

## Sociology of Social Media: Analysis of Theoretical Perspective

*Praveen Kumar Singh\**

### ABSTRACT

*The force of privatization and globalization has allowed to dramatic changes in the country's media. This time of Indian media is critical. It's overwhelming in the quick and dramatic changes over the last few years, and frustrating in the current deadlock. Today's vastly changed media scenario calls for a recasting of the role of media in promoting pro-social change. The technologies through which this communication takes place include a variety of outlets. Broadcast media transmit information electronically, via such media as Film, Radio, Recorded Music, or Television. Digital Media comprises both Internet and mobile mass communication. Internet media comprise such services as email, Social Media Sites, Websites, and Internet-based Radio and Television. In this way, they can utilize the easy accessibility and outreach capabilities the Internet affords, as thereby easily broadcast information throughout many different regions of the world simultaneously and cost-efficiently. Social media has gained importance in the globalised and liberalized era. The increasing use of social networking sites among students has caused concern as it has both positive and negative implications on social behavior, academic performance and career development. Against this view point, present paper highlights the theoretical perspective of social media uses and its implications in sociological framework of analysis.*

### Introduction

Social networking phenomenon has emerged over the last years. Social networking sites have grown from a niche to a mass online activity, in which millions of internet users are engaged, both in their leisure time, and at work. Social networking websites like Orkut, Facebook, Myspace and Youtube are becoming more and more popular and has become part of daily life for an increasing number of people. Young people are attracted to social networking sites. No doubt these social networking sites provides employment, marketing, personal growth, sharing of information but the most prevalent danger through often involves online predators or individuals. These social networking sites have great impact on youth. One can easily see the entry

---

\* Post Doctoral Fellow (ICSSR), Dept. of Sociology, Lucknow University, Lucknow

gate of these social networking sites but it is unable to find exit for these social networking sites. One side these sites provide to communicate with our dear ones websites can be useful for education based on sound pedagogical principles and proper supervision by the teachers on the other side it creates platform for many cyber crimes, and also distracts students from their studies. Several research studies have revealed that social media technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, wikis, Flickr, and YouTube have garnered more than a billion users across the world and have redefined the modern business. Modern universities and Colleges are making consistent efforts to utilize the support of social media in reaching the existing customers, attracting the new customers and building credibility and reputation of their brand image. Research studies further revealed that these educational institutional brands need to measure their visibility in the most popular social media relative to that of competitors. Social media is influencing every walk of life including social relations, society, politics, economic and business.

The technological deterministic view presents the internet as an innovative force that has profound influence on children and youth; technology generates new patterns of expression, communication, and motivation. In Western societies, young people's cultural consumption includes a large number of media arte facts such as television sets, VCRs, landline and cell phones, video games, compact disc players, MP3 players, and computers. Over time, households tend to acquire more than one media item. Adolescents appropriate the media, and more and more media tools move from the public spaces of the household to private places, from the living room to the bedrooms, accumulating in the teenager's room. Youth are described as having created a bedroom culture that facilitates their media consumption without parental supervision or limitation. Acting in a media-rich environment and a bedroom culture, the Net-generation or digital natives express different values, attitudes, and behaviors than previous generations. These digital natives are described as optimistic, team-oriented achievers who are talented with technology. Immersion in this technology-rich culture influences the skills and interests of teens in important ways. Technology is an inherent part of society; it is created by social actors.

According to a social construction of technology approach, it is important to note that social groups differ in the extent of their access to technology, their skills, and the meanings they associate with technology. The same technology can have different meanings for different social groups of users. Technologies can and do have a social impact, but they are simultaneously social products that embody power relationships and social goals and structures. Thus technological changes are a process and do not have a single direction. Digital spaces such as social networking sites, weblogs (blogs), and

clip and photo sharing are owned by commercial companies that target youth and try to shape their consumption patterns. The internet as a culture means to regard it as a social space in its own right, exploring the forms of consumption and content production, and the patterns of online communication and social interaction, expression, and identity formation that are produced within this digital social space, as well as how they are sustained by the resources available within the online setting. In this sense, online activity is conceived as different and even separate from one's offline activity, having a life of its own, usually separated from real life as a parallel reality of the participating individuals. When studied independently, the virtual space is a coherent social space that exists entirely within a computer space, and in which new rules and ways of being can emerge. Thus, youth operating within an online community may be geographically dispersed, experiencing different hours of the day in different locales, but they share an identical interest, virtual space and rules, shared activities, and a common sense of belonging. Being online not only detaches individuals from the constraints imposed by location, but also frees them from the constraints associated with their offline personalities and social roles.

Social media platforms facilitate various ad hoc and formal, small as well as large-scale online communities, where User-Generated-Content (UGC) flourishes. Thus, youth today are actively involved in web production and tend to appropriate portions of it and to convert them into youth zones. Teens also produce unique, stand-alone content for the web, such as blogs, that allow for a more interactive dialog. Blogs represent a kind of diary that is shared with a larger audience that refers to the details of their everyday life (daily concerns, thoughts, and emotions), consumer talk, and television and movie critiques. As such, blogs are a popular way to build identity and socialize in an information-based society. Social networking sites have additional features; they allow users to present information about themselves (such as age, gender, location, education, and interests); encourage users to link to known and likeminded others whose profiles exist in the site or to invite known and likeminded individuals to join the site; and enable users to establish and maintain contact with other users, to post content, create personal blogs, and participate in online groups. Besides the communication element, social network sites are sites for identity formation and experimentation. Most sites encourage users to construct accurate representations of them, but it is difficult to know to what extent individuals do so. Youth adoption of the internet presents opportunities for participation in the information society. The most frequent use of the internet is for conducting social contact with family, friends, and acquaintances. For some adolescents, belonging to a peer group and participating in social activities are dependent on access. The social participation of adolescents is shaped

both by their developmental need for social association and the technological features of the internet.

