

Social Media Behaviour Among Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

A new media allows users to connect, collaborate, and create new content, services, communities, and channels of communication that help in delivering information and services. Social media allows community members to share their experiences with the like-minded people in many different ways. In online media, users' behaviour differs compared to traditional media because situation varies. Users in social media are segmented as fact collectors, information seekers, and love to watch and be creative. The present study aims to uncover social media platforms and providers used by undergraduate students. In addition, the study investigates the social media behaviour of Kaziranga university undergraduate students. To achieve the objectives of study, a framework of six distinct groups of social media based on their actions on different social media platforms (Li & Bernoff, 2008) was applied. Samples of 115 undergraduate students were considered by using a convenience sampling technique. Data was collected using structured questionnaire from the undergraduate students and analysed using statistical techniques. Research indicates that use of social networking sites is at top, with maximum users for Facebook. The study concludes that users mainly belong to the joiners group followed by the collectors and spectators groups.

Keywords: Social Media, Networking Sites, Behaviour, Groundswell, Internet

INTRODUCTION

Internet has changed the communication level of consumers and marketers. Internet has few unique features such as – storing a vast amount of information at several virtual locations, being a transaction medium between users and service providers, providing information on demand, having ability to search and distribute information, and being cost effective (Peterson et al., 1997). However, social media has occupied the major pie of Internet activities among users. Social media is a consumer-generated media and enables people to share information with friends and colleagues using the Internet. It is designed to be shared, sharing means that it is easy to comment on, easy to send, there are no costs associated with viewing the media and, last but not least, it is always available. In social media activity, users mainly belong to a new breed of consumers whom can be referred to as Digital natives, within the context of social media. However, majority of social media users are from young generation and technologically savvy. Therefore,

the present study focuses on college students and their uses of social media platforms, providers, and students' social media behaviour. Moreover, the study focuses on age, gender, and behavioural characteristics of these digital natives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media is about holding conversations and sharing experiences with others who are connected through like-minded activities (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997). Social media is “a group of internet based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and it allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Social media includes Social News Sites, Social Networking, Social Bookmarking, Social Sharing, Social Events, Blogs, Microblogging, Wikis, Forums, and Message Boards. Social media websites allow users to engage and communicate with different user groups and build relationships. Social networking sites can be

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described as networks of friends for social or professional interactions (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009).

In fact, social networking sites have deeply changed the dissemination of information over the internet making easy to share and absorb (Akrimi & Khemakhem, 2012). Social media websites have influenced user behaviour intensely ranging from information search, acquisition and use (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). However, several studies have been engaged to uncover the consumers' behaviour by segmenting them in different categories who interact online. McDonald (1996) segmented the Internet audience as "avid adventurers," "fact collectors," "entertainment seekers," and "social shoppers." In recent years, social networking sites have increased in popularity across the globe. Facebook is said to have more than a billion active users (as of 2012) since its beginning in 2004 (www.facebook.com).

Kord (2008) revealed that the involvement of students in social media has increased considerably since 2004. Recent studies carried out by some researchers reported that 80–90% university students are actively involved with at least a particular social media (Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Stutzman, 2006, and Tufekci, 2008). Boyd (2007) indicated that teenagers and students embraced social media so as to interact with peers, for information sharing, and to re-formulate their personalities thereby getting their social lives off the ground. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to inquire about social media behaviour of undergraduate students including their access to social networking sites and platforms.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to:

- identify the popular social media platforms and providers among university undergraduate students.
- explore the social media behaviour of university undergraduate students.

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory research was carried out using the survey method. The relevant secondary data has been collected from the journals and websites for building a conceptual base for conducting the research. A questionnaire is

prepared using the characteristics of six distinct groups of social media behaviour of consumers to explore the response of customers. Data was collected with the help of structured questionnaire based on a framework of six distinct groups of social media based on their actions on different social media platforms were used proposed by (Li & Bernoff, 2008) in Groundswell. The 115 final year undergraduate students of Kaziranga University, Jorhat, were selected using convenience sampling method. Data was collected administering and asking the questions to 35, 24 and 56 students of BBA, B. Com., and B. Tech, respectively, focusing on different aspects of social media behaviour. The collected data was then coded, calculated, and analysed using SPSS tools. Simple statistical tools namely, descriptive statistics were used for deriving conclusions from the data to identify the social media behaviour of students.

