Social Media – Making Pathways for Rural Development in India!!!

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Abstract

Post fire, if any invention has been so much influential and made such a huge impact on mankind it is without doubt –internet technologies and social media. Social media has converted whole world into one digital village where geographical isolation is no more relevant. Social media once considered mean for message conveying has immersed and powerful tool to make a mark in healthcare, education, safety, economy and almost every walk of life. And rural development is n exception. Gone are the days, when use of a low quality brick used in rural road construction when reported got inspected after good 3-4 years, or literally after the whole road vanished. Thanks to social media, now a day if a low quality brick is used within 60th second it is reported with evidence to almost all authorities and within an hour its gets verified and booked. Social media has certainly discovered many untapped potential for rural development. Social media for development uses to convey messages on issues such as health care, poverty reduction, good governance, environmental protection and community development, socio-economic and cultural development. Today the world has become a small place to live in and share knowledge, ideas and passing over valuable culture to the next generation, all these things are possible through social networking. Social media provides a platform to create and exchange user generated contents but it is redundant for the rural people to access internet for the most known form of social media, Facebook or twitter etc. The inability of these people to use this platform is a major reason for them to look at another option like NGO's. If ICT is developed for better connectivity it is important for the people using these platforms (provides by NGO'S) to not get alienated and exploited and thus be able to provide a space which caters to rural India. Social media is a form of "many to many communication" meaning by using it people can input and receive information to and from the internet; they will be able to connect and communicate dynamically within a flexibility formed scope. The social web and mobile technologies have accelerated the rate at which relationships develop, information is shared and influence takes hold. Now a day people like to use social technology to help shape the world's events and culture. Facebook has taught us new ways to communicate and collaborate through features like feeds, profiles and groups. At the same time, smart phones and tablets provide mobile and instantaneous access to information from any location. Social media refers to communication devices, which can be used to communicate and interact with a large number of audiences in different languages. Social media is the web based and ICT based tools for information exchange. It includes social networking site, blogs, online forums, wikis, socially integrated text messaging services, video and podcasts, and many more. In the current situation, the role of Social media is very import to upgrade the rural society of India. It can

motivate the rural people towards progress. It has been used at once for transmission of development communications to the people of this society as in others. The objective of this paper is to identify the role of social media for rural development along with opportunities and challenges social media has to offer for rural development in India.

Keywords: Rural development, social media, mobile technology, Information and communication Technology (ICT)

Introduction:

In the recent years, social media has played a pivotal role in knitting the fabric of Indian society. In fact we should agreethat social media has transformed the Indian society from a naïve society to a more mature society. Social media websites such as face books, Twitter and You tube have given the Indian people a platform to raise their voices against the injustice and enquuality. India are increasingly logging into the social networking sites, at present 302 million people are using internet, this data will rise up to 500 million at the end of 2018.The dream of India to be digital India cannot be true without making rural India to be digital, because 70% population of India live invillages with no access to modern internet infrastructures. From the digital perspective, India is divided into two different communities: 70% of rural population and 30% of urban population. The latter has access to Google or Facebook all the rest cannot afford monthly internet connection so they can never have Facebook experience likes urban. The Indian society is the convoluted society with multi cultures, multi tribes and castes, multi lingual and the disparities between the urban and rural people

SOCIAL MEDIA

Various definitions are available for social media but two are most suitable:

- "Social media primarily internet based tool for sharing and discussing information among human beings" to " It is a thing of opposites; compelling and annoying, time wasting and time efficient, useful and useless."
- "Social media is a group of internet based application that build on ideological and technological foundations of web2.0 and that allowcreation and exchange of user generated content."
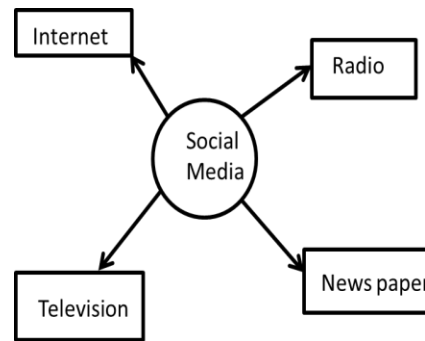
Social Media Types:various types of social media based on apps

- Social network or networking sites
- Blogs
- wikis
- Podcaste
- Forum Content Communities, and Microblogging

Potential of Social Media as a Rural Development:

The worldwide goal is the sustainable growth of job, poverty reduction, and equitable development. The social media potentialof India performing communication networking has been proved time and again by many instances of national information importance. It has been seen that social media or ICT is playing a "catalytic" role in developing rural area. ICT means all technologies used for communication and information purpose. It includes all type of media like internet, TV, radio etc. It is a basic infrastructure tool for economic and social development of a country. Realizing the importance and powerfulness of social media, it is used in rural development for agricultural activities like proper guidance to the farmers about use of fertilizers; how much amount of fertilizer should be added, to the nature of soil, for which crop the soil is more beneficial. The technology is too beneficial in the increment of yield of crops due to which the farmers will be in profit. Agriculture researchers of developing countries are also believed that social media are important tool to disseminate their findings.

