappropriated and recontextualised by users. All these activities happen within a social context. The remixing is done by various authors contributing to the remix, and this could be an improvement on the previous work. The production of "Memes" is a cultural production by non-organised users reflecting the prevailing social, political and economic landscape. With social media, the balance of production has moved from organised to users, public and citizens who have social media tools at their disposal to create their own culture.

This cultural production creates its own creative economy which operates parallel to the traditional market models. This economy operates outside the traditional institutional control. For example, cultural institutions like a music label want to maintain the role of a gatekeeper by deciding artist and music they want to promote, social media users are creating, storing and archiving their own music and hence another cultural space is emerging within social media from production to consumption helping niche expertise as well as new interesting perspectives on existing production models.

Then there is the culture of everyday life that becomes entwined with the virtual life of social media. For example, even traditional societies are increasingly significantly mediating through social media using mobile phones. Friendships and peer-to-peer relations are increasingly conducted online through social media messaging apps.

Economic: The disruptionist social media democratises information and provides a platform to all users who are on social media. This makes all users their own media brand with the traditional barriers and gatekeepers absent on social media platforms. Due to a changed relationship between producers of messages and consumers, smaller brands, entrepreneurs and niche businesses proliferate with not only an alternate channel for marketing but also a channel to sell their products and services. Location, which used to be the most crucial parameter for a business, is no longer as important.

Social media platforms are the way information spreads. Through content creation by users even with no advertising, a good product or service or creation can be marketed by the new modes of content creation in the social media where users can produce, remix, reproduce, reappropriate and recontextualise good creative content produced by a small brand, making it viral, thereby changing the way the product/service is advertised. This has disrupted traditional advertising models, and social media platforms are today the most prominent advertising companies. For example, Facebook and Google control almost 60% of all online media spending (source: eMarketer). This is creating a new ecosystem which spans industry sectors, media formats and channels.

Businesses are using social media to generate insights on product/service offerings, get feedback of the quality of product/services, stimulate demand by creative content and competitions and create targeted product offerings now that social media platforms can micro-target potential customers based on location, demographics and/or other factors. The flip side of dependence

on social media for sales by businesses is that while on are hand when products attract many shares, it can reinforce sales however, when the reverse is the cost, customers begin to distrust the product and the company, a term called "social proof" coined by psychologist Robert Cialdini (Users go on e-commerce sites and look for "social proofs," a testimony from a celebrity, a rating system is given by users of the product etc.).

Various studies have shown that implementing social networks in the workplace helps in knowledge sharing as well as project management activities by removing boundaries, eliminating barriers in which departments work and helps to raise interaction levels while also creating more skilled and knowledgeable workers.

Social: The social impact of social media is by far the biggest as social media works through the formation of social networks by users in a virtual world. Its most significant impact is the formation of networks which span space and time and leads to the free-flowing of cultures and formation of new cultures which impacts the world. It has impacted how people consume information, how the consumption of media has gone from public to private and personal.

However, on the flip side, social media works on algorithms. The information a user gets through social media is determined by the user preferences, which is self-declared by the user and detected by the algorithm. Hence if one is an environmentalist, then one would get news and user-generated content on environmental activism. This selective exposure of information is harmful to the user as the user is not able to get alternate perspectives, for example, the tradeoff between development and environment. In politics, this can lead to things like political polarisation, of being associated with a political party or ideology which is detrimental to democracy. This is also what is called the "echo chamber" effect. Meanwhile, research has also shown evidence that social media use leads to a persuasion of political beliefs, i.e. individuals who use social media were more likely to have their political beliefs persuaded than those who did not.

Social media, like any media, has the power to increase the scope of stereotypes not only among children but people all ages. One study with Facebook users found its use encouraged people to represent themselves in traditional gender constructs maintaining stereotypes.

Various studies done on social media users have found that social media users are more stressed and anxious. Primack, Shensa et al. (2017) found a linear association between the number of social media platforms used with anxiety and depression, i.e. the more platforms a user used, the more the anxiety and depression. Various reasons ascribed for this, including a distorted view of people's lives, cyber-bullying and feeling the time spent on social media a waste. In fact, studies on social media usage found social media affecting sleep, self-esteem, loneliness and well-being but it is also true that social media affects people differently, depending on personality traits or any pre-existing conditions.

Check Your Progress: 2

Note: 1) Use the space below for your Answer.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. Describe some social media etiquettes users must follow while operating on social media.

