**SOCIAL MEDIA AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL**

Social media forms an undeniable part of how we communicate in this modern century. Its effect is now central to all communication stages and channels. Consisting mainly of online communities, its voice carry a strong and influential impacts and there is much to be gained from engaging directly with people through these channels – whether to reach journal readers, to network with colleagues, or even just to keep up to date with friends and family.

According to ***Akshat, Tahir, Shivani and Samiksha*** in their joint presentation titled, ***“Role of Social Media in Business Communication”,*** defines ***Social Media*** as:

“The online content created by people using highly scalable and accessible publishing technologies. In it’s basic sense, it’s a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information and content. It’s a fusion of sociology and technology, transforming monologues (one to many) into dialogues (many to many) and is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. Social media allows people to connect in the online world to form relationships for personal, political, and business use.”

The presenters built their ideology around ***Business* *Communication*** stating the obvious that:

Social Media is basically about building a conversion with clients and consumers. They also highlighted that companies are successfully using social media to drive sales, build traffic, find employees, build community, and create a positive, well known brand. Stressing further that social media can be leveraged to create wonderful marketing masterpieces – big names like Skittles and Dell increase their sales, brand, and the community around their products.

Social Media comes in many forms including:

* Forums
* Blogs
* Business Networks
* Photo-Sharing and Video-Sharing Platforms
* Social Gaming
* Microblogs
* Chat Applications (Chat apps)
* Social Networks.

Globally, the influence and power of social networking is so phenomenal such that the number of worldwide users is estimated to rise to 2.95 billion by 2020 – which is a thirdth of the world’s human population. However, it is expected that 650 million users will come from the world’s second most powerful nation, China. While a thirdth of a million users is estimated by usage to come from India.

In recent time, the North America Region has been rated with the highest penetration rate of social networks where 60% of the region’s population accounts for ownership of at least one social network account. Similarly, 78 percent of the United States population has a social networking profile as indicated in the Digital Social Media Statistics and Facts as at 2016.

Inarguably, the influence of Social Media cannot be overemphasized. As we examine the individual and constituent member of this phenominal communication tool – Social Media, we shall discover that social media has permeated into every aspect human activity - inclduing communication.

**FACEBOOK**

Facebook which has been rated the most widely and populous social network platform provides great exposure, powerful and useful marketing, interaction and communication platform for free.

It both enhances and promotes online peer and group discusions to acquire, gain and birthed valuable inputs.

Community of people with purposeful association, socialization and communication is pioneered at the lowest possible cost.

On a yearly basis, because of its influential effect on communication, there is an approximately 72% increased usage of the platform for all manners and levels of communication.

**WHATSAPP**

Whatsapp messenger is a freeware and cross platform instant messaging and Voice over IP (VoIP) service. All data is end-to-end enccryted which reliably uses a standard cellular mobile numbers and application runs from a mobile device, though it may also be accessible from a desktop computer.

This application enables sending text messsages and voice calls, and more recently images, videos, video calls and other media, documents and user location be shared.

Beyond user to user or group communication, Whatsapp in September, 2017 had also announced a service that will also allowed business platform for companies to provide customer service to users at scale.

As at February 2016, whatsapp users rose to over one billion, making it the most popular messaging application at the time. However, it is the most popular messaging system (application) at the time in India, Pakistan, Russia, Latin America, most of Africa and the UK including Germany, Italy and Spain.

**EMAIL**

According to ***Sendmail Inc,*** email has long been a fundamental tool for communication in the business sector. However, the Sendmail survey of 2013 revealed that email communication contributes to about 64% of work tension, confusion or other negative consequences for working class personnels.

**However, email system as a messaging service has provided a consumerate way and channel of communication bewteen individuals, community of people and organizations at a near-no-cost for the communicating parties.**

**TWITTER**

Although not overly rated or used because of limited flexibility of the system platform, twitter is also very useful and influence the mode of communication and transmition of information, ideas and thoughts among varied peoples group.

Twitter also provides outreach and feedback in the modern communication era, particularly, foreign handlers, political activities and socio-economic activities.

It is also a support system for other online presence. Like facebook, there is an annual increase of the twitter usage by 69%.

**GOOGLE+**

As a social networking service provided by the all times giant search engine company, this platform will helps you understand your own statistics on the web. In terms of controlling your messaging system on the web, google+ is a giant specialist on this prospect.

The platform help factored in local carousel results while its integration ability with other platform cannot be overlooked. Hence, it is a great tool of the Social media that influences communication effectively.

Communicating in the business world, ICT, education and other relevance sectors across the globe has increased the percentage usage of the Google+ by 67 per cent.

**PINTEREST**

**Pinterest or Personal Interest** is a personalized media platform which is used to find ideas for one’s projects and interests.

The communication factor allows users to browse and locate contents of other users on the main page. One can personalized their social experience by pinning items, creating boards and interacting with other users.

**SKYPE**

Skype influences communication by cutting the cost of audio or voice communication. And, in the instance of making contact, its video coverage allows colleagues and communicating partners to stay in tough with each other thereby reducing the traveling cost.

**YOUTUBE**

As a video-sharing platform, youtube allow a variety of ways fo communicating to a large audience through video footages that informs, educates, and entertains. This social network is used to add value to text content platforms like blogs, forums, etc.

Top Social Network sites by number of active users in 2017

Social network sites worldwide ranked by number of active users (in millions, as of January, 2017).

As published on February 23, 2017 by Robert Allen

SmartInsights, a digital expert company states:

Social networks are now so well established, that there are now a core ‘top 5’ social networks which doesn’t change much from year-to-year.

Facebook community had risen in recent time to over 1,870 million active users and holds an 18% market share, 7% more so than its closest competitor, the Facebook-owned, Whatsapp.

(Diagram here)

Consequently, there is a predominantly APAC favoured platforms, with QQ (9%), WeChat (8%) and Qzone (7%) all with over 600 million active users, which indicates the communication effectiveness of APAC offers. However, there is also a cluster of predominantly western social media networks in Tumbir (6%), Instagram (4%) and Twitter (4%).

SmartInsight , also revealed that among the US users, Facebook is aslo retaining a huge lead on the competition. Its increased penetartion to 89% of the US internet users, with the Facebook-owned instagram rating second with 32% penetration.

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