### **Sociology of Social Media**

Manuel Castells (1996) used the concept of 'Network society' first of all in sociology in the late 20th century. He is of the view that a new social structure which is based on microelectronics and is ensured by information and communication technology is called as Network Society. While Industrial Society was dependent on modes of transport and communication, the Network Society is dependent on modes of digital Communication. Castells argues that network society has grown at a much progressive rate than the previous societies of the industrial age. Castells mentions that it is not the force of technology that brings changes in society, but rather the emerging changes in social needs that interact and lead to the development of technology.

The Network Society is influenced by two major phenomenon-Technology and Globalization. Internet and mobile phones are important nodes of networking in network society. They have made social networking easily accessible to one and all. Even though the internet was first discovered in 1969 but gained mass popularity only in the last decade, because of various reasons such as regulatory changes i.e. fast bandwidth in telecommunications, growth of personal computers and user-friendly programs which make easy to upload and access a large volume of content online. As a result, the rapid growth of social demand for the networking has forced experts to develop technology at a very fast rate. The number of Internet users grew from 40 million in 1995 to about 2.7 billion in 2013. In 2013 rates of penetration have reached 39 percent of the world population.

A new type of horizontal and vertical communication network has developed with Internet Diary (the Blog), Video diary (the Vlog), and own radio broadcast(the Podcast) as its essential components. These contents are easily accessible to anyone at anytime. Not only this, growth of the Network Society affects all aspect of society including media. Previous dependence on static electronic devices result in technology being divided between computers, telecommunications, and the broadcast media. In the system, known as 'Old Media' the flow of information went from a minority of creators to a majority of passive consumers. But now due to low cost, technology is widely available, easy to use and allows for mobility. These result in technology being diffused throughout all realms of human activity and media being produced at anytime, anywhere, and by anyone. Another key change is the ability of individual nodes to easily spread throughout the network. The contemporary society is based on Social networks, Technical networks

and Media networks. Social Media gives impetus to online interactions while technology provides the technical expertise needed for maintenance of social networking. These networks and the desire of humans to interact globally and virtually has given rise to social networking sites. It becomes important to understand their concept, origin and functioning of social networking sites to look at their impact on contemporary society.

The idea of “Social Networking” has existed for several decades as a way for people to communicate in society and build relationships with each other. The Web-based services which allow individuals to construct a semi-public or public profile in a bounded system is termed as social networking site. As quoted by Boyd and Ellison (2007), they are “Web based services that allow individuals to construct a public or Semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”. Social Networking Sites are popular because they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. This results in connection between individuals who are far off and unknown. During the decade of 1990, when new online communication technologies were introduced to the public in forms such as email and chat rooms, many authors such as Dr. Norman Nie (2001) of Stanford University, predicted that these forms of technology would adversely affect adolescents social life and reduce their sense of association. However, communication has been facilitated by social networking sites because members of these sites form groups and communities to share their opinions among themselves through opinion polls, discussion forums etc.

Singlepress.com was the first social networking site launched in 1997, which not only allowed users to create profiles and list their friends but also surf the friends. A new phase of social networking sites began when Ryze.com was created in 2001 to help people to beverage their business and commercial networks. Friendster came in 2002 as a social complement to Ryze. It could not work for long because it encountered technical and social difficulties which frustrated its users. From 2003 onwards many new social networking sites came up. Facebook was launched in 2005 which includes school students, professionals inside corporate networks and now eventually everyone as its users. Unlike other social networking sites, Facebook provide option to users to make their profile public or private. As present there is no reliable data on number of people using social networking sites, although research indicates that their popularity is growing worldwide. Social networking sites have given rise to Virtual Communities. These communities are quite distinct from the old. A diverse and widespread virtual society in cyberspace has created the tradition of the virtual communities. Taylor and Licklider (1968) witness the

potential of electronic community networks . They opined that virtual community has geographically distant actors grouped in micro clusters and are not based on common location but on common interest. Rheingold (1993) gave the concept of virtual community as, “Virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace”. The important features of a virtual community are shared resources, common values, and reciprocal behaviour. Moreover, technology has made virtual communities possible and has brought enormous intellectual, social, and commercial changes. In addition it provides political leverage to ordinary citizens at a relatively low cost. Virtual Communities are not limited by the space-time constraints. People engage with others irrespective of geographic distance and time as compared to traditional communities which did not guarantee communication at such a fast pace. The traditional community was often exclusive, inflexible, isolated, unchanging, and homogeneous while a modern community is one that is primarily devoted to democratic problem solving needs. According to this conception, these communities are groups of people who achieve particular goals. Licklider and Taylor wrote in 1968 an essay that was about computing future. They say that life would be happier for the digital natives because the people with whom one interacts will be selected more by commonality of interests than by proximity. It will make communication more effective and productive as well as enjoyable. Moreover, cyberspace provides a new form of public space. People tend to forget their actions and activities which has multiple trajectories i.e. effect in more than one sphere of life and sometimes contradictory ones. As philosopher Alfred Schutz (1967) mentions that people live in “multiple realities”. Netizens have developed two identities, one in real life and another in virtual world. Even though the internet brings people together, it also provides the means to remain anonymous in communication. Carey (1993) said that “everything that rises must diverge”. Critics lament it as a technology which has reduced face-to face interaction as it requires undivided attention and is addictive. Nevertheless, the virtual mediums of communication that rely on technology have brought a revolution in the contemporary society. The internet is the most significant ‘Computer Mediated Technology’ (CMC). However; many aspects of life have been transformed with the advent of new type of communication. It is evident that the networking sites have brought many changes in the society both at the micro as well as macro levels. Therefore, it becomes crucial to analyze the impact of social networking sites on society.