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2. How do algorithms of social media apps or websites influence an individual user?

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5.7 LET US SUM UP

Through this Unit, we have discussed Web 2.0 and its characteristics like social, collaborative, interactive and responsive web, and the tack that social part of the web meant users were just not only consuming information from a static web, but they were also creating it. While tracing the historical dimension of social media evolution, we have observed that the present technology-mediated social media or social media networks as we know them today have evolved from the courier service started much earlier followed by inventions like the telegraph, the telephone and the radio. More importantly, we elaborated on seven functional building blocks, i.e. conversation, sharing, presence, relationship, reputation, groups and identity. These are present in varying quantities in any social media application and can be substituted and enhanced by the integration of applications. We also compared social media with the mainstream media. The traditional mass media is a one-to-many communication where the consumer is passive and isolated. Social media, on the other hand, is one-to-one and many-to-many communication where the consumer is active.

Also, in this Unit, we discussed various social media etiquettes which are a code of behaviour within the context of social media platforms. Social media platforms offer a virtual social network; hence bad behaviour is generally frowned upon like in real friend networks. One should not spam and troll or cyberbully as it could lead one into trouble. In the later part, we discussed social media usage by individuals, governments, organisations and businesses in multiple fronts. Individuals may use it as news sources, to make new friends and social networks or use it to publicise oneself in terms of skills or other aspects.

5.8 KEYWORDS

A prosumer is a person who consumes and produces a product.

Blog (a truncation of "**weblog**") is categorised as social media. It is a discussion or informational website published on the World Wide Web consisting of discrete, often informal diary-style text entries (posts).

Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet.

Crowdsourcing is a sourcing model in which individuals or organisations obtain goods and services, including ideas and finances, from a large, relatively open and often rapidly evolving group of Internet users.

Forum, or Internet forum or **message board**, is an online discussion site where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages.

The echo chamber is a metaphorical description of a situation in which beliefs are amplified or reinforced by communication and repetition inside a closed system.

The social network is a social structure made up of a set of social actors (such as individuals or organisations), sets of dyadic-ties, and other social interactions between actors.

User-generated content (**UGC**), alternatively known as **user-created content** (**UCC**), is any form of content, such as images, videos, text, and audio, that has been posted by users on online platforms such as social media.

Web 1.0 refers to the first stage in the World Wide Web, which was entirely made up of web pages connected by hyperlinks. Generally believed to refer to the web when it was a set of static websites that were not yet providing interactive content.

Web 2.0 refers to websites that emphasise user-generated content, ease of use, participatory culture and interoperability for end users.

5.9 FURTHER READINGS

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5.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

1. A user may subscribe to a personality over Twitter or Instagram. That particular personality may continuously be sending messages. The individual who is following may perceive that s/he receives messages and communicates to him or her. Whether a social media user is posting a message or sharing information or commenting on others posts, the mere presence is an acknowledgement of being part of the communication process.

2. Kietzmann et al., (2011) defines seven functional building blocks for social media. These are present in varying quantities in any social media application and can be substituted and enhanced by the integration of applications. While LinkedIn is about reputation, Facebook is about relationships, Twitter is about conversations, WhatsApp is about sharing, TikTok is about identity and Foursquare is about presence, all these social media platforms could be used as a combination of the above mentioned seven functional building blocks in varying degrees. To give an example, Facebook could be used for marking presence in a natural disaster when users mark themselves as "safe."

Check Your Progress: 2

1. The most important thing to remember is that social media networks mimic real-world networks and etiquettes act as a code of behaviour within the context of our society. Even if it is a virtual medium one is operating in, the people in the network are real, and they know you, and you know them. Hence the way one operates on a social media network, some of the etiquettes remains the same as in real-world networks - ***1]*** *Behave as one would do in the real world; 2] Posting of appropriate Content; 3] Follow copyright law; 4] Do not use excessive hashtags, and 5] Do not post inappropriate comments.*

2. The information a user gets through social media is determined by the user preferences, which is self-declared by the user and detected by the algorithm. Hence, if one is an environmentalist, then one would get news and user-generated content on environmental activism. This selective exposure of information is harmful to the user as the user is not able to get alternate perspectives, for example, the tradeoff between development and environment. In politics, this can lead to things like political polarisation, of being associated with a political party or ideology which is detrimental to democracy. This is also what is called the "echo chamber" effect.