

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MASS MOVEMENT

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Abstract Social media is the most popular buzz-word of the new millennium. Social media, the computer-mediated tools, allows people to create, share and exchange information, ideas, pictures, videos, etc. in virtual world. The members of social media sites are associated with one or more specific types of interdependency such as friendship, kinship, ideology, common interest, relationships of beliefs, knowledge, prestige, etc. With the rapid penetration of internet and fast growing population of global netizens, social media has been playing a crucial role in the mode of communication from its inception. From young to old, students to professionals, rich to poor (those who can afford internet), academicians to artists, businessmen to politicians, celebrities to corporates, ministers to government officials, etc. all make use of social media for a range of social, academic, political, leisure, personal, creative, cultural, commercial, officials and other activities. In fact, social media has been growing as a popular tool to reach out the mass easily. The mass movement 'call for a Day of Rage' on January 25, 2011, that ignited the Egypt was a revolution originated from a Facebook page. In India, Anna's 'India Against Corruption (IAC)', initiated by Kisan Baburao Hazare, was a leading example, where Social media played a crucial role to mobilise supporters for the movement. Anna Hazare who started an indefinite hunger strike on 16th August 2011 to exert pressure on the Indian government to enact a stringent anti-corruption law as envisaged in the Jan Lokpal Bill, received unprecedented online support from India and abroad. Less than 4 days into Anna Hazare's movement, the campaign received support from over 1,16,000 fans on Facebook and 5600 followers on Twitter.

Many experts have the opinion that Anna Hazare's mass movement would not have been so big without enormous support generated by social media. It was that social media created a useful platform for the supporters to share their views and ideas on corruption, patriotism and social changes. Ever since the success of social media campaign of IAC, it became a pertinent question whether it's going to be the age of social medium to unite people for mass movement. In fact some believe that social media going to be more powerful than Gutenberg's printing press, which was responsible for the Protestant Reformation in the fifteenth century, in the years to come. Even those, who doubt the credibility and integrity of internet would agree to the fact that the mass movement for pro-democracy rights' and social and political reforms sweeping Tunisia, Egypt, Iran, India and other parts of the globe would not have been able to spread their campaigns without social media. In fact, social media has revolutionized learning, cognition and sociability. It has facilitated the development of a new culture of social behavior and consciousness. The power of social media has made to understand the value of it for uniting people for mass movement. This study of the paper focuses to understand and analyse the role and impact of social media as a tool of mobilizing young generation for mass movement.

Keywords: Social media, mass movement, mass awareness, online campaign, etc.

Introduction

The development of technology has been the key reason for the emergence of different mediums for networking of people in different times. As recent addition, internet has made such networking of people much easier, more beneficial and inexpensive. A large population of internet users uses the word "Social Media" for networking through online websites.

The popular definition of social media states "the relationships that exist between

network of people" (Walter & Riviera, 2004). In common parlance, the word social media can be understood as the practice of expanding the number of one's contacts and connections for different purposes. For easy understanding, it can be defined as a web-based facility that allows an individual to develop a public or semi-public virtual platform to avail the facilities such as sharing and expressing views, develop bonding with people of diverse interests, create mass

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movement for different issues, promote business etc. It is basically a social structure based online virtual world, where members of the sites are associated for mutual benefits.

The emergence of several Social Networking sites like Orkut, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Hi5, Twitter etc. have not only made the concept of 'World a Global Village' reality but also developed a strong public platform to exercise democratic rights and public opinions. In a way, social media has created a parallel world connecting with each other 24X7 with significant influence in the state of the affairs of the world.

Clay Shirky, one of the pioneers of the study of social media as tool of mass mobilization for collective action, argues that over the years, with the proliferation of internet across the globe made communication denser, more complex, and more participatory. People have gained greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech, and thus, an enhanced ability to undertake collective action (Shirky, 2011). The recent development of people's participation in social activism like students protest in Britain against university fee hike, Egyptian revolution, India against corruption, etc. have added a new dimension in the mode of mass mobilization. In fact, social media has been emerging as the most potent and powerful tools to share, exchange, debate and shape mass media movement for wide and instant publicity.