Social networking sites have integrated into the daily routine of millions of Indian users. The post independence generation holds India’s present and future in its hands. The decisions made and the patterns set by this generation

will affect the future. The challenge before Indian society is to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. In words of Edward Shils (1981) tradition is anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present'. The Hindu culture, prescribe roles which are inherited, clear and attainable. Role performance, which depends on virtue or vice lead to the wheel of life called Nirvana. Social Mobility relates to progress on the wheel. A modern way of life involves scientific way of doing things via rational principles. It involves the rejection of inherited role and performing new ones. It is democratic, secular, and aristocratic. Modern science and technology, modern democratic government and modern culture have made their impact on Indian society. An entire social system is changing and Indian society which was a closed one; in which young people had no opportunity to meet others or to take decisions, has now changed to an open society. In this system, social interaction outside the family is both desirable and necessary. Indians are becoming more social and interactive virtually.

Although not everybody has access to the Internet and computers in Indian society, the fact that, it is spreading very fast cannot be undermined. The technological advancement has given rise to network structure of society. Social networking sites are an important element of network society. It has changed the way people think about interactions. Identity formation has become very important in globalised era because people have become social media savvy. Netizens engage in variety of activities on social networking sites. Just a few decades ago it was tough to connect with people except through face-to-face interaction. The rise of social networking sites connect people in new ways and enable them to empathize with each other online. Moreover, the growth of social networking sites in Indian society show a significant change in the social and personal behaviour of adolescents. Even though these sites help adolescents to publicize their personal information, it also encourages them to overstate various aspects of their lives. However, these positive aspects are not without associated risks such as identity theft and cyber blackmailing. Other adverse effects on adolescents are mood swings, attention deficits at school and addiction. Moreover, these sites serve as a platform for the adolescents to engage in some deviant acts. People can hide their real identities on social networking sites and can play with emotions and feelings. They display their best on these social networking sites creating a false sense of perfection. Social networking sites have also given rise to cyber crime. The crime has become easy, anonymous and effective on social networking sites. Emergence of cyber crime in network society has become a concern for researchers and thinkers all over the world. It is essential to analyze various studies and works undertaken in this area. It is also necessary to find out what these studies lack as cyber crime is a dynamic issue and needs constant observation. The following chapter critically reviews various

published works on cyber crime, social networking sites and effect on adolescents as a result of excessive use of these sites.

In the discipline of sociology the concept of 'social network' refers to a social structure made up of individuals who are connected to each other and have a complex set of relationships or ties between themselves. In the study of society the analysis of social network is vital. Today social network analysis has become one of the major paradigms in contemporary sociology. Emile Durkheim, Ferdinand Tonnies, George Simmel, Jacob L. Mareno, Bronislaw Malinowski, Alfred Radcliffe – Brown, Claude Levi-Straus, John A. Bareen and many other sociologists have given prime place to social network in their respective studies (Peluchet and Karl., 2008). George Simmel, a German sociologist stated at the importance of studying social network by emphasizing the dynamics of triads and web of group affiliations. It is also important to note that another eminent sociologist Jacob Mareno had developed the first socio-grams in the 1930s to study interpersonal relationships. The major theme of social network is to understand social interaction is that social phenomena should be primarily conceived and investigated through the proportion of relation between and within units (Pettenati and Cigognini, 2007). Hence, the inner base for the creation of SNS is nothing but the concept of social network.

Social Networking Sites can be broadly defined as internet-based social spaces designed to facilitate communication, collaboration, and content sharing across networks of contacts (Mahajan, 2009). Social Networking Sites allow users to manage, build and represent their social networks online. People use Social Networking Sites for countless activities. Among the most common uses are, connecting with existing networks, making and developing friendships/contacts, creating an online presence for their users, viewing content/finding information, creating and customizing profiles and so on (Asagi and Kazi, 2013). Boyd and Ellison define Social Networking Sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (i) construct a public or a semi public profile within a bounded system, (ii) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (iii) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Subrahmanyam, 2007). Wikipedia defines Social Network Sites as an online platform that focuses on building and reflecting social networks or social relations among people who share interests and activities. Social Networking Sites, E-mail, instant messaging, view-and photo sharing sites and comment posting are all tools that help people to communicate and socialize with each other (Valadez and Duran, 2007). A social network is a collection of individuals linked together by a set of relations. Online social networking sites 'virtually' link individuals, who may or may not 'know' each other. They enable rapid



exchange of knowledge, high levels of dialogue and collaborative communication through text, audio and video. Individual actors have ties with other individual actors. In this sense, these individual actors interact / share their interests, ideas/information with others (Valkenburg, and Schouten, 2006). Currently the usage of SNS is continuously growing prominence in India. Will Hodgman says that “Social networking continued to grow strongly in India this past year, with several of the top global brands carving out a more prominent position” (Waldstrom and Madsen, 2007) and he also says that “The social networking phenomenon continues to gain steam worldwide, and India represents one of the fastest growing markets at this moment”. “While there is certainly room for several players in this social networking space in India, the sites that have the right blend of having both a strong brand and cultural relevance will be best positioned for future growth” (Weatherall and Ramsay, 2006). Today India ranks as the third largest market for the usage of social networking worldwide, after the U.S., China. There are certain modifications were being made to increase the popularity of SNS in India particularly by providing the service in few regional languages (Ogburn and Nimkoff, 1976).

