The Role of Social Media in Women Empowerment

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Abstract

The upsurge in the use of technology has provided avenues in communicating which has facilitated integral interaction especially with people distance apart from each other. Social media via the internet is used as the tool to stand in bridging the digital divide. Although, the Internet enabled service was made available to enhance communication through conveying information and fostering interaction among people, its growing usage indicates a more viable potential which serves as a new effective platform for initiating business transaction and processes known as Social Commerce. Nevertheless, little academic research has been conducted to investigate how business organizations could harness this platform for business purposes even much more examining the role social media a multimedia tool plays in promoting business transactions and the impact it has on social commerce. The study analyses intend to help practitioners and academics establish the viability of multimedia been the drive behind social media adoption especially in businesses that involve social interaction with customers. The literature focuses on how social media adoption and acceptance on twitter an online application can help establish this fact. This case study sought to provide an analysis of the current trend usage of commercial social media site by conducting an online survey with twitter end-users. Social media has proven potential for mobilizing attention and accountability to women's rights, and challenging discrimination and stereotypes. It has proved to be a powerful vehicle for bringing women's rights issues to the attention of a wider public, galvanizing action on the streets of cities around the world and encouraging policy makers to step up commitments to gender equality. The paper is an attempt to study how social media is contributing to women empowerment based on secondary data. The paper likes to conclude that though social media is contributing to women empowerment but there is virtual gender gap due to lack of literacy, cybercrime, cyber bullying, etc. and women are not able to fully utilize the new space.

Keywords: Social Media, Empowerment, Women Empowerment, Cybercrime, New Media.

Introduction

Over the past decade, the media landscape has dramatically changed with social media outlets such as blogs, online discussion forums, and online communities now supplementing traditional media outlets such as newspapers, magazines, and television programs. Social media are new information network and information technology using a form of communication utilizing interactive and user-produced content, and interpersonal relationships are created and maintained. Social media is becoming an agent of change. It is changing the way information is communicated to and from people around the world. Its use is increasing day by day with high rate in all over the world. Social media has proven potential for mobilizing attention and accountability to women's rights, and challenging discrimination and stereotypes. It has proved to be a powerful vehicle for bringing women's rights issues to the attention of a wider public, galvanizing action on the streets of cities around the world and encouraging policy makers to step up commitments to gender equality. The explosion of social media, Cyber feminism and unprecedented use by women of new technologies represents important opportunities to bring gender equality and women's rights issues to the forefront of both policy making and media attention. India ranks second in usage of Facebook and third in Twitter. These social networking sites not only pave a way for communicating across the globe but they have played a major role in empowering women, encouraging the civic participation among women in Western, Middle East and Asian countries. The paper is an attempt to study how social media is contributing to women empowerment based on secondary data.

Review of Literature

Narayana and Ahamad (2016) revealed in their study that Media have a great potential for empowerment of women, however the overall use of this media by women is very low. It also suggested that the powerful and positive role that the media can play in the empowerment of women and gender equality should be supported and further explored. They also found that how media can increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making. Also, Gupta (2018) concluded in her study that most of the respondents have high empowerment in final say on their health care and decision on employing servants in home 85 percent and 90 percent respectively, which shows the high percentage rate of the empowered women. Further it was found that in the economic empowerment sphere most of the respondents are empowered nicely. It shows that women in India are empowered and their empowerment percentage indicates a medium level of empowerment and high percentage of influence of Media and technology. This is an indication that women are very much aware of the variables which can lead them towards empowerment. A study conducted by Subhash and Patil in 2014 have concluded that impact of mass media on women has enabled their empowerment, but still there are many suggestions given by women to restrict crime related

programmes, improvement of learning and knowledge, equal status of women, gender equality etc. Hence the media should take into the suggestions of women and improve their programmes, telecasts, circulations, knowledge and information. Also, Khan and Moin in 2013 reported that with access to internet at homes, women are using it for multiple purposes. It has enabled women to participate in important daily affairs of state that ranges from household work to education, health and governance. Furthermore, Asif in 2013 stated that the development of society can be improved if women are empowered. Role of media is important to empower women because it gives self-reliance and there is a visible effect of media on every sphere of life. The new media is the fact that anyone can be part of the global information sharing process by anyone, anywhere in the form of any article and information on social platforms.

Social Media

The word media is defined as 'one of the means or channels of communication, information, or entertainment in society' as newspapers, radio, televisions and social networking sites etc. Media technology has made communication increasingly easier as time has passed throughout history. Today, children are encouraged to use media tool in school and expected to have a general understanding of various media technologies available. The media technology shapes the advance modern society. In the contemporary period, social media is the most popular among all other means of communication and information. 30 percent of World's population is active social media users whereas in India the active social media users are 15 percent of the population which is a sizeable proportion. Usage of social media is on increase and it is estimated that such percentage will increase every year by 10 percent. Moreover, 60 percent of social media users are youth who are prone to cybercrimes and problems. For many connected users in India, access to the Internet is primarily for accessing social media networks. The most popular activities on social media include maintaining one's own virtual profile on the likes of