

A Research on the Effect of Social Media in the Development of Rural Society: A Review

Rampal*

Assistant Professor of Sociology, Govt. College Behrampur, Bapauli, Panipat

Abstract – The focus of this paper is to delineate the relationship between social media and rural India, how rural development can be improved. Looking at a few instances where social media has benefitted rural development will serve as a positive analysis, whereas there will be a brief analysis of the limitations of media. The aim would also be to broadly define social media, and look at how media, be it any form, has a social responsibility towards the audience it's reaching. Whereas the instances provided in the paper will serve as a reminder of the marvels of social media, but a growing digital divide with a lack of development of information and communication technology (ICT) has made it redundant for people in rural areas to access internet for the most well-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 NGO's who can use these platforms or influence other forms of media which are inclined towards social responsibility giving more of a reason to broadly define social media.

-----X-----

INTRODUCTION

The Indian society is a convoluted society with multi cultures, multi tribes and castes, multi lingual and the disparities between the urban and rural people. Since the origin of independent India, no one can deny the fact that India has grown as a nation and as economy rapidly with major growths from infrastructure to public health care, from communication sector to IT field and much more. Social media has affected all spheres of rural people's lives: right from their livelihood to their healthcare, from traditions to social campaigns etc. convoluted. The Indian society is a complex society with multi cultures, multi tribes and castes, multi lingual and the disparities between the urban and rural people. Since the inception of independent India, none can deny the fact that India has developed a lot in almost all the fields leading from infrastructure to public health care, from communication sector to IT field and much more. This paper aims to find out the relationship between the social media networks and rural India's development and also critically examines why majority of rural India. Development is not a linear process but a multidimensional exercise. Even the rural India defies any definition. There have been many initiatives by Indian government and also many UN programs have been implemented in Indian villages.

Besides that, many private social networks have taken the initiative like various NGOs, news channels, various web sites etc. As observed in many scenarios, development in Asia and Africa is

not as systematic as the industrial development in Europe. That's the reason when rural areas of India still face issues like sanitation, public health care etc., social media finds a relevant place. Diverse social and infrastructural needs must be addressed more or less *simultaneously* to ensure a nation's future growth and prosperity. As the paper signifies, Social media has affected all spheres of rural people's lives: right from their livelihood to their healthcare, from traditions to social campaigns etc.

Many people have defined social media networks from time to time. But broadly, most of the people find social media networks synonymous with social networking sites, micro blogging, various internet forums etc. But as per the study of this paper, "social media networks" have a broader area of definition. Every media whether it is a radio or a news channel or Ngo or any source which interacts with public at some level, has a social responsibility. This responsibility is very important in nature as it affects the development of the society by large means. Thus, the media cannot shirk from this social responsibility and thus, making all the prominent media networks as the "social media networks".

At rural level, folk media has a very significant role and place in people's lives. Modern day media still appears alien to the rural people. Folk media mainly includes folk songs, folk dances, folk theatre and other folk performing arts. The first significant international recognition of the traditional media in the communication and the development strategies

of developing countries came in 1972 when the International Planned Parenthood Federation and UNESCO organized in London a series of meetings on the integrated use of the folk and the mass media in family planning communication programmers.

Every village has its relevant music, dance or theatre. The folk arts cater to the needs to the local people and are in accordance with the changing traditions of the society. Traditional folk forms in India can be effectively used for social developmental communication. The communication potential of Indian traditional performing art has been proved time again and again by many instances of national importance. One can find such examples in every state of India where through awareness is created through folk dances, folk songs or through folk theater. The outcome of various researchers has established the importance of rural media in development communication. Traditional uses of folk media were primarily for entertainment, social communication and persuasive communication.

International commission for the study of communication problems, the commission, also popularly known Mac bride Commission, was established by UNESCO to study among issues as increasing importance attached to communication as a social phenomenon and the consequent interest shown in the development communication. The limiting factor in case of mass media is that it appears glamorous, impersonal and unbelievable to the rural people whereas the traditional media are close to the hearts and minds of the people, so their appeal is at personal and intimate level. Folk media can overcome the language barriers and can appeal to the emotions and thus souls of the rural people.

