

Social Media for Social Networking of Dalits

P. Gowtham Devanoor, B. P. Mahesh Chandra Guru, M. Dileep Kumar, Bhanupratap A.

Abstract: The importance of social networks lies in their value as social capital. Social networking has become a new platform for collaborative endeavors in all walks of life. The structural pattern of relations of a social network can have significant impact on how actors actually behave. The social networks are developed for the development of identity and peer relationships in modern times. The emerging science of social networks truly has transformative power. There is strong evidence to suggest that social networks can improve the socioeconomic well-being of communities. Dalits have been widely using social networking sites to generate debates about the casteism and issues related to it. Social learning and participation are crucial for the Dalits since they need aggressive preparation and effective practical strategies to secure their share from the wider society. The social media reconstructs the debates around social justice, inclusive development and sustainable development related issues and concerns of Dalits.

Keywords: importance, platform, Network, developed, transformative power, Dalits.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Preamble

The social media have become all pervasive interactive and participatory communication tools and technologies in modern times. The technological factors (increased broadband availability, the improvement of software tools and the development of more powerful computers and mobile devices), social factors (rapid uptake of social media by younger age groups), economic factors (increasing affordability of computers and software and growing commercial interest the social media sites) and political factors (increasing political mobilization and several political changes across the world) have boosted the social media revolution across the globe. The social media application has become a new way of life in all modern organizations including the educational institutions. The specialists have explored new avenues for better social media application for better social networking an empowerment of marginalized sections of the society in modern times. The role of social media in the social networking of Dalits is primarily analyzed in this article based on qualitative research method.

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P. Gowtham Devanoor, Research Scholar, Department of Studies in Communication and Journalism, University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Mysore, Email: gowthamdevanoor@gmail.com

Dr. B. P. Mahesh Chandra Guru, Professor, Department of Studies in Communication and Journalism, University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Karnataka, India, Email: bpmcguru@yahoo.com

M. Dileep Kumar, Guest Faculty, Department of Studies in Communication and Journalism, University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Mysore-570006, Karnataka State, India, Email: dileepnarasaiah02@gmail.com

Bhanupratap A, Research Scholar, Department of Studies in Communication and Journalism, University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Mysore, Email: bhanugangwayz@gmail.com

II. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are Internet based means which connect the likeminded users. The online social network is useful for sharing information, ideas, experience and expertise in modern times. The social media are very effective tools of participatory communication. All the interactions which take place through social media are safe and convenient. The social media have become all pervasive interactive and participatory communication tools and technologies in modern times. The consumer use of the Internet first became popular through dial-up Internet access in the 1990s. By the first decade of the 21st century, many consumers in developed nations used faster, broadband Internet access technologies

The technological factors (increased broadband availability, the improvement of software tools and the development of more powerful computers and mobile devices), social factors (rapid uptake of social media by younger age groups), economic factors (increasing affordability of computers and software and growing commercial interest the social media sites) and political factors (increasing political mobilization and several political changes) have brought about the social media revolution in the world.

The current technological landscape shows tremendous promise and presents numerous opportunities for news and professionals despite certain potential pitfalls. The social media have also posed serious challenges to media professionals. The users of print and electronic media are going online for their news. Most of the users receive their international and national news from the Internet (Alejandro, 2010:03). The social media are a form of collective wisdom which can be used to make quantitative predictions that outperform those of artificial markets.

III. SALIENT FEATURES OF SOCIAL NETWORK

The importance of social networks lies in their value as social capital. Whereas human capital lies within the individual, social capital resides in the structure of social relationships a person has within their own social network. Social capital is productive to the extent that it creates opportunities that would otherwise not be possible or would be more costly. Social capital does indeed vary in the expected hierarchies of caste, tribe, and religion in India. The social networks of scheduled castes and tribes can be developed on the basis of meaningful social media intervention. Social networking has become a new platform for collaborative endeavors in all walks of life on the basis of the development of web based technologies.

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There is significant shift of social network within the community and increase in social activity due to an influx of users (Shideler and Kraybill, 2003:32). The social network is a type of exchange or interaction which takes place in modern times with the help of social networking sites.

