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Media Industry Trends and Dynamics: The Social Media Boom

Shirin Abbas^{a*}, AK Singh^b

^aShri Ramswaroop Memorial University, 2/66 Gomtinagar Lucknow 226010, India

^bShri Ramswaroop Memorial University, A-9 AWHO Colony, Tyagi Vihar Bangla Bazaar, Lucknow 226002, India

Abstract

Media Industry in 2014 is moving away from traditional print and audio-visual domination and into the digital age with smartphones being the key to ushering in innovative technology, creativity and high-speed communication. Mobile telephony has proved a huge plus in propagating digital applications not just in the metros but also in smaller cities and towns. There has been a phenomenal growth of digital media usage despite the poor power and infrastructure situation in India which is a huge deterrent. India today boasts of the third largest population on Facebook and the growing numbers are an indicator of things to come.

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1. New media

New media is the preferred term for a range of media practices that employ digital technologies and the computer in one way or the other. New media is also emerging as a key term in education and culture.

1.1. New media vs digital media

The big issue with the use of the term 'digital media' is that it has a tendency to highlight and pinpoint technology as the defining aspect of a medium and lose focus on its usage and applications. As against this, the

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +91-9335231305

E-mail address: Shirin.bj@srmu.ac.in

term, ‘New media’ throws better light on contemporary cultural concepts and contexts of media practices than just focus on new technology.

This a lot of media analysts see new media as nothing more than the revaluation of old media through the prism of improved technology or as Dewdney Andrew and peter have stated, it is “the visioning of new media possibilities through the lens of old media is a response to the phenomenon of convergence in technologies and media ownership” (Dewdney & Peter, 2006).

New media is an overall term that encompasses a volatile industry which includes multimedia, entertainment and e-commerce. As Parker and Dunn state, “The term has long been used in social research, having been used since the 1960s and 1970s by investigators studying the form, uses and implications of information and communication technologies.

Social Media refers to the means of interactions between the public through which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Furthermore, social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content. It introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals.

“Social Media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Furthermore, social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content. It introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals” (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2010).

Table 1. Social media usage—Global & Indian

Medium	Global	Indian
Facebook	1.5 billion	115 million
Twitter	500 + million	77.49 million
Google +	500+ million	20 million
Linked in	238 million	23 million
Instagram	130 million	Data not Available
Pinterest	70 million	8.12 million
Tumblr	267 million	2.93 million
You Tube	Data not Available	55 million

1.2. The growth of mobile applications (Apps) and smartphones

IT research firm Gartner has estimated that worldwide Mobile app stores revenues will possibly cross \$30 billion in 2014 compared to \$18 billion in 2012. The Gartner study estimates that while there was a downfall in paid apps in the start of this decade, free downloads which account for about 85 percent of total mobile application store downloads in 2012 will increase by the middle of this decade and users will begin paying for more applications as they perceive values in the concept of mobile applications, and they become more trustful of billing mechanisms. The growth between 2010 and 2014 is forecast be over 1,000 percent.

As we all know there is a linear relationship between the apps download and the sales of new mobile devices as the customers who buy new mobile phones definitely download apps and as the mobile buying cycle slows down so does the mobile apps downloads. The industry is expected to continue its explosive growth in future also due to upgrading of mobile networks from 2G to 3G to 4G which will increase the speed of internet and data downloads on the mobile phones and also the mobile phone manufacturers launching more and more devices with powerful processors, touch screens, increase in display screen sizes and finally developers developing more apps.

The Gartner study goes on to state: “Apple iOS and Google Android app stores combined are the dominant players in this market and are forecasted to account for 90 percent of global downloads in 2017.” According to the Gartner survey email and calendaring (46%), Instant Messaging (IM) (37%), and office & personal productivity (26%) are the three most popular uses of mobile applications today.

No longer just a consumer boon, Mobile apps have seen a phenomenal increase in adoption by enterprise companies that are developing and launching mobile apps to engage with both the consumers and employees. Smartphones sales are increasing and the companies are adopting the bring-your-own-device (BYOD) will also fuel the enterprise apps growth. (Gartner, 2013)

The Vice President of the Sales and Marketing, group and General Manager of worldwide embedded systems group at Intel, Ms. Indu Nandakumar states in her article in *The Economic Times* from India's e-hub, Bangalore. "We view the internet-of-things driving the next wave of computing. Early indications from India indicate a lot of interest around these new solutions." Internet –of-things refers to the growing trend of devices getting connected to the internet and indicates growing e-literacy in a country. [3]

Just an indicator of the growth index, role and importance of social media can be provided by the following statistics:

- If Facebook were a country—it would have the third largest population in the world today after China and India and have twice the population of the United States!
- 72% of all internet users are now active on social media
- 18-29 year olds have an 89% usage
The 30-49 bracket sits at 72%
- 60 percent of 50 to 60 year olds are active on social media, 45% of Facebook users are over 65.
- Time spent on Facebook per hour : USA citizens spend 16 minutes, followed by Australians at 14 minutes and the Brits at 13 minutes.
- 71% of users access social media from a mobile device.