The present electronic era has brought several pros and cons. The electronic era not only provided better, faster and improved working ability of young people, but also an emergence and new form of disorder in Indian youths. Since last decade, the over utilization of social media is an ongoing activity which is increasing at an alarming rate and leading to addiction form among Indian young people which is a serious concern. Problems arriving from over utilization of social media have been documented worldwide including in India, where the use of the social media has increased noticeably.

It is observed through the studies, that the social media is more addictive among the youths, over utilization of it has been referred to as behavioral addiction and one's inability to avoid being online to the point where it effects the users life, relationships, emotions users' social life etc. There are various forms of social media addiction, such as forming online friendship, accessing pornography, gaming, online shopping etc. It is observed that, over utilization of social media, refrain from participating in real life activities, young people lives mostly in the virtual than in real life. Through this study an attempt

has been made to highlight the negative and positive effects of social media on the Indian youths and their opinion about social media.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND RURAL SOCIETY

The aim of this paper is to focus on the impact of social media on rural India. This paper will also try to define social media, how rural development can be through Social Network Services (SNS) and various platforms that have succeeded on SNS while also looking at the practicality of these services. It is important however to define social media to not restrict the field only to SNS provided through the internet via Facebook, twitter, etc but it also diminishes the work done by many NGO's which have programs which also utilize the same idea of networking as Facebook or twitter. There also is a need to know the precise definition of social media, as it can also be looked at from a different perspective. The definition of social media has changed over a period of time, has broadened and explained by many scholars through various perspectives. Though most of the people, speaking on a majority scale, believe that social media networks is linked heavily with social networking sites, micro blogging, various internet forums etc. This paper will look at the broader aspect of social media networks where its definition isn't restricted to only a few platforms.

Any and every media which has to interact with the public at some level, be it an NGO or radio or television, all of them have a social responsibility. This responsibility is very important in nature as it affects the development of the society by large means. Thus, the media cannot shirk from this social responsibility and thus, making all the prominent media networks as the "social media networks". (Rai & Shahila, 2013). The mass media (radio, television, newspaper and magazines) are indispensable, enabling citizens to have their voices heard and opinions expressed, it is a powerful tool. The essence of media should be to involve the citizens in decisions regarding development plans, and to spread the knowledge of these decisions to various parts. There is a considerable difference in media among regions and countries, and between cities and rural areas. We hope to focus on the latter. The latter focuses on the fundamental problem with rural India, which is rural development. So the role of media becomes extremely important and key to a lot of citizens in these areas where the benefits of internet have not yet been reaped.

But what is rural development? Rural development in general is used to denote the actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-Urban neighborhoods, countryside, and remote villages. These communities can be exemplified with a low ratio of inhabitants to open space. Agricultural activities may be prominent in

this case whereas economic activities would relate to the primary sector, production of foodstuffs and raw materials. (Raja, 2011).

After much clarity in the understanding of the two keys terms – Social Media and Rural Development, we can look at the various plays through which both of these terms are linked and also try to follow the nature of their relationship. Differentiation of modern day media and traditional media has been discussed very closely. The paper aims to discuss various fields where social media has affected rural people's lives and also of the fields where media has been lacking in its role.

EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Indian society is an elaborate society with multi cultures, multi tribes and castes, multi lingual and the disparities between the urban and rural people. Since the birth of independent India, there is no denying the fact that India has grown as a nation and as economy rapidly with major growths from infrastructure to public health care, from communication sector to IT field and much more. But development is not a linear process but a multifaceted system with a complex idea. Even the rural India defies any definition of development. The Indian government has started many initiatives which have tried to encompass the large Indian crowd and while also many UN programs have been put to use in Indian villages. Besides that, many private social networks have taken the initiative like various NGOs, news channels, various web sites etc. But unlike Europe's systematic Industrial growth, Asia and Africa still remain largely unaffected by the model due to the large size of many nations with no connectivity. India goes through a similar problem. That's the reason when rural areas of India still face issues like sanitation, public health care etc., social media finds a relevant place. Diverse social and infrastructural needs must be addressed more or less simultaneously to ensure a nation's future growth and prosperity. Social media has affected all spheres of rural people's lives: right from their livelihood to their healthcare, from traditions to social campaigns etc. Time and time again SNS have found a way and have realized their potential to become pioneers in rural development.