Statement of research problem

The real backbone for the rise of mass movements worldwide is the rapid and easy dissemination of information in recent times. Social media, among all available media platforms, makes spread of message just like bushfire. The pouring of ideas, thoughts, plans, programmes, debate, etc. on social media contributes immensely in the recent drive for mass mobilisation and standing united for social and political causes. The statement of the research problem is *“to understand and examine the impact of social media among young generation for mass movement”*

Significance

Social media introduces speed and interactivity that were lacking in the traditional mobilization techniques, which generally include the use of leaflets, posters, and faxes” (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011). From last couple years, it has been a topic of blogging, debate, discussion on different media on the role, speed, interactivity and impact of social media for different online activities.

The popular social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, etc. have been playing crucial roles in creation and exchange of user-generated content for mass movement in the recent times These social media sites have been found to be instrumental in propagating campaigns for mass participation, supports and fund rising across the globe. The success story of several mass movements including outbreak of revolution in the Arab world and Anna's India Against Corruption (IAC) movement and several other prove the far reaching impact of social media.

It's probably 2008, the world realized the importance and power of social media sites for the first time in the wake of Barak Obama's presidential election campaign. It was followed by “Twitter rebellion” in Iran in 2009. The student movement in Britain against the hike in university tuition fee in 2010 also saw the unprecedented social media support to mobilise students for protest on streets.

mybarackobama.com- online US presidential Campaign

Technically, Barack Obama's election campaign cannot be considered as mass movement for a social cause, nevertheless it was probably one of the earliest attempts of social media networking to get connected to people. The website mybarackobama.com, the social networking site developed for the campaign, created more than 2 million profiles, planned 200,000 offline events, formed 35,000 groups, posted 400,000 blogs, and raised \$30 million.

Egyptian revolution

In Egyptian revolution, one of the most

powerful revolutions against the president Hosni Mubarak, social media sites Facebook and Twitter both played pivotal roles in keeping people connected to the revolution. The social media sites played a credible role in providing a platform for planning protest and sharing news from Tahrir Square in real time. Many believe that it all started with opening a Facebook page “We Are All Khaled Said”.

The page received enormous “likes” and people started posting their disgust on Hosni Mubarak regime. The social media created a platform for thousands of people to instantaneously share videos of mainly events featuring brutality of the regime. Most importantly, it was the social media that played major role in conveying the news to the outside world on the lives of the common people in Egypt under Mubarak's regime and the intensity of the agitations against him. The bloggers and social media sites users were able to update the world about the revolution that would otherwise never make it to mainstream media.

India Against Corruption (IAC)

Kisan Baburao Hazare, popularly known as Anna Hazare, a social activist and prominent leader fighting against corruption, was in news for his India Against Corruption (IAC) movement. He went for indefinite hunger strike to exert pressure on the Indian government to enact a stringent anti-corruption law as envisaged in the Jan Lokpal Bill. Anna Hazare took his nationwide movement to a whole new level with the help of large scale participation of people both online and offline. His movement-IAC used social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube so extensively that it left the mouths of political parties wide open.

A dedicated expert team of information technology from Public Cause Research Foundation (PCRF), which acted as secretariat for India Against Corruption (IAC), ran IAC's main website along with 14 city-centric websites round the clock. They also monitored the television channels and post relevant videos on

the internet for creating buzzes across the globe. The team posted latest information about Hazare soon after he was arrested on social media sites, mainly on Facebook and Twitter. The movement received overwhelming online responses, around 3.64 lakh 'likes' on Facebook and over two lakh followers on Twitter. Hazare's video recorded in Tihar jail received nearly 1.6 lakh views on video-streaming website YouTube. @janlokpal, the twitter account of IAC, and #janlokpal hashtag were the reliable sources of information for more than 2 weeks.

Social media introduces speed and interactivity that were lacking in the traditional mobilization techniques, which generally include the use of leaflets, posters, and faxes. (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011). Looking at the crucial role played by social media in the recent mass movement, we cannot deny the fact that social media have the potential to unite people for social causes. This paper is an attempt to examine to understand the impact of social media on mass movement from the perspective of young netizens.

Objectives of research

The prime objectives of undertaking this research is to (a) understand the reasons behind the growing dependency people on social media in the recent times (b) examine the role played by the social media in mass movement (c) understand the impact of social media in mass movement.

Hypothesis

On the basis of the review of literature, personal experience and discussion with peer groups, the researcher has some assumptions on the topic of the research. The assumptions in broad level are (a) social media sites act as the catalyst in influencing online users to join mass movements (b) social media has been emerging as useful tool to develop public opinion (c) the high degree of the connectivity of social media makes mass movement far reaching and impactful.