The Internet is fast becoming a natural, background part of everyday life. In 2002, more than 600 million people worldwide had access to it (Manasian, 2003). Children now grow up with the Internet; they and future generations will take it for granted just as they now do television and the telephone (Turow & Kavanaugh 2003). The main reason people use the Internet is to communicate with other people over e-mail – and the principal reason why people send e-mail messages to others is to maintain interpersonal relationships (Hampton & Wellman, 2001, Howard *et al.* 2001, McKenna & Bargh, 2000, Stafford *et al.*, 1999). The Internet is likely to have a significant impact on social life; but there remains substantial disagreement as to the nature and value of this impact. Several scholars have contended that Internet communication is an impoverished and sterile form of social exchange compared to traditional face-to-face interactions, and will therefore produce negative outcomes (loneliness and depression) for its users as well as weaken neighbourhood and community ties. Media reporting of the effects of Internet use over the years has consistently emphasized this negative view (McKenna & Bargh, 2000) to the point that, as a result, a substantial minority of (mainly older) adults refuse to use the Internet at all (Hafner, 2003). Others believe that the Internet affords a new and different avenue of social interaction that enables groups and relationships to form that otherwise would not be able to, thereby increasing and enhancing social connectivity. In this review, we examine the evidence bearing on these questions, both from contemporary research as well as the historical record. The relative anonymity of the Internet can also contribute to close relationship formation through reducing the risks

inherent in self-disclosure. Because self-disclosure contributes to a sense of intimacy, making self-disclosure easier should facilitate relationship formation. In this regard Internet communication resembles the “strangers on a train” phenomenon described by Rubin (1975; also Derlega & Chaikin, 1977). Overall, then, the evidence suggests that rather than being an isolating, personally and socially maladaptive activity, communicating with others over the Internet not only helps to maintain close ties with one’s family and friends, but also facilitates for people who are not passively affected by technology, but actively shape its use and influence (Fischer, 1992, Hughes & Hans, 2001).

At the top of the cultural construct that led to the creation of Internet is the techno-meritocratic culture of scientific and technological excellence, emerging essentially from big science and the academic world. This techno-meritocracy was enlisted on a mission of world domination by the power of knowledge, but kept its autonomy, and relied on a community of peers as the source of its self-defined legitimacy. The hacker culture specified meritocracy by strengthening the inner boundaries of the community of the technologically initiated, and making it independent of the powers that be. The appropriation of networking capacity by social networks of all sorts led to the formation of on-line communes that reinvented society and, in the process, dramatically expanded computer networking, in its reach and in its uses. They assumed the technological values of the meritocracy, and they espoused the hackers’ belief in the value of freedom, horizontal communication, and interactive networking, but they used it for their social life, rather than practicing technology for the sake of technology. Finally, the Internet entrepreneurs discovered a new planet, populated by extraordinary technological innovation, new forms of social life, and self-determined individuals, whose technological capacity gave them substantial bargaining power *vis-a-vis* dominant social rules and institutions. The culture of the Internet is a culture made up of a technocratic belief in the progress of humans through technology, enacted by communities of hackers thriving on free and open technological creativity, embedded in virtual networks aimed at reinventing society, and materialized by money-driven entrepreneurs into the workings of the new economy (Castells, 2001).

The emergence of the Internet as a new communication medium has been associated with conflicting claims about the rise of new patterns of social interaction. On the one hand, the formation of virtual communities, primarily based on on-line communication, was interpreted as the culmination of an historical process of separation between locality and sociability in the formation of community: new, selective patterns of social relations substitute for territorially bound forms of human interaction. On the other hand, critics of the Internet, and media reports, sometimes relying on studies by academic

researchers, argue that the spread of the Internet is leading to social isolation, to a breakdown of social communication and family life, as faceless individuals practice random sociability, while abandoning face-to-face interaction in real settings. Moreover, a great deal of attention has been focused on social exchanges based on fake identities and role-playing. Thus, the Internet has been accused of gradually enticing people to live their own fantasies on-line, escaping the real world, in a culture increasingly dominated by virtual reality (Castells, 2001).

The Internet seems also to play a positive role in maintaining strong ties at a distance. It has often been observed that family relationships, stressed by growing disparity of family forms, individualism, and, sometimes, geographical mobility, are being helped by the use of e-mail. Not only does e-mail provide an easy tool to “just be there” at a distance, but it makes it easier to mark a presence without engaging in a deeper interaction for which the emotional energy is not available every day. But the most important role of the Internet in structuring social relationships is its contribution to the new pattern of sociability based on individualism. Indeed, as Wellman writes, “complex social networks have always existed but recent technological developments in communications have afforded their emergence as a dominant form of social organization” (Castells, 2001). Increasingly, people are organized not just in social networks, but in computer communicated social networks. So, it is not the Internet that creates a pattern of networked individualism, but the development of the Internet provides an appropriate material support for the diffusion of networked individualism as the dominant form of sociability. New technological developments seem to enhance the chances for networked individualism to become the dominant form of sociability. The growing stream of studies on the uses of mobile phones seems to indicate that cell-telephony fits a social pattern organized around “communities of choice,” and individualized interaction, based on the selection of time, place, and partners of the interaction (Kopomaa, 2000; Nafus and Tracey, 2000). The projected development of the wireless Internet increases the chances of personalized networking to a wide range of social situations, thus enhancing the capacity of individuals to rebuild structures of sociability from the bottom up.