The social networks reveal how resources flow and circulate among these individuals who are more connected than others. The social network also lay the groundwork for latent and weak tie connectivity and a base on which strong ties can grow. As organizational operations and government information become more entwined with Internet access, it is important to be aware of how such changes affect individuals' access to resources, and to contacts that can help them understand those resources through useful social networks (Haythornthwaite, 2005:17).

Social networks are also developed in all spheres of human life including business world. It is a collaboration tool which makes good marketing based on sharing of mutually beneficial information, ideas and experiences. The social networking sites are primarily used for the purpose of social network development (Beisel, 2006:06). The social networks strengthen the solidarity of networks of likeminded persons. They promote collaboration and facilitate development (Vanneman et. al, 2006:33). The social networking has been useful to the marginalized sections of society all over the world since it provides a forum for mobilization of ideas and actions for their empowerment.

In particular, the social networking offers an exceptional arena for the individual and social lives of young people in the present times. The users are continuously constructing and co-constructing their identity online not only by using the site and its functionalities, but also by using their friends as mediational means. The social networking sites like Arto are simply a continuation of young people's normal teenage life (Larsen, 2007:22). The social networks enable the teens actively manage their online profiles to keep the information they believe is most sensitive away from the unwanted gaze of strangers, parents and other adults. The users manage their online identities and personal information by using social networking sites (Lenhart and Madden, 2007:24).

The modern teens have created a profile on a social networking site such as Facebook or MySpace. They have the profiles to interact with others who share common interest. These multi-channel teens are super communicators who will use any tool at their disposal, but cell phones, instant messaging applications and social networking channels rank higher in the panoply of their communications choices when compared with landline and face-to-face communication outside of school (Lenhart et. al. 2007:24). The young generation of educated persons has started developing and using their own social networks which appear to be adept in a variety of other technologies such as blogging and multimedia production.

There is steep growth rate for sales of premises- and cloud-based social networking services. Modern organizations deploy hybrid models for greater collaboration which is critical to business success. The mobile collaboration will increase for all categories of workers, and organizations can either take the lead, or be led by their

users. The social networks enable the users to adopt themselves to the changing environment, accelerate decision making, improve customer responsiveness and support continuous learning (Gartner, 2008:14). The social networks have enabled richer interactions among people and expanding collaboration to a broader level. A truly collaborative, effective and efficient workplace will not arise until organizations make these capabilities widely available through social networks.

The use of social networking is increasing in the field of higher education. In social networking systems the individual user (or groups of users) can decide what they wish to discuss and who they wish to work together with. The social networking systems truly have the capability to deliver a platform for learning where the student is potentially at the centre of activities (Oradini and Saunders, 2008:26). Recent research has identified the existence of social networks as a common and important denominator in cases where different stakeholders have come together to effectively deal with natural resource problems and dilemmas.

The structural pattern of relations of a social network can have significant impact on how actors actually behave. This clearly has implications for actors' abilities to manage environmental challenges (Bodin and Crona, 2009:07). The young adults use social networking sites regularly to develop two-way communication for academic and personal uses. They spent more time observing content on Facebook than actually posting content. Facebook was used most often for social interaction, primarily with friends with whom the students had a pre-established relationship offline (Pempek, et. al. 2009:27). The social networks are developed for the development of identity and peer relationships in modern times.

The social networks are used effectively for various purposes including the natural resource management in the world. There is a growing recognition that stakeholders can and should influence environmental decision making through active social network development. The intellectuals and environmental activists have played more central roles in the social network in modern times (Prell et. al, 2009:29). Social network development attracts people based on common language or shared racial, sexual, religious or nationality-based identities.

The social networks operate under an autonomous business model, in which a social network's members serve dual roles as both the suppliers and the consumers of content. It is important to cultivate an environment within which social networks can be used to their greatest advantage. The activists must work at this crucial time to ensure that they achieve the goals through optimum utilization of social networking sites for better social network development and sustainable development endeavors (Willard, 2009:36).

Social networks facilitate a great deal of learning between youth in these online communities. Teens negotiate identity, learn social skills and become subject matter experts through peer teaching in topics that pique their interests (Boyd, 2009:09).

The social networks have become useful sources of exchange of knowledge and information is crucial for effective governance of natural resources (Bodin and Crona, 2009:07).