Methodology

(i) **Universe:** The young netizens of Delhi, who

are connected to the social media sites either through their PCs/laptops/tabs or mobile phones have been selected as the universe for the study. As per statistics, the rate of penetration of internet and average time spent on social media are quite high among youth in India, mainly in metro cities.

(ii) Sample size: The simple random sampling technique has been applied to pick 300 respondents active in social media living in different pockets of Delhi. For the study to be inclusive, during the data collection some variables like professions, sex, locality, academic qualifications were also taken into consideration.

(iii) Unit of study: Any youngster living Delhi in the age group between 16-25, whether highly educated or semi educated, male or female, upper or middle class, but active in social media have been taken as the unit of the study.

(iv) Tool of data collection: A questionnaire with relevant questions related to the topic has been deemed suitable as tool for data collection. Although all the questions framed for the study have not been included in for analysis, but in order to achieve the objectives of the study each question has been framed in meaningful and logical way.

Finding of the Study

Some interesting findings were noticed from the survey conducted in the national capital Delhi. These findings were found to be quite useful to test the hypotheses and generalized to the larger population. The selection of conducting the survey in Delhi made the survey more interesting. For the reputation of Delhi being the political capital of the country and hub of intellectual activities help to gather some important findings on the impact of social media in the lives of the people of the city and mass movement. The findings of the study have been discussed hereunder.

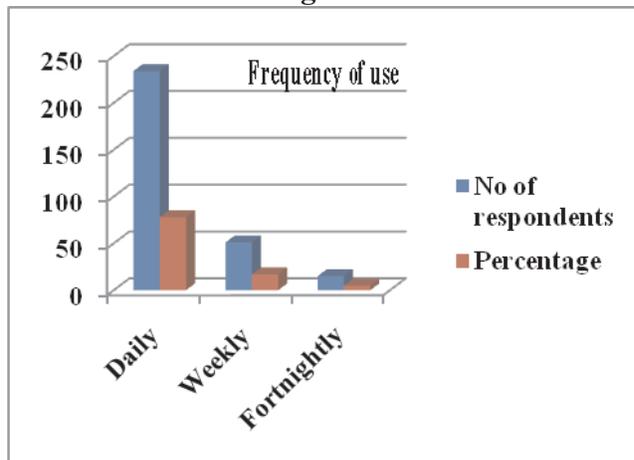
(i) Frequency of uses

From the responses of the survey, it has come to notice that 78% of respondents surf internet everyday, 17% surf at least once in every

Table 1

Options	No of respondent	Percentage
Daily	234	78
Weekly	51	17
Fortnightly	15	5
Total	300	100

Figure 1



week, 5% of the people surf at least once in every fortnight.

(ii) Source for information updating

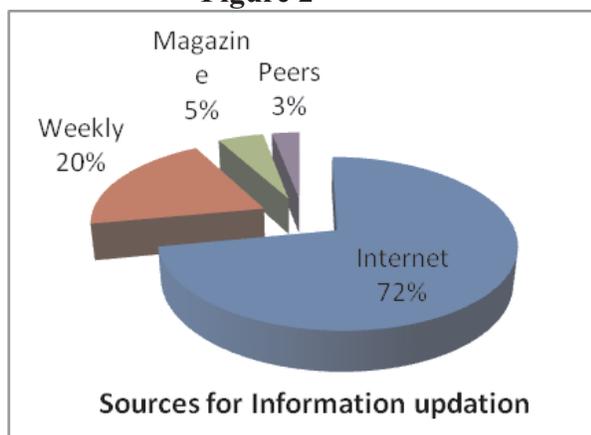
Survey also reflects that 72% of the respondents use internet as main source for information, for 20% of the respondents newspapers are the main source of information, 5% depends on magazines for updating

Table 2

Options	No of respondent	Percentage
Internet	216	72
Newspaper	60	20
Magazine	15	5
Peers	9	3
Total	300	100

themselves, whereas 3% respondents depend on peers for information. In fact it is a common belief among the regular internet users that internet has made them more informative and socially active. For them internet is the need of the hour, and for every small or big information

Figure 2



they Google (as they use it for the word search) it on internet.

(iii) Participation on Social Media

All the respondents, randomly selected representatives of the universe of the survey, were found active on social media sites. They use either their PC/laptops/tabs or mobiles phones to be active on the popular sites of social media. Facebook and Twitter were found to be more popular among the respondents of the sample.