The Internet has unique, even transformational qualities as a communication channel, including relative anonymity and the ability to easily link with others who have similar interests, values, and beliefs. Research has found that the relative anonymity aspect encourages self-expression, and the relative absence of physical and nonverbal interaction cues (e.g., attractiveness) facilitates the formation of relationships on other, deeper bases such as shared values and beliefs. At the same time, however, these “limited

bandwidth" features of Internet communication also tend to leave a lot unsaid and unspecified, and open to inference and interpretation. Not surprisingly, then, one's own desires and goals regarding the people with whom one interacts have been found to make a dramatic difference in the assumptions and attributions one makes within that informational void.

### **Usage of Social Media in Globalised Era**

Globalization is defined by many in many ways Giddens defines it in terms of consequences of modernity (Giddens, 1990). David Held summarizes globalization debate in three major schools Hyperglobalizers, skeptics and Transformationalists (held *et al.* 1999). However Roland Robertson defines in terms of simultaneity and interpenetration of global local (universal-particular), Robertson resisted macro-sociological perspective about globalization and explains in terms of Glocalization (Robertson, 1995). From a cultural perspective Nederveen Pieterse, (2009) summarizes three theories about cultural globalization, first is cultural Differentialism, second is Cultural Convergence and third is Hybridization. However all these perspectives are important for globalization our intention is to understand the global-local interplay and the process of cultural Globalization in the context of Facebook. Cultural globalization is defined by Ritzer (2010) as 'cultural influences that exists at global level between and among various nations'. Facebook is a 'new global media' and a part of cultural globalization. Whereas media is referred to technical medium which uses for communication purpose while communication refers to 'a distinctive kind of social activity which involves the production, transmission and reception of symbolic forms, and which involves the implementation of resources of various kinds' (Thompson 1995-18). He emphasizes upon three essential elements of Media- Fixation, Reproduction and Time-Space Distanciation. Communication is important for culture, as Benedict Anderson said 'Communication is the cement of identity. It is through communication that cultures define themselves.' In modern societies, much of this sense of shared identity is communicated through media technologies (Wheeler, 2000). The culture refers to the way of life, historically transmitted patterns of meanings- norms, values, belief, knowledge, custom, and ideologies. Media is different according to the technology involved there are two types of media Mass media and new media. New media is different from mass because it is interactive (McQuail, 2010). Some examples of new media are mobile phones, internet, and video games. SNS (social networking service) is one of the growing use of internet, Boyd and Ellison (2011) defined SNS's as web services which facilitate users maintaining a 'public or semi-public profile within a bounded system' and through which can 'articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection (Murthy 2012). Dhiraj Murthy said SNS has five essential

differences from old media- it is free to use, public (or perhaps semi-public), multicast, interactive and networked.

Globalization and the widespread application of Internet are associated with the radical changes, which have taken place recently. The widespread use of IT has accelerated the generation and transmission of information, making communication more efficient than ever before, Information technology is revolutionizing the way we communicate, work and play. Computers and the Internet are paving the way for a sweeping reorganization of business, from online procurement of inputs to greater decentralization and outsourcing. By increasing access to information, IT has made the working of markets more efficient. Globalization has further accelerated competition and innovation. It also speeds up the diffusion of new technology through trade and investment (Mamkoottam, 2003).

Fundamentally, Internet is a combination of two types of websites; typical (traditional) websites and social media websites. The typical websites might be managed and controlled by an individual or an organisation, i.e., it supports one way information communication. On the contrary, social media websites invite people to use, with an intention of sharing views and experiences and interact with others. i.e., it allows two way responsive communications (Careerbuilder, 2014). Social media comprises social networking sites, user-generated content community sites, wikis, consumer review sites and internet-based open public forums (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). In the recent years, social media has grown in importance in the tourism and hospitality industry and it has also started replacing traditional sources of information (Jepsen, 2006). Gupta and Kim (2004), described User Generated Contents (UGC) as "Coffee Shops", where people with similar interests can come together and interact (talk) with each other electronically.

Social media has now become a very significant part of our modern life. It plays a very influential role in information search and decision making, especially with respect to tourism and hospitality related purchases (Fortis, 2012). Social media facilitates various tourism and hospitality related companies to interact directly with the actual and potential customers, tourists and industry stakeholders and vice versa. It has the ability to influence the buying behaviour process (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). So far, a numerous researchers have worked on social media related studies and there has been considerable discussion on the definition of social media. Social media is generally considered internet-based applications, carries user-generated content which includes reviews, product information, critics and media impressions created by consumers (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010), (Blackshaw, 2006). Vickery and Wunsch-Vincent (2007) have similar opinion on social media. According to them it's an internet. increasingly influenced by intelligent Web

services that enable users to contribute to developing, collaborating, rating and distributing Internet contents and customizing Internet applications". In continuation, "social media allows companies to interact directly with customers via various Internet platforms and monitor and interact with customer opinions and evaluations of services" (Hvass & Munar, 2012). According to Marriam Webster (an encyclopaedia from Britannica Company), social media is a mix of forms of electronic communications (as websites for social networking and micro blogging), through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other contents (as videos) (Marriam Webster, 2014). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content".

