

SOCIAL MEDIA... OPENING UP OF A NEW HORIZON !!!

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ABSTRACT

With what began with the idea of “friending”, social media in today’s date has expanded immensely to what one couldn’t have imagined even a few years ago. Beginning with sites like Friendster and MySpace to the now trending Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, or Snapchat, social media has come a long way and that too very effectively. Right from being in touch with people you like (or otherwise), to portraying yourself the way you want (irrespective of how you actually are), to even expressing your opinion welcoming an array of wanted and unwanted responses - you have it all.

This is something that hitherto wasn’t so upfront. In the age when there were only newspapers and radio or even when the nation had television, there was hardly any person around us that didn’t have an opinion on how Rahul Dravid should have played a shot to have remained on the crease or what should India’s defense strategy be against Pakistan. While coming across news that demanded opinion, a common man would discuss the issue he/she felt about with the friends over tea and pretend to know it all. Things have changed now, but not to a great deal. People pretend even today. They voice opinion even today. What is different today is that friends that we had around us for tea have spread across the globe. More importantly those are massive in number. Some thousands on FB or some lakh followers on Twitter is puny.

It has become easier for the generation today to discuss beyond newspapers and TV news as social media and blogs and portals that give new perspectives call for a debate. Healthy or ugly, that remains out of question. But at least there is a debate. For how long does it sustain? This is one question that probably pops up here but as long as the nation and its population is up for a talk, matters resolve. With so many opinions coming together on one platform, social media remains probably the only place where you say what you wish to, with no inhibitions.

KEYWORDS: *Social media, Facebook, Twitter, opinions, perspective, debate*

Social media today has allowed the users to be ‘active’, in literal meaning of the term, wherein within seconds of posting a message, you get responses of all sorts. You fight, share same opinion, voice your frustration, discuss issues, express disbelief, tarnish someone’s image, ridicule someone else, and what not. When was such a platform given to the people of our country where they could say whatever they wanted to people who they didn’t even know? Isn’t this an amazing thing where you can start a grand campaign to help a needy just by one tweet? Chennai floods last year is one relevant example.

Above everything else, there is news with a different perspective. Think of the time when Pranav Dhanawade scored 1009 runs in a single inning. The nation went berserk showering all kinds of praises. It was only after three days of his gigantic feat that one content writer working for a website showed the world the other side asking us to 'calm down' and informing us about the opposite team comprising of much younger players and that his innings lacked sportsmanship spirit. A similar incident was witnessed recently when Dhanawade was being compared to Arjun Tendulkar as the former wasn't selected for U-19 team. The nation took Dhanawade's side indirectly blaming Arjun (thinking he was selected because of his father). Poor nation didn't even bother to know the full story that said that Dhanawade wasn't even eligible and that Arjun was selected as he performed brilliantly. Was this side of 'another perspective' even possible 10 years ago with just newspapers and TV news available?

Public read a story. Discussed about it with few of his/her friends, and that was it. There was never the other side of story available. Hence there was 'half truth' floating everywhere. What new media basically does is that it justifies one of the basic tenets of journalism- objectivity. It is only when you get to know both sides of the story that you can form an opinion. That's how it should be. And it is new media that has enabled the same. While newspapers and TV impart information and you are passive, it is new media that is active and interactive. Yes, there are opened pages in newspapers. Plus there are options with the audience of raising objections with the content on print and broadcast, but a continuous and immediate discussion on large scale is not possible.

When a blog commends Modi of making frequent foreign trips, or when a website gives us another story on the much hyped AIB Roast; or even when going against the general notion a freelancer praises Arnab Goswami or in the case of so-called intolerance when a blogging site favors Aamir Khan for his statement that was misinterpreted by the media (or deliberately used otherwise), it is actually presenting that side of the story which newspapers or TV news by their very inherent nature can't. At the same time, forcing the audience or readers to believe in one side only should be done away with.

Thanks to content writing that this generation is witnessing so many sites, each of different genre. While some are skeptical, some judge the value. However though unintentional, the main motive behind each of them sums up to providing a different perspective which we tend to ignore after reading the news story the first time.

The examples are many. The most recent one includes legends. Late Muhammad Aii who after his demise is not only remembered for his sporting skills but also for the good he did for the society. Drawing comparisons with our very own Sachin Tendulkar and other veterans of various fields, it were these 'other perspective' sites that told us that Sachin too should do something like him to serve a better and bigger purpose as a legend. On the other hand, several portals also said that he didn't need to serve the society just because somebody else did wherein he did what he was best at, while there were opinions which said- Yes, we shouldn't necessarily hope Sachin

does political things for the society but since he like several other celebrities can prove to be opinion leaders, they should come forward. Mind well, all this is not in any of the newspapers but on social media inviting opinions from several individuals residing in every nook and corner of the earth. Yes, it may not make a big change in the world we live in. But to some extent, this makes us aware of what happens around us, the people that breathe the same air as us.

Social media offers a platform very transparent that allows each and every one without minutest discrimination to voice his/her opinion and also to know what fellow people think of it. Similarly you are also free to let others know what you think of their value judgment. This is a place where you don't just read the information and take it in. You question its basic premise, have a discussion and form opinions. You post something in Gujarat and it is read across the globe. Isn't that great?

On the other hand, creative campaigns like The Last Selfie WWF on Snapchat, Like A Girl on Twitter, Presidential Hopefuls on FB and Twitter, Plate of Hope on Facebook, Change.org or people signing for net neutrality debate have gained tremendous popularity and have made the world a better place to live in. Talking of impact- two young girls were arrested in 2012 for questioning the shutdown in Mumbai for Shiv Sena patriarch Bal Thackeray, or Suresh Prabhu solving queries of passengers already on trains at just a tweet, hundreds of strangers forming a team in Chennai to carry out the relief measures during floods are only a few. Hail Social Media!

CONCLUSION:

While one fragment sees it as a waste of time to read such posts online, another significant fragment considers it freedom of expression in a way of opening horizons. Like it or not, this is something bigger than what newspapers or TV news can offer in today's date. And if it is giving you a perspective into something you didn't notice before without asking you to compulsorily believe it, is there an issue?

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