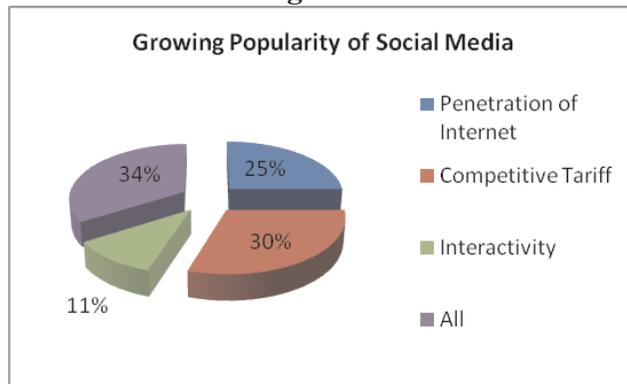
(iv) Growing popularity of Social Media

The survey suggest that 25% of the respondents believe in growing penetration as the key reason for the rising popularity of internet, whereas 30% of them credits the competitive rate of tariff of internet data uses makes the medium popular. 11% of the respondents have the opinion that the high degree of interactivity helps the medium to be popular in the recent times. The majority of the respondents *i.e.* 34% believe that all reasons mentioned above together make

Table 3

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Penetration of Internet	75	25
Competitive Tariff	90	30
Interactivity	33	11
All	102	34
Total	300	100

Figure 3



internet a popular media in the recent times.

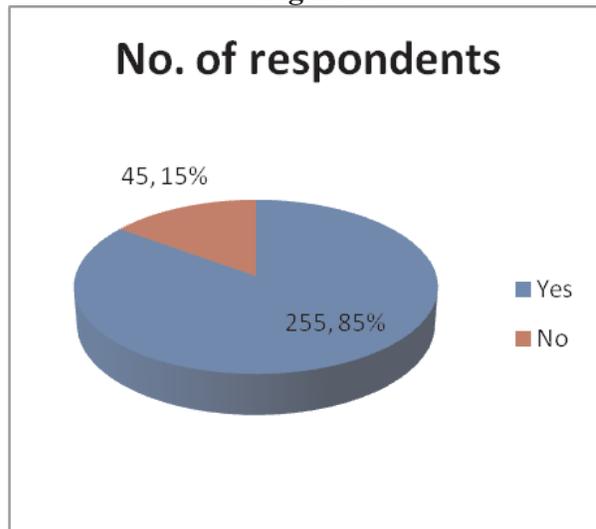
(v) Social media for Mass Movement

85% of the respondents look for social

Table 4

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	255	85
No	45	15
Total	300	100

Figure 4



media sites to get updated information on mass movement occurring in any parts of the country and the world as well. 15% of the respondents were not entirely dependent on social media for such information. (See table and figure 4)

(vi) Participation in Online Campaign of Mass Movement

It was found in the survey that 72% (see

Table 5

Options	No of respondent	Percentage
Yes	216	72
No	84	28
Total	300	100

Figure 5

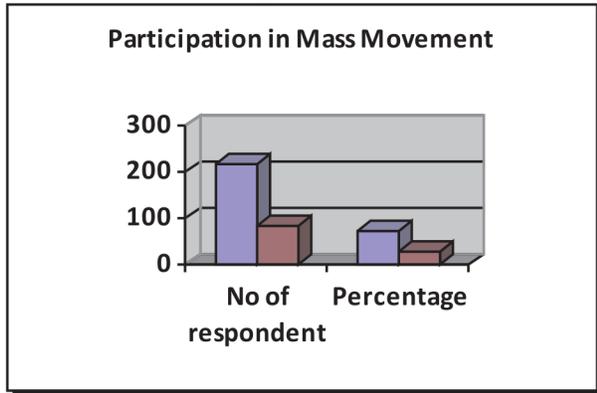


table 5 and fig 5) of the respondents who were depended on social media for updates, participated in mass movement occurred recently or in the past, either in the form of offline or online supporter. They posted their comments, views, likes, dislikes, raise fund, organize offline and online events, etc. to support such movements. Even many of the respondents were associated with India Against Corruption (IAC) movement as online or offline supporter. A number of 84 respondents out of 300, i.e. 28% of the respondents were found not dependent on social media for updates on mass mobilizing movement.