As mentioned earlier, decision making of tourism and hospitality industry consumers (tourists) is well influenced with Information communication Technology developments. Web 2.0 / social media have completely changed the view of tourists towards designing and consuming travel, tourism and hospitality related products (Buhalis and Law 2008). Fotisa, Buhalisa and Rossides conducted a study to know the role and impact of social media on the whole holiday travel planning process: before, during and after the trip. The study suggested that social media tools are used highly after holiday trip, for sharing the travel experiences. Social media has great ability to influence the holiday makers with respect to changes made in holiday plans prior to final decisions (Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2008). In a study on 'the role of social media in international tourist's decision making' (Schroeder & Pennington-Gray, 2014), it has been concluded that social media is very useful in case of crisis communication. Technological acceptance and familiarity with e-tools also influence people to use social media at the time of crisis (Schroeder *et al.* 2013). Today's consumers are more sophisticated and dynamic (Baggio, 2014) and they look for more specialized media (Ráthonyi, 2012). According to the socialmedia.com, there are over 1.15 billion users of Facebook, more than 550 million users of Twitter, more than 359 million active monthly users and 1 billion enabled accounts of Google+, over 1 billion monthly active users of YouTube and around 150 million monthly active users of Instagram. As per social networking statistics published by Browser Media Socialnomics, MacWorld, among all of the internet users worldwide, approximately 56% people use Facebook, 14% LinkedIn, 11% Twitter and 9% Google+ (Statistic Brain, 2014).

Among the various tools that internet has brought our way Social Networking became a global phenomenon. Millions of people now go online to engage in social networks. According to Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia,

there are more than 300 Social Networking Sites (SNS) and 1.5 billion members worldwide. In recent years, usage of social networking sites has grown rapidly. It took 38 years to attract 50 million listeners for wireless radio system, 13 years for television to attract 50 million viewers; in 4 years the internet has attract 50 million surfers. iPods took 3 years to reach 50 million users, but Facebook, one of the leading social networking sites, added over 200 million users in just 12 months. This shows the penetration capacity and popularity of social networking sites (Locke and Brown, 2007). Social Networking Sites are a type of virtual community that has grown tremendously in popularity (Goodman and Click, 2007). Through social networking people can use network of online friends and group memberships to keep in touch with current friends, reconnect with old friends or create real-life friendships through similar interest or groups. Besides, establishing social relationships, social networking members can share interest and their ideas with other life-minded members by joining groups or forums. They can also participate in discussions through SNS. Members will be updated instantly about their friends and groups. In short, a SNS is a hub for communication, entertainment and information (Prakash,2013) . In India too this fact is acknowledged by various studies and hence today the usage of SNS has become large part of the student's lives in Indian society (Huang, 2008). The increasing usage of social networking sites has far reaching impacts on interpersonal relationships of students. SNS influence the interpersonal relationships of students in many ways (Knouse and Webb, 2001). Through SNS, users come to meet other people and these people can affect the user's relationships and this influence can either be positive or negative for the users. An interpersonal relationship is a relatively long-term association between two or more people. This association may be based on emotions like love and liking, regular business interactions, or some other type of social commitments. Interpersonal relationships take place in a great variety of contexts, such as family, friends, marriage acquaintances, work, and neighborhoods (Lenhart and Madden, 2007). They may be regulated by law, custom, or mutual agreement and are the basis of social groups and society as a whole. These impacts are so widespread that they caught the attention of social scientists worldwide. However, the range of studies conducted to deal with the usage of SNS among college students is negligible in India. Hence, the proposed study makes an attempt to fill in this gap, to some extent, by concentrating on the impact of SNS on college students.

## **Conclusion**

India is the only large global market that continues to record double-digit growth of its internet user base even as growth tapers off in the rest of the world. With over 400 million people having access to the Internet, India has

the largest internet user base in the world after China. Moreover, the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) expected that number to reach 462 million by mid-2016. Growth in India is not only driven by the low penetration of the internet among the population, which stands at around 30 per cent, but is also aided by low cost of smart phones. According to the Internet Trends report, the average cost of a smart phone in India is \$158, which is among the lowest in the world. India is poised to be unique because unlike China and the rest of the developing world that is mobile-first in nature, India has been branded a mobile-only market. Over 300 million of its estimated 400 million Internet users access the internet only over mobile devices. Government estimates suggest that India will add close to 50 million Internet users every five to eight months and this would continue through to 2020. The increasing use of social networking sites among different segments of population has shown both positive and negative implications on social behaviour, relations, communication, productivity and performance in different walks of life, governance and overall development of society and social transformation.