The teens are closely associated with social networks for quick and easy communication and for relationship building and maintenance with the likeminded persons. The social networks reduce face-to-face communication and interaction but facilitate interactive communication for educational and personal development (Agosto and Abbas, 2010:01). The emerging picture of youth and social network sites suggests that these online communities mediate a wide variety of peer social practices and learning (Ito et. al., 2010:20).

The emerging science of social networks truly has transformative power. The applications of social network theory encompass everything from marketing to counter-terrorism to cancer research. The social media is great for extending traditional campaigns, not for replacing them. The social networks provide better opportunities for the achievement of progress in all walks of life including business (Bedell, 2010:04). The students are apt to use a variety of technologies to communicate frequently with their friends. There is a significant relationship between a teenager's intensity of Internet use and participation in online social networking (Ahn, 2011:02). The youth participation in social network communities signal the development of important technical skills and social development.

IV. SOCIAL NETWORKING IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The widespread diffusion of the Internet, mobile communication, digital media and a variety of social software tools throughout the world has transformed the communication system into interactive horizontal networks that connect the local and global. The social media have facilitated the formation of social networks and social movements. The new communication technologies tend to generate new forms of decentralized, non-hierarchical organizations and movements (Haider, 2011:15). The use of social media for social networking has become a significant force in political organizing, social interaction, and economic development.

There is strong evidence to suggest that social networks can improve the socioeconomic well-being of communities. There is need to continually reexamine and analyze the use of social media and social networking in the field of community development. In community development, one can use social media to facilitate social networking and conversely, one can network, form partnerships, and build relationships by leveraging social media (Lachapelle, 2011:21).

The young people develop online social networking to portray themselves as 'responsible young people' by distancing themselves from the public or grown up discourses represented by their parents or the news media (Larsen and Ryberg, 2011:23). The social networks enhance collective action for management but are not a panacea. The social networks play an important role as a bridging organization by facilitating collaboration, learning and coordination among agencies that span local, national, and

international levels; functions that are critical to strengthening and extending environmental management (Cohen et. al. 2012:10). Social Networks facilitate the successful management of common pool natural resources. The network bridges the ties among various players but does not guarantee its long term success (Rico et. al, 2012:30).

The online social networks of the teenagers have enhanced their capacity to make and sustain friendships. The users interact among themselves through online communication modes. The teenagers have also adopted social networking sites in their daily lives and used social networks for academic and personal benefits (Elaheebocus, 2013:13). The social networks have come into existence to bring the likeminded persons together and facilitate regular online social relations and identity (Vittadini and Pasquali, 2013:34). The social networks are built in modern times by the scientists to understand human social behavior and to use SNSs for experimental interventions. The social networks have posed ethical and regulatory challenges (Shapiro and Ossorio, 2013:31).

The social and ecological landscapes are in transition. They have given birth to social networks which have created new opportunities and challenges for values associated with agricultural and forestry production and biodiversity conservation. The social networks have explored new avenues and possibilities for greater people's participation in the process of sustainable development. The social networks articulate the patterns of connectivity between actors, and influence natural resource management outcomes (Beilin et. al, 2013:05).

The farmers develop social networks which play an important role in managing the agricultural sector. The social networks play a significant role in the flow of information and experience and enable the farmers to cope with adversity (Poudel et. al, 2015:28). The social media have changed the landscape of higher education and supported the individual academic in their role. The social media have become principal tools of social networking which has provided practical training, including the sharing of good practice, and to initiate dialogues within institutions regarding the potential career progression opportunities (Donelan, 2016:12).

The social networks have proven to be useful in all walks of life. They are found in the context of governance as useful source of shared interests in solving the problems of the people. The social networks are useful to engage stakeholders in their preferred ways and share the knowledge relevant to stakeholders particularly in connecting them with each other in the governance process (Hauck et. al, 2016:16). The social networks provide search functionality with different criteria. The users can search for local friends by restricting the query to a single town, for co-workers by searching for a company name, or for like-minded people by searching for their favored artist (Wuest, 2017:37). The social networks continue to add millions of users to their overall user base. The individuals and organizations have discovered social media as a new way of targeting their customers with relevant information.