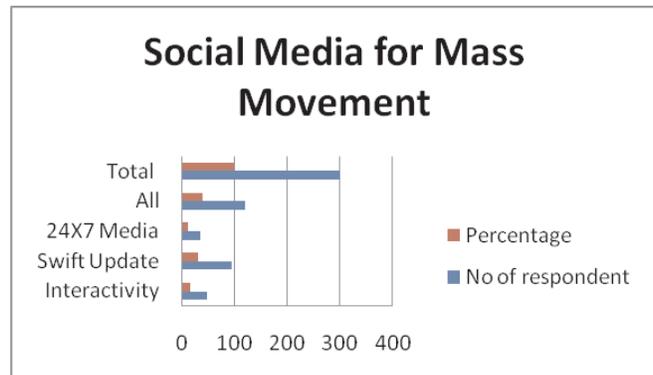
(vii) Reason for Social Media growing as useful Mass Mobiliser

When enquired on the reason for growing popularity of social media as mass mobiliser for mass movement, 32% believe the quality of the medium for swift updates makes the media grow

Table 6

Options	No of respondent	Percentage
Interactivity	48	16
Swift Update	96	32
24X7 Media	36	12
All	120	40
Total	300	100

Figure 6



as useful tool. 16% and 12% of them find quality of interactivity and 24X7 media respectively the key reasons for growing popularity of social media as mass mobiliser. A total of 120, i.e. 40%, of the total respondents suggest all the reasons, i.e. Interactivity, Swift Update and 24X7 media, make social media useful catalyst to spread and speed up the intensity of mass movement.

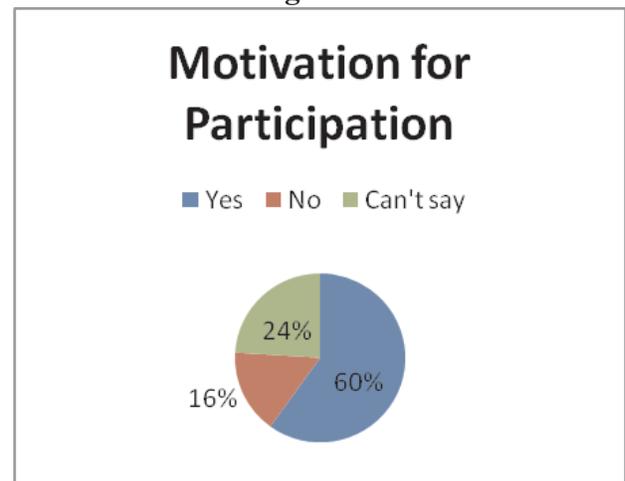
(viii) Motivation for Participation

Social media sites have been playing crucial role in the success of mass movement in the recent times. In the survey, it was found that as many as 60% of the respondents have the

Table 7

Options	No of respondent	Percentage
Yes	180	60
No	48	16
Can't say	72	24
Total	300	100

Figure 7



opinion that social media have been motivating more and more people to extend their solidarity towards mass movement organized in different parts of the globe including India. On the other hand, 16% does not have the same opinion and 24% can't say anything on it. The popular one liner of a famous mobile service provider-where ever you go the network follows- is quite applicable for social media, as 92% of the people have the opinion that wherever they went they got updated information on any mass movement form social media. They firmly believe that social media help them to stay connected and express their views 24X7.

Conclusion

Initial assumption on the catalytic influence of social media to join mass movements was found to be true from the finding of the study. A sizeable population of youngsters, who are found to be active in social media, participate in mass movement due to strong online presence of several such recent movements. Living anywhere in the world, social media provide netizens to extend solidarity to such mass movement. While carrying out the survey, it has been found that some of the respondents participated in India Against Corruption (IAC) movement. Many netizens

have the opinion that due to easy availability of the minute to minute information on IAC made the online presence of the campaign a great success. The netizens express their views in the form of likes, comments, clicks, appeals, initiating forums, participating in online discussion, debate etc. Social media platform provide a democratic platform to users to debate and discuss on issues related to the concerns of the mass audience. The growing penetration and cheaper rate of internet make it feasible for mass movement to create instant and powerful impact. These interpretations based on the data collected suggested all three hypotheses to be true.

Whether in Arab nations, Britain or India, the high penetration of internet in the world and strong presence of youngsters on social media either through PC or Laptop or Tab or mobile phones have been helping such movement to receive record participation of people. The grand success of Jasmine Revolution and India Against Corruption (IAC) undoubtedly established the fact that user-generated content on social media can also make a big difference in mass mobilisation for important social causes. With times, social media have been emerging as powerful tool to unite people to participate and voice their opinion on mass movements.

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