(According to Social Media Analyst Jeff Bullas)

Monthly Active Users	No. of Users	Time Spent on Social Media Networks per hour by country	
Facebook	1.15 billion	United States	16
Google +	359 million	Australia	14
Twitter	215 million	United Kingdom	13
Instagram	150 million	1 Million Web Pages Are Automatically Connected To Facebook	
Pinterest	20 million	5 million times/day the +1 button from Google is used	
Reddit	2 million		

Source: www.jeffbullas.com/2014/01/17/20-social-media-facts-and-statistics-you-should-know-in-2014/

2. The Indian scenario

While Social Media growth around the world has slowed, no one can doubt it's viability in the U.S. and Western Europe, it's far from stopped, with the huge opportunity to recruit new users in less-developed markets ensuring that the social networking uptick will continue for years to come. Some 200 million users globally were added in the past 12 months, with 1.61 billion people now active in social media and 1.5 Billion on Facebook alone. This is expected to advance to breach the 2 billion mark in 2016.

The growth figures were not unexpected. According to an eMarketer report, "Worldwide Social Network Users: 2013 Forecast and Comparative Estimates," the number of social network users in India exceeded 127 million users by end of 2013. The total numbers of social media users will more than double and reach close to 283 million users by 2017.

There has been a strong social media adoption in India since past few years as the business organizations, government organizations and even political parties are actively utilizing the various social media platforms and social network sites to reach the people. Of 75% of Indians who are active internet users most spend over 30 minutes per day online on the different social networks. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest etc. are extremely popular and interaction with friends, relatives, colleagues and community, live chat, status updates, image- as well as video-sharing are some of the major activities.

According to Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), "India is expected to have close to 165 million mobile internet users by March 2015 according to the IAMAI –IMRB Report 2012-13. The number of social media

users in Urban India reached 66 million by June 2013 and by March 2015 is expected to cross 155 million Mark. Some 97 per cent of them are on Facebook. And they are spread beyond the big metros. One-third of social media users live in towns with a population of less than 5 million; 25 per cent of the total users live in towns with less than 2 million inhabitants”.

Social media usage is also fast catching up with mobile internet users. According to the report, 77 percent of the users use mobile for social media. Email, social media, search, app store and chat / IM are used every day by those accessing internet through mobile. Facebook had 78 million monthly active users (MAUs) in India for the quarter ending March 31, 2013, registering a 50% increase from the Q1 2012. LinkedIn has 20 million users, Twitter has 33 million users, Pinterest has 5.5 million users in India at the end of March 2013. Indians are very active on different social networks and are also actively increasing the amount of time they spend on the various social networking sites.

Once restricted to college students, Facebook's fastest-growing demographic is users over 18. By June 2014, the total number of internet users tally is expected to reach 243 million in the sub-continent (India), of which more than 185 million are likely to access the web through their mobile device. In India the social media giant has amassed 92 million users, which is now the 2nd highest after the U.S, according to Facebook's own data. Hence, Facebook adoption is bound to rise further in the near future both at mobile and desktop levels. Thanks to the Indian mobile manufacturers, the multimedia sets are now cheaper than ever allowing people from all economic strata to access the internet. The sudden surge of social media literacy has now spread all across the country. Thus, mobile apps provide not only ease of access to the users but it also allows users from the mid and low impact zones to access social media. It is observed that although a large chunk of these users may not be proactive but they do act as listeners. Listeners who when required, act.

Social media networking properties (apps/sites) comes second only to “search” as the most favored activity of smart phone users in India. The current goof up of the facebook IPO may have affected its image worldwide, but the majority of smartphone users in India have chosen to overlook it as a minor glitch. Contrary to the notion that mobile internet penetration is unhealthy, a recent report by Nielsen Informate Mobile Insights suggests that 93% Indian smartphone users use their handsets to access social media. Facebook, of course tops the list with 5 times more hits than its rival Google+ and Twitter falls into the third place (Rai, 2012).

Though internet awareness in India is high, there are but a very low number which attempt to browse through sites other than Facebook. This is a trend also seen globally in developing countries as Facebook continues to dominate the usage as social media usage timeline is slightly lagging in these states. In India, one is likely to find most teens flocking the social media giant's website and use it extensively to share their photos, stories, speak out and opine indulge in discussions and other activities.

Of the total 92 million (7.73% of the total user-base) Facebook users in India, more than half are predominantly in the age group 18-24 years. Facebook is very popular in India and other developing nations. Nearly 11% or 10.6 million Facebook users in India are aged below 17, about 26 million (28% of total Facebook India population) fall in the age group of 25-34. Close to 6.6 million are between 35-44 years, 2.2 million between 45-54 years and the rest above 55 years.

Male Users Dominate, Accounting For 75.6% Of The Overall User Base!