Among the several mass media, newspaper and farm magazine are commonly used. They have a vital role to play in the communication of agricultural information among the literate farmers. Increasing rate of literacy in the country offers new promises and prospects for utilizing print medium as a means of mass communication. Agriculture journalism is a new field in India and is growing rapidly as the food giver of India is becoming literate now (Rai & Shahila, 2013). Through online public grievance system, development in these parts take place smoothly as the villagers can lodge their complaints on this forum. This initiative has aided rural people a

lot. Though it is naive to think that electricity, telephony and connectivity in rural areas will spread if the demand does not grow of these resources.

The Indian society is an elaborate society with multi cultures, multi tribes and castes, multi lingual and the disparities between the urban and rural people. Since the birth of independent India, there is no denying the fact that India has grown as a nation and as economy rapidly with major growths from infrastructure to public health care, from communication sector to IT field and much more. But development is not a linear process but a multifaceted system with a complex idea. Even the rural India defies any definition of development. The Indian government has started many initiatives which have tried to encompass the large Indian crowd and while also many UN programs have been put to use in Indian villages. Besides that, many private social networks have taken the initiative like various NGOs, news channels, various web sites etc. But unlike Europe's systematic Industrial growth, Asia and Africa still remain largely unaffected by the model due to the large size of many nations with no connectivity. India goes through a similar problem. That's the reason when rural areas of India still face issues like sanitation, public health care etc., social media finds a relevant place. Diverse social and infrastructural needs must be addressed more or less simultaneously to ensure a nation's future growth and prosperity.

Social media has affected all spheres of rural people's lives: right from their livelihood to their healthcare, from traditions to social campaigns etc. Time and time again SNS have found a way and have realized their potential to become pioneers in rural development. Many Indian social media networks have committed themselves to provide information to the farmers regarding cultivation as well as animal husbandry especially All India Radio (AIR) which has been committed to rural audience for more than 50 years now. Among the several mass media, newspaper and farm magazine are commonly used. They have a vital role to play in the communication of agricultural information among the literate farmers. Increasing rate of literacy in the country offers new promises and prospects for utilizing print medium as a means of mass communication. Agriculture journalism is a new field in India and is growing rapidly as the food giver of India is becoming literate now (Rai & Shahila, 2013).

Through online public grievance system, development in these parts take place smoothly as the villagers can lodge their complaints on this forum. This initiative has aided rural people a lot. Though it is naive to think that electricity, telephony and connectivity in rural areas will spread if the demand does not grow of these resources. In addition, information networks can become conduits that allow money to flow into the village through new kinds of non-discriminatory and clean

industries. Information and communications technologies can also compensate for other kinds of infrastructure limitations. For example, if online work, trade, or payment were to become available for members of a village community, the poor quality of roads to and from that village becomes less of an obstacle to earnings and employment. Finally, and most importantly, if capital were to become more readily available within a village community through such networked systems, it would then be in a better position to finance the basic infrastructure that it needs, including roads, dispensaries, and water and sanitation systems.

But there has been a critical problem, the problem has been of digital divide. The global digital divide describes the unequal distribution of information and communication technology across nations, commonly described as the “gap between the information haves and have-nots.” The contours of the global digital divide are complex and, although the “digital divide” has become a common political catchphrase, popular discourse has, for the most part, failed to capture all of the dimensions of the divide. (Ali, 2011)

The Internet has transfigured the way most people in the West live. It has become an important part of our economic, political, and social lives, changing the way we purchase commodities, the way we bank, and the way we share exchanges with one another. First, the Internet reduces traditional blockages to trade and industry, allowing small businesses in developing nations to market their products directly to the United States and other developed countries. Second, the informational capacity of the Internet enabled developing countries to move ahead in improving fundamental services. It can allow, with its use, people all across to access information from any part of the world. The only way in India to reduce this divide is by providing the rural people with adequate information on the internet and its uses explained. But there would be people on the internet looking to cash in for the naïve nature of new internet users. But amongst many limitations, digital divide is said to be only temporary as technology would become redundant in developed nations and the third world countries would be able to produce this technology for cheaper rates, they would also be able to improve their existing technology. These gaps in connectivity is due to the economic disparity of different nations, whereas some nations have tried to improve this connectivity but there are many pressing issues in third world countries, for instance, irregular electricity supply.