### References

- Baggio, R., Sigala, M., Inversini, A., & Pesonen, J. (Eds.). (2014), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2014 - eProceedings of the ENTER PhD Workshop in Dublin, Ireland*. IFITT (online: [http://www.enter2014.org/uploads/pages/106/files/1/eProceedings\\_ENTER2014\\_PhDWS-Jan172014.pdf](http://www.enter2014.org/uploads/pages/106/files/1/eProceedings_ENTER2014_PhDWS-Jan172014.pdf)).
- Bargh JA, McKenna KYA, Fitzsimons GM. (2002), Can you see the real me? Activation and expression of the 'true self' on the Internet. *J. Soc. Issues* 58(1): 33 – 48.
- Berger, P.L. (1970), *The Problem of Multiple Realities - Alfred Schutz and Robert Musil in Natanson*, 213-233 (translated in Grathoff/Waldenfels, 1983, 229-251).
- Blackshaw, P. (2006), *The Consumer-Generated Surveillance Culture*. Accessed online (23rd November, 2014) at <http://www.clickz.com/clickz/column/1706163/the-consumer-controlled-surveillance-culture>.
- Blumler J, Katz E. (1974), *The Uses of Mass Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage  
Blumler J, Katz E. 1974. *The Uses of Mass Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Boyd D. and Ellison, N. (2007), Social Network Sites : Definition History and Scholarship, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13 (1), 1-11.
- Boyd D.M. and Ellison N.B., Social Networking Sites: Definition, history, and scholarship, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1) (2007).
- Buhalis, D., Law, R. (2008), *Progress in information technology and tourism management: 20 years on and 10 years after the Internet - The state of e Tourism research* Schroeder, A., L. Pennington.
- Cairncross, Frances (1997), *The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution Will Change Our Lives*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston.



- Carey, James W. (1993), Everything that rises must diverge : Notes on Communication, Technology and the Symbolic Construction of the social, *Beyond Agendas*, 171-184, Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood.
- Castells, M. (2001), *The Internet Galaxy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Castells, M. (2004), *The Network Society: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, MA: Elgar, Northampton.
- Castells, M. (2009), Communication power (pp. 33-36). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dyk, Jan van (2006), *The Network Society*, Second Edition, Sage, London.
- Fischer C. (1992), *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press.
- Fotis, J. (2012), Discussion of the impacts of social media in leisure tourism: "The impact of social media on consumer behaviour: Focus on leisure travel".
- Fotis, J., Buhalis, D. and Rossides, N., (2012), Social media use and impact during the holiday travel planning process. In: Fuchs, M., Ricci, F. and Cantoni, L., eds. *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2012*. Vienna, Austria: Springer-Verlag, pp. 13-24.
- Giddens, A. (1990), *The Consequences of Modernity* (UK: Polity).
- Glass, G. (2005), Manuel Castells's Network Society. Retrieved from-<http://www.geof.net/research/2005/castells-networksociety> (2011, February 19).
- Goffman, E. (1959), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Anchor Books, Doubleday, New York.
- Goodings L., Locke A. and Brown S., (2007), Social Networking Technology: Place and Identity in Mediated Communities, *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 17, 463-476.
- Gray, H. Donohoe, and S. Kiouisis. (2013), "Using Social Media in Times of Crisis." *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, Special Issue on Social Media*, 30 (1-2): 126-43.
- Gretzel, U. (2006), Consumer generated content - trends and implications for branding. *e-Review of Tourism Research*, 4(3), 9-11.
- Gupta, S., and H. W. Kim. (2004), "Virtual Community: Concepts, Implications, and Future Research Directions." *Proceedings of the Tenth Americas Conference on Information Systems*. New York, August, pp. 2679-87.
- Hafner K. (2003), Eluding the web's snare. *New York Times*, April 17: G1.
- Hampton K, Wellman B. (2001), Long distance community in the network society. *Am. Behav. Sci.* 45: 476–95.
- Held, *et al.* (1999), *Global Transformation: Politics, Economy, Cultures* (Cambridge: polity).
- Huang C., A Brief Exploration of the Development of Internet Use for Communication among Undergraduate Students, *Cyber psychology and Behaviour*, 11(1), 115-117.

- Hughes R Jr, Hans JD. (2001), Computers, the internet, and families: a review of the role new technology plays in family life. *J. Fam. Issues* 22: 778 – 92.
- Hvass, K. A., & Munar, A. M. (2012), The take-off of social media in tourism. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 18(2), 93–103. doi:10.1177/1356766711435978.
- Internet World States (2016) available at: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#in>.
- Jepsen, A. (2006), Information Search in Virtual Communities: Is it Replacing Use of Off-Line Communication? *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 12(4), 247-261.
- John A. Bargh and Katelyn Y. A. McKenna, (2004), "The Internet and Social Life," *Annual Review of Psychology* 55: 573-90.
- Jones S. (2002), *The Internet Goes to College*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet/ Am. Life Proj. <http://www.pewinternet.org>
- Kaplan, A., & Haenlein, M. (2010), Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.
- Keser C, Leland J, Shachat J, Huang H. (2002), Trust, the Internet, and the Digital Divide. IBM Res. Rep. RC22511, Yorktown Heights, NY.
- Knouse S. and Webb S., Virtual Networking for Women and Minorities, *Career Development (2001) International*, 6(4), 226-228.
- Kopomaa, Timo (2000), *The City in your Pocket: Birth of the Mobile Information Society*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Lash, Scott and Urry, John (1994), *Economies of Signs and Space*, Sage, London.
- Lenhart, Amanda and Mary Madden, (2007), "Teens, Privacy & Online Social Networks: Managing Online Identities and Personal Information in the Age of MySpace," Pew Internet & American Life Project (18 April).
- Lenhart A. and Madden M., (2007), *Social Networking Websites and Teens*, Washington, D.C., Pew Internet and American Life Project.
- Licklider, J.C.R. and Taylor, R.W. (1968), The Computer as a Communication Device, *Journal Science and Technology*, 76, 21- 31.
- Mamkoottam, K. (2003), *Labour and change*, Response Books, Delhi.
- McKenna KYA, Bargh JA. (1998), Coming out in the age of the Internet: identity 'demarginalization' through virtual group participation. *J. Personal. Soc. Psychol.* 75: 681 – 94.
- McKenna KYA, Bargh JA. (2000), Plan 9 from cyberspace: the implications of the Internet for personality and social psychology, *Personal. Soc. Psychol. Bull.* 4: 57 – 75.
- McQuail, D. (2010), *Mass Communication Theory* (UK: Sage pub.).
- Miller Daniel *et al.* (2016). *How the world changed social media* (UCL press).
- Murthy, D. (2012), 'Towards a Sociological Understanding of Social Media: theorizing twitter', *Sociology*, vol. 46 no. 6, pp. 1059-1073 (UK: sage pub).
- Nafus, Dawn and Tracey, Karina (2000), "The more things change: mobile phone consumption and concepts of personhood," unpublished research paper, University of Cambridge, Department of Social Anthropology and British Telecom.