V. SOCIAL NETWORK OF DALITS

Dalits have been widely using social networking sites to generate debates about the casteism and issues related to it. They make assertions through the online media and social media. Social networking has speeded the exchange of information between Dalits in India and abroad. In the social networking sites Dalits find their peer groups from all over India and even from abroad. Sharing the common concerns and raising theoretical philosophical and sociological questions against casteist discriminations are common features of Dalit interventions in the social networking sites. The social networking sites also enable better social network development and connectivity between Dalits and other stakeholders of development across the country.

As a matter of fact, the traditional print and electronic media have not ensured judicious space and time for the discussion of Dalit issues and concerns due to policy constraints. Social learning and participation are crucial for the Dalits since they need aggressive preparation and effective practical strategies to secure their share from the wider society. Dalits skillfully utilize the social media which are absolutely free from certain social and economic compulsions. Their interventions in the social networking are the need of the hour in a pluralistic society like India. It is the responsibility of the people, who believe in equality and justice, to give ample support for these interventions in the social networking sites.

There is greater variation in social capital in India across caste, tribe, and religion. The weak social networks and political mobilization of OBCs and dalits are a consequence of their relative poverty and low education as compared to high caste Hindus. The persistence of Brahmin privilege in social networks – in spite of the fact that they form less than 5 percent of the population – is an important finding for India. Even in urban areas, Brahmins enjoy better access to schools, medical facilities, and the government than do other groups. Dalits need healthy and viable social networks to mobilize relevant ideas and constructive actions for their empowerment (Vanneman et. al., 2006:33).

In India, movements and parties representing the lowest ranking Dalit caste groups have followed different strategies in their struggle against social, economic, political and cultural discrimination. The movement has to be strengthened on the basis of sound social networking of Dalits and transnational advocacy networks (Lerche, 2008:25). A new universe has opened up in which Dalit issues are debated. The forums range from Round Table India which conducts an online, anti-caste debate; to Dalit Camera, which films debates and interviews and loads them onto YouTube.

Dalits are active on Facebook and Twitter and are quick to react to any slight or act of discrimination through their own social networks. This social media mobilization has led to an eruption of opinions and self-expression. All the online debates in this vast Dalit forum are helping dalits to formulate arguments and theories that enable them to understand how they can deal with the caste system and the cruelties of Indian mainstream society (Dhillon, 2016:11).

Dalits in India have faced several challenges and constraints from the empowerment point of view.

Dalits have resolved to develop social networking with a view to seek the intervention of international agencies including the United Nations Organizations. The interventions mentioned combating caste-based discrimination generally, accountability, implementation and enforcement of laws to protect Dalits, combatting violence against Dalits, eradicating caste discrimination in education, ensuring access to adequate housing, water and sanitation for Dalits, and enhancing activities aimed at eliminating discrimination against Dalit women (International Dalit Solidarity Network, 2017:18).

The International Dalit Solidarity Network has worked for the internationalization of caste discrimination as a critical human rights issue. The network produces crucial input in the form of documentation, strategic interventions and lobby action and also supports lobby activities on a national level. The network has strongly advocated the need for developing social network among Dalits to mobilize action for the education, organization, emancipation and empowerment of Dalits in India (International Dalit Solidarity Network, 2017:19).

Discrimination against Dalits is widely recognized as a human rights issue. The rights of Dalits can be protected on the basis of sound network of organizations from local to global. The 'Dalit Adhikar Network aims to build the capacity of small and community-based organizations and empower Dalits by connecting them with various social security schemes through social networking.

VI. CONCLUSION

The social media have become all pervasive interactive and participatory communication tools and technologies in modern times. The present study evaluated the role of social media in the social networking and empowerment of Dalits in Karnataka state. The prominent characteristics of social media include - free web space, free web address, building profiles, uploading contents, making conversations, chatting with clients and members, sending of e-mails and creating pages. The Constitution of India contains several progressive and protective measures for the empowerment of Dalits and other sections of society in India. The social network basically consists of likeminded individuals and organizations. The social networks are at the heart of alliance development and governance for sustainable development. The social media have the capacity to build and sustain the social network of Dalits who are the most marginalized sections of Indian society. The Dalit intellectuals and organizers make use of social media to address the issue of marginality and social injustice in India. The social media reconstructs the debates around social justice, inclusive development and sustainable development related issues and concerns of Dalits.

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