The problem then lies with the fact that rural India needs platforms where they could express their grievances, like, online public grievance. Social media can provide this platform where their voices and their culture is protected, looked after. In today's global economy, where computers and the Internet are so fundamental to production and participation, it

is clear that if the right to development is to be taken seriously, that right must encompass the development of information connectivity technology infrastructure and skills. It is also very important to look at the various platforms which have helped rural India, where there was definite impact made on the lives of the people. These are just examples to clarify the impact.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Social media can benefit business owners and entrepreneurs in developing economies by reducing the cost of communication and increasing opportunities to find business partners and customers (similar arguments are made with respect to mobile phones). However compared with developed economy contexts, there is not much literature on social media and economic activity in developing countries. Nwabueze et al. (2013) claim that social media plays a crucial positive role in achieving microfinance banking goals in Nigeria by facilitating information flow to the poor and small business owners who are the primary target of microfinance. However, it should be emphasized that it is very difficult to disentangle social media effects on business outcomes from other factors (e.g., innate skills and drive of entrepreneurs and business leaders, and the business environments in which they operate), because of data availability and also the general problem of identifying a network effect.

In addition, social media enables entrepreneurs to create and maintain weak ties and bridging social capital. While Facebook is generally regarded as being useful for maintaining strong ties such as close friends or kin, Twitter enables entrepreneurs to expand and use their weak ties such as acquaintances. In Fischer and Reuber's (2011) study of entrepreneurs' use of Twitter one interviewee said “Facebook is a cocktail party and so when you are engaged in Facebook you're surrounded, sometimes very peripherally but surrounded, by people that you know and you like and that are part of your social graph. Twitter's not that. Twitter is more like somebody standing on the street corner with a megaphone saying, ‘Hey, if you're interested in the Toronto Maple Leafs, check out this article!’ And I may be interested and I might check it out or I may just walk right by”. Through interviewing entrepreneurs, the authors provide evidence that Twitter increases social interaction. Likewise, from a point of view of job opportunities, LinkedIn (a social networking site for professionals) allows users to make connections with those who are in the same circle and out of the circle. This is also helpful for utilizing weak ties, so that individuals can find new job opportunities.

Social media provides another way of potentially improving economic outcomes in developing economies, namely as a source of business-related

“big data”. Big data is often discussed in the context of the ‘internet of everything’ or ‘network of networks’ and can be thought of as data from networks of (1) people (social web) e.g. phone logs/GPS, social network sites (e.g. Facebook), microblogs (e.g. Twitter); (2) information (traditional web – the WWW) e.g. web pages, clickstreams, website logs and (3) things (sensor web) e.g. temperature sensors, medical instruments. Big data refers to not only data that is beyond traditional analytical techniques and computational capacity, but also a phenomenon whereby analysts can access data that are unprecedented in terms of size, dynamics and variety and use these data to uncover and predict a wide range of societal phenomena. Social media is a major source of big data, especially with respect to data on human behavior. The Global Pulse project in Indonesia10 aims to predict daily food prices using food-related tweets by users in Twitter. The goal is to provide an alternative means of officially monitoring food prices, thereby reducing cost of data collection (incurred by both government and business operators).

LIMITATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN INDIA

The first step to understand the impact – and even more the potential – of social media in India is to acknowledge its limits: 70% of India’s population live in rural areas, with no access to modern Internet infrastructures. Among those who reside in urban areas, over 165M people are active online. A good slice of the pie is on Facebook: around 62 million users populate the American social network – recently becoming the second biggest Facebook-population after the US (Ghedin, 2013). But what happens on the other side of the digital divide? How is social media penetrating the areas where people don’t have PCs and smartphones – yet just telephones, TVs and a strong need for information? Exploitation and de-alienation are not simply two contrasting interpretations of SNS; rather, Marxist theory encourages us to accommodate them within a single analytical framework. SNS give audience more opportunities for objectification by allowing self-expression, authenticity, and communication and collaboration with others. As the communication and sociability of users are commodified, so does their labour become a source for exploitation? In what follows I consider the dialectics of exploitation and alienation on SNS by taking a closer look at Facebook (Fisher, 2012). De-alienation would occur through the opportunity provided for selfexpression, communication with other individuals which is good, which helps people to feel they have control over economic, cultural and social discussions.