If we compare Facebook user demography on the basis of gender, nearly 75.6% of the total user base in India, (nearly 69.5 million users) are male, whereas close to 22 million odd are female users. In the age group below 17, male users account for 8 million (8.6% of the total user base in India) and female for 2.6 million. Amongst teens of age between 18-24 years, nearly 34 million or 37% of users (In India) are male and about 11.6 million are female users.

Even in higher age groups, male users dominate, outplaying female users by a significant margin, amongst users aged 25-34 years 19.8 million (77.3% of users in the mentioned age category) are male compared to 5.8 million who belong to the female category. Amongst user aged 35-44, 77.39% (5 million) are male and rests (1.46 million) are female.

The IAMAI report further elucidates the Adoption of Social Technologies in Enterprises vs. Consumer, amount of time spent on social media by users along with addressing the key question of how corporate houses are factoring Social Networks in their Online Ad Budgets? This report presents a status quo compendium on social media that will act as a ready referral source for the digital media industry.

Microsoft India Head, HR, Rohit Thakur while accepting that Social Media has emerged as a highly influential professional tool, avers, that Social Media is fast emerging as an effective tool for self branding. In such a scenario it is imperative that prospective candidates create an appropriate social profile that has complete and accurate information about their education and professional qualifications, agenda, affiliation and stand on critical issues (Bhatia, 2013).

The Digital Media market is estimated at a total of 227 billion rupees in India with 127 users with PCs and laptops and another 100 odd million accessing internet through mobiles tablets and other devices.

3. Empowering the voter

A recent report released by the Internet and Mobile Association of India and IRIS Knowledge Foundation has revealed that of India's 543 constituencies, 160 can be termed as 'high impact' — that is, they were most likely influenced by social media. As the report explains, high impact constituencies are those where the numbers of Facebook users are more than the margin of victory of the winner in the last Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) election, or where Facebook users account for over 10% of the voting population. The study goes on to declare 67 constituencies as medium-impact, 60 as low-impact and 256 as no-impact constituencies. In 67 other 'medium-impact constituencies', Facebook users comprise over 5 per cent of voters. Politicians here, the study says, 'cannot afford to ignore social media' (Datar & Shetty, 2013).

The study certainly seems to echo the general euphoria over social networking as a political tool. However, the number of Facebook users might not translate into any change in voting patterns. Though high in numbers, 7.8 crore Facebookians and 2 crore Twitteratis make up only 8.5 % of the total Indian population. Social Media expert Ratnakar Kumar speaking on this vast divide between the internet haves and the have not says, "As you know the number of people active on social networking sites is small when compared to a vast majority of non-internet Indian electorates. However, a socially committed and politically aware 98 million in itself is a huge force to reckon with, especially when the voting turn-out in Indian politics is not always high, 98 million can play a major role" (Datar & Shetty, 2013).

3.1. Global digital trends 2014: data deluge

There are over 2.1 billion plus Internet users in the world today with over 45% of them in Asia alone and over 5.3 billion mobile subscribers — 77% of world's population! Some 500 million to 1 billion people access Internet via mobile, many of them only through mobile. Almost 1 in 5 global mobile subscribers have access to fast mobile Internet (3G+). Today 85%+ of new handsets can access mobile Web.

3.2. Digital trends India 2014

Facebook user growth will come fastest from Asia-Pacific, where adoption rates in India, Indonesia and Japan far exceed the worldwide average growth. As of now, Facebook had 92 million users in India in the first quarter of 2013. The next logical step is to monetize this base (Kohli-Khandeker, 2013).

There is no magic wand to predict what 2014 will bring for India. There will definitely be innovations in digital marketing and communication. Social pundits have prophesied that year 2014 will surely be the year of the Mobile web for India. Mobile Commerce has long-held promise in India, but looks like 2014 will be the year when the promise turns into reality. Large ecommerce websites like MakeMytrip, Flipkart and Myntra are seeing 15-20% of the transactions coming through mobile already. If you run a business, it's the right time to think through a mobile strategy and ensure that your customers can transact with you through their mobiles (Chawla, 2013).

With 227 million online users in India, over 127 million of these access the internet through PC's Laptops et al whereas the remaining 100 million do the same through Mobiles, tablets or other devices. The percentage share of social media amounts to around 13% of the total digital pay revenue of Rs 250 billion as per IMAI, TRAI, FICCI_KPMG Report 2013 and industry sources (Kohli-Khandeker, 2013).

4. Conclusion

With a 51.7% increase expected in the Indian subcontinent in Social Media users, the time is ripe to usher in a new digital revolution which entails the use of inexpensive efficient and prompt tools to aid social causes like HIV/AIDS research and communication. With transliteration and translation tools available across various e-platforms, the stage has come when these will be the tools of the future to push intensive research and study in these spheres. The field is now open to innovative communicators who wish to take the lead and take e-communication to new heights in this digital age.

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