- Nicole B. Ellison, Charles Steinfield, and Cliff Lampe, (2007), "The Benefits of Facebook 'Friends': Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12: 4.
- Nie, N. H. (2001), Sociability, interpersonal relations and the internet: Reconciling conflicting findings. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45. 420-435.
- Pan, B, MacLaurin, T. and Crotts, J. (2007), 'Travel Blogs and their Implications for Destination Marketing', *Journal of Travel Research* 46(1), pp. 35-45.
- Peluchette J. and Karl K., Social Networking Profiles: An Examination of Student Attitudes Regarding Use and Appropriateness of Content, *Cyber psychology and Understanding Teen Online Behaviour*, *Aplis*, 20(2), 84-86 (2007).
- Pettenati M.C. and Cigognini M.E. (2007), Social networking theories and tools to support connectivist learning activities, *Journal of web based learning and teaching technologies*, Pieterse, N.J (2009): Globalization and culture (U.S.A: Pluto).
- Preeti Mahajan, Use of Social Networking in a Linguistically and Culturally Rich India, *The International Information and Library Review*, (2009).
- Pudliner, B. A. (2007), Alternative literature and tourist experience: Travel and tourist Weblogs. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 5(1), 46-59.
- Ráthonyi, G. (2012), Influence of social media on tourism – especially among students of the University of Debrecen.
- Rheingold, H. (1993), *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*.Pg 5 MIT Press, London.
- Ritzer, G (2010), *Globalization: A Basic text* (UK: Wiley-Blackwell).
- Robertson, R. (1995), 'Glocalization: Time-space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity' in M. Featherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* (London: sage).
- Sadie Plant, (1996), "On the Matrix: Cyber feminism Simulations," *Cultures of the Internet: Virtual Spaces, Real Histories, Living Bodies*, ed. Rob Shields (London: Sage,) 170–83.
- Schroeder, A., & Pennington-Gray, L. (2014), The Role of Social Media in International Tourist's Decision Making. *Journal of Travel Research*, (March).
- Sherry Turkle, (1999), "Cyberspace and Identity," *Contemporary Sociology* 28: 6: 643–8.
- Shils, Edward. (1981), *Tradition*, The university of Chicago press, Chicago.
- Statistic Brain, (2014), A social networking statistics, available online, <http://www.statisticbrain.com/social-networking-statistics/> (Accessed on 29th October).
- Straus SG. (1997), Technology, group process, and group outcomes: testing the connections in computer-mediated and face-to-face groups. *Hum.-Comput. Interact.* 12: 227 – 66.
- Subrahmanyam K. and Lin G., (2007), Adolescents on the Net: Internet Use and Well-Being, *Adolescence*, 42(168), 659- 677.
- Thompson, J. (1995), *The Media and Modernity* (UK polity).

- Tracey, Karina (2000), "Virtual communities: what's new?," paper delivered at the First Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers, Lawrence, University of Kansas, September 16.
- Valadez J. and Duran R., (2007), Redefining the Digital Divide: Beyond Access to Computers and the Internet, *The High School Journal*, Feb/Mar 2007, 31-44
- Valkenburg P.M., Peter J., and Schouten A.P., Friend Networking Sites and Their Relationship to Adolescent's Well-Being and Social Self-Esteem, *Cyber Psychology and Behavior*, 9(5), 584-590.
- Vickery G and Wunsch-Vincent S (2007), *Participative Web and User-Created Content: Web 2.0, Wikis and Social Networks*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Waldstrom C. and Madsen H., (2007), Social Relations Among Managers: Old Boys And Young Women's Networks, *Women in Management Review*, 22(2), 136-147.
- Weatherall A. and Ramsay A. (2006), *New Communication Technologies and Family Life*, Families Commission Blue Skies report 5.06.
- Wheeler, D.L. (2000), "New media, Globalization and Kuwaiti National identity", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 3, pp. 432-444.
- William Fielding Ogburn and Meyer Francis Nimkoff, (1976), *Technology and the Changing Family*, Greenwood Press.
- Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010), Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, 31(2), 179-188. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016.
- Zeng, B., & Gerritsen, R. (2014), What do we know about social media in tourism? A review. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 10, 27-36. doi:10.1016/j.tmp.2014.01.001.