Framework to Measure Social Media Behaviour

In *Groundswell* Li and Bernoff (2008), the authors have proposed a framework of six distinct social media groups based on their actions on different social media platforms. The segments are creators, critics, collectors, joiners, spectators, and inactives. Creators are the online consumers who at least once a month publish a blog or article online, maintain a web page, or upload videos or audios to sites like YouTube. Critics react to the others' online content by commenting on blogs and writing reviews about products or services. Collectors love to find and share things online. Collectors save URLs and tags on social bookmarking service. Joiners participate or interact on social networking sites like Facebook, Myspace, and LinkedIn. Spectators are the feed readers and consume what the rest users in social media produce. Inactives are the people on internet but not yet participated in social media. Each step on the ladder represents a group of consumers more involved in the groundswell activities than the previous steps.

Activities for Each Segment

A consumer or user needs to only participate in one of the listed activities at least monthly to become part of a group.

- **Creators**
 - Publish or maintain or update a blog
 - Publish or update your own Web Pages
 - Upload video you created to a public website
 - Upload audio music you created to a public website
 - Write articles stories poems etc. and post them online
 - Upload photos to a public website
- **Critics**
 - Post ratings or reviews of products or services
 - Comment on someone else's blog
 - Contribute to online forums or discussion groups
 - Contribute to or edit articles in a wiki
 - Add comments to some ones page on a social networking site
- **Collectors**
 - Add tags to Webpages online photos etc.
 - Vote for websites online
- **Joiners**
 - Update maintain a profile on a social networking site
 - Visit social networking sites
- **Spectators**
 - Read blogs
 - Watch video from other users
 - Read online forums or discussion groups
 - Read customer ratings or reviews
 - Listen to or download audio or music from other users
- **Inactives**
 - None of these activities

The tool to help users to understand the target demographics lies within these six groups.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The survey was conducted on a sample of 115 users from BBA, B. Com., and B. Tech final year students of Kaziranga University. Data analysis was done using frequency distribution method and comparison was

made to identify the social media behaviour of users. Findings of the results were based on response of 35 BBA, 24 B. Com, and 56 B. Tech student users. Out of 115 respondents, 52.2% of respondents belong to the age group of 20–21 years, followed by 37.4% over 21 years, and 10.4% within 17–19 years. Moreover, 53% of respondents are female and rest 47% are male.

Uses of Social Media

Table 1 indicates that use of Social Networking Sites are highest among the respondents (85%), followed by Wikipedia (56.5) and Social Sharing Sites (50.4%). However, Blog has minimum users (6.1%) and Forum occupies the least among all categories of social media.

Table 1: Social Media Use of Respondents

<i>Types of Social Media</i>	<i>% of respondents uses Social Media</i>
Social Networking Sites	85.2
Wikipedia	56.5
Social sharing Sites	50.4
Blog	6.1
Forum	1.7

Note: Percentages add to more than 100% because the categories overlap.

Source: Primary data

Member of Social Networking Sites

Table 2 indicates about the respondents' use of social networking sites and engagement with one or multiple networking sites. Data enunciates that the maximum number of respondents is engaged with more than two social networking sites, which is around one third of sample size.

Table 2: Member of Social Networking Sites

	<i>% of Membership of Social Networking Sites</i>
Member of one networking site	23.5
Member of two networking sites	42.6
More than two networking sites	33.9

Source: Primary data

Uses of Social Networking Sites

Table 3 designated that the use of Social networking sites such as Facebook was highest among the respondents (86.1%), followed by Google+ (53.9) and Twitter (20.9%). Conversely, Myspace and Xing have very less users, i.e. 8.7% and 3.5%, respectively.