CONCLUSION

Social media networks has without a doubt changed the lives of rural people. As far as agriculture is thought of, these have given many opportunities to the farmers and made the process of selling the crop

easy through online programs which have resulted in the removal of middlemen. There are many success stories in field of health care as well. Rural politics is the area where social media networks hasn’t reached to the required potential. But there still remains a lot of room for improvement for social networking services as with better technology, the connectivity of these places should improve and provide the economic opportunity to take benefits from the system. Social Media can help provide that, media which cares for a well-integrated society and believes in having social responsibility. Services like Facebook, twitter provide a mass reach, but of a population which can afford to have the required technology to avail the service but can help connect the large population.

A social media network has without a doubt changed the lives of rural people. As far as agriculture is thought of, these has given many opportunities to the farmers and made the process of selling the crop easy through online programs which have resulted in the removal of middlemen. Introduction to information and communication technology has emerged as a major source for development in India. In order to accelerate rural growth, it is essential that we learn new ways of integrating social and human infrastructure development into the installation of basic information and communications infrastructure. The impact can be seen through many examples and these examples are of not just Social media like – Facebook but with the use of internet NGO’s like Gram- Vaani have flourished, defining social media in a new perspective which is of development and of a social responsibility. Social media networks have no doubt affected the lives of rural people. As far as agriculture is concerned, these have provided many opportunities to the farmers and eased the process of selling the crop through online schemes which has resulted in elimination of middlemen. There are innumerable success stories in field of health care as well. Rural politics is the area where social media networks haven’t achieved to the required extent.

REFERENCES

1. Amir Hatem Ali (2011). “The Power of Social Media in Developing Nations: New Tools for Closing the Global Digital Divide and Beyond”, <http://harvardhrj.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/185-220.pdf>
2. Balasubramania Raja G (2011). “Mass Media and Rural Development” , THAVAN IJRMS, Vol. 01, No. 01, October.
3. Balasubramania Raja G. (2011). “Mass Media and Rural Development”, Thavan IJRMS, 1(1).

4. Ekta Bansal (2015). IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON RURAL INDIA, IJMRBS, Vol. 4, No. 3, July 2015
5. Eran Fisher (2012). "How Less Alienation Creates More Exploitation? Audience
6. Fischer, E. and Reuber, A. R. (2011). Social interaction via new social media: (how) can interactions on Twitter affect effectual thinking and behavior? Journal of Business Venturing, 26(1): pp. 1–18.
7. Guido Ghedin (Article) (2013). "Social Media In Rural India: Bridging The Digital Divide" <http://www.digitalintheround.com/>
8. Gupta Anmol Rai, Zafar Shahila (2013). "Rural India : The Next Frontier for Social
9. Kumar, H. (2006). Folk Media and Rural Development. Indian Media Studies Journal 1(1)
10. Labour on Social Network Sites", tripleC Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 171-183, 2012 ISSN 1726-670X <http://www.triple-c.at>
11. Media Networks", International Journal of Engineering Research & Technology, Vol. 2, No. 1, January - 2013)e-ISSN: 2278-0181
12. Nwabueze, C., Nwabueze, C., and Egbra, O. (2013). New communication technologies and microfinance banking in nigeria: Critical role of the social media. New Media and Mass Communication, 15: pp. 12–17.
13. Share of agriculture in Indian economy. Retrieved on 15 March, 2012 from <http://www.indiainbusiness.nic.in/economy/agriculture.htm>
14. Singh, Ra (1993). "Communication Technology for Rural Development
15. Vaishnavi J. Deshpande, Dr. Rajeshkumar U. Sambhe (2014). Information Technology Implementation for Comprehensive Development of Rural India – A Review, IJSR Volume 3 Issue 8.

Corresponding Author

Rampal*

Assistant Professor of Sociology, Govt. College
Behrampur, Bapauli, Panipat