India provides an interesting case on the use of social media in agriculture named AGROPEDIA: an online agricultural knowledge repository. It is unique web 3.0 platform in agricultural domain. It enables us in getting exactly the same information for which we are

looking for. It is the first of its kind in the world with the capability of searching semantically enabled information.Agropedia seeks to address lacunae in Indian agriculture knowledge and applications. Any user who registered to Agropedia can either add, rate or comment on any content in all major Indian languages, this feature makes Agropedia different from theother sites. Agropedia has various section:Agrowiki, Agroblog, Agroforum,Agrochat or Images.

Agrowiki: Developed by using the concept of Wikipedia i.e. socially co-creating content. Everyone is able to search and create content regarding agriculture, and share it with his or her peers.

Agroblog:A Platform where one can record his or her agriculture-based experiences and stories. Generally, on Blogs an individual can record their opinions, information, etc., on daily basis and hence the name "AgroBlog" was devised to represent agricultural based opinions and experiences.

Agroforum: A crop based Question & Answer forum of Agropedia.

Currently Running Schemes for Rural Development:

E-chopal: It was initiated by ITC Ltd. in June 2000 to provide internet access to rural farmers and currently has 6,500 e-chopal computer centers. Forty thousand villages in 10 Indian states are taking advantages of e-chopal. Using this farmer my order supplies, learn about best agricultural practices, receive weather reports and read about pricing of crops throughout the region. Farmers can use the information at their own price and also obtain higher profit of agricultural products because they are no longer depending on a middleman.

Drishtee: It provides information technology goods and services to rural India through Kiosk based services such as: health, education, microfinance, ecommerce etc. Primary objective of the Drishtee is to empower rural community by supporting local entrepreneurship.

DrishteeHaatacts as an online platform where rural produces can price, upload and sell their products to consumers from across the globe.

Akshaya: It is initiative of Kerela state IT mission and mow spread all around states of India to bridge up the digital divide. Aim of Akshaya is to set up a network of 6000 information centers to educate at least 1 member in each of 6.5 million families in kerela. Akshaya provides service like computer and internet training, Generate and distribute locally relevant content, Issue f certificates, Licenses etc.

Limitations of Social Media in Rural India:

Using Social media one can be able to connect with anyone, anywhere and at any time. But unfortunately, the same does not hold true for Rural India. The user base in India is still largely the urban tech-savvy population and rural India is still lagging behind in this space.Rural India has a number of challenges that hinders the penetration of Internet and social media. These are socio-economic conditions, literacy levels, geographical locations, occupation, exposure to media, etc. They can't afford the cost of internet and electronic gadget like smart phones, computers as they still live on less than a dollar per day. Geographical location is another challenge for them. There are many poverty-stricken backward regions in India that are cut off from the rest of the world. Forget social media, the only media that is accessible to these locations is a radio, if at all. Poor literacy rate coupled with a serious gap of information flow seems to make social media a distant dream for them in this century.

Language is another major hindrance in India. India being a multilingual country, it would require websites and devices to incorporate a host of varied local languages. The rise in the use of more local languages and devices has guaranteed the success for social networking services like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram as well as Instant Messaging (IM) applications like WhatsApp. However, that is only half of the picture. It would be misleading if we only looked at the digital-savvy population to understand the social media landscape of rural India. Around 70 per cent of the rural population has no access to the Internet and still lives below the poverty line. Research Report says that some people are interested in social mediaespecially for facebook, youngster visitedtelecenters (KIOSK's) only to access facebook. Few of them even used their cell phones to access internet and social media. The projects as such with their top-down transfer of technology like policy have failed to deliver their development goals and yet to another level they have created, through their telecenter, new information ecosystem albeit unhealthy ones. While the states and NGO blame the illiteracy, unawareness and resistance to change in villages for failure of high tech e-governance services, But it is observed that rural people both users and nonusers reconstructing the meaning of digital technologies and those who have managed to access appropriating it contextually and thus co-evolving with a new material culture, simply put people in the villages were not being of object of development which the state or even NGO imagine them to be, and where engaging with the new digital technologies as per their own context. An interesting analogy can be made with the case of adaptation which the state thought would promote national integrity scientific temper, education etc. but was culturally embraced in unexpected ways even in Doordarshan days in the rural India.

Conclusion:

Social media network has changed the lives of rural people. Introduction to ICT plays a major source for rural development. In order to accelerate the rural growth in India, we have to remove the barriers which hinder the rural people not to use social media. The laudable initiative of providing Internet access to the remotest corners of the country, taken on by the government, will place rural India on the digital-savvy social media route, as the potential of India lies in the online rural population.Social media penetrates into rural India in different ways like community radios. Gram Vaani (meaning voice of the village), a social tech company based at IIT Delhi, has initiated an interactive voice response (IVR) system called the Mobile Vaani for the rural community. This serves as their "social social media platform." This network enables rural households to create their own voice media that generates local action, greater awareness and empowerment for development.

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