Table 3: Uses of Social Networking Sites

	<i>% of respondents uses Social Networking Sites</i>
Facebook	86.1
Google+	53.9
Twitter	20.9
LinkedIn	20.0
Myspace	8.7
Xing	3.5

Note: Percentages add to more than 100% because the categories overlap.

Source: Primary data

Social Media Behaviour

The mean or average is a measure of central tendency and applied to measure the center of a numerical data set. It provides an indication about where the data seems to cluster around. It is the classic type of average and represents the total points divided by the number of possible points and the overall performance on many items is evaluated with a single number. Tables 4 and 5 revealed that overall mean is highest for Joiners followed by Spectators and Collectors. This indicates that respondents mainly belong to joiners category as well as collectors and spectators. As per the definition in Groundswell by Li and Bernoff (2008), data highlights that respondents participate or interact on social networking sites like Facebook, Myspace, and LinkedIn (Joiners, 0.37). In addition, respondents love to find and share things online (Collectors, 0.27). Collectors save URLs and tags on social bookmarking service. Some of the respondents are the feed readers and consume what the rest of the users in social media produce (Spectators, 0.27). However, lowest overall mean exists for creators (0.13), which indicates the lack of creativity such as publishing a blog or article online, maintaining a web page or uploading videos or

audios to sites like YouTube. Similarly, Critics (0.20) indicate the deficiency of commenting on blogs, writing reviews about products or services among students. Further, some of the respondents are Inactives, who have not participated in any social media activities though present in internet.

Table 4: Summary of Social Media Behaviour of Segments

<i>Segments</i>	<i>Overall Mean</i>
Creators	0.13
Critics	0.20
Collectors	0.27
Joiners	0.37
Spectators	0.27
Inactives	0.21

Source: Primary data

Table 5: Social Media Behaviour of Users Segment Wise

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Overall Mean</i>
Publish maintain or update a blog	.13	0.13
Publish or update your own Web Pages	.06	
Upload video you created to a public website	.08	
Upload audio music you created to a public website	.11	
Write articles stories poems etc and post them online	.12	
Upload photos to a public website	.26	
Creators	.77	0.20
Post ratings or reviews of products or services	.28	
Comment on someone else's blog	.26	
Contribute to online forums or discussion groups	.09	
Contribute to or edit articles in a wiki	.04	
Add comments to some ones page on a social networking site	.31	
Critics	.98	0.27
Add tags to Webpages online photos etc.	.30	
Vote for websites online	.24	
Collectors	.54	
Update maintain a profile on a social networking site	.36	
Visit social networking sites	.37	

Joiners	.73	0.37
Read blogs	.27	
Watch video from other users	.24	
Read online forums or discussion groups	.27	
Read customer ratings or reviews	.27	
Listen to or download audio or music from other users	.31	
Spectators	1.37	0.27
None of these activities	.21	0.21
Inactives		

Source: Primary data

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION OF RESEARCH

Internet has driven a drastic change on communication of users. Social media has allowed the like-minded people from across the globe to share their thoughts, beliefs and ideas. Research highlights that the users of social networking sites are higher and Facebook occupies top position among the social networking sites. In addition, majority of users are engaged with multiple social networking sites. Research enunciates that surveyed respondents can be categorised as joiners, followed by collectors and spectators in social media platforms. Conversely, many of the internet users have not yet participated in social media activities.

Limitations of this study include a few commonly associated problems of sampling. This research is subject to some limitations, which may provide fruitful avenues for future research. Firstly, certain limitations may arise from sample selection because population was undergraduate students of Kaziranga University. Therefore, respondents do not reflect the behaviours related to social media users of other geographic regions. This is an area in which research could be improved and extended. Secondly, some of the respondents did not respond to queries fully and information was withheld. Sometimes, the respondents were reluctant to give information about their usage and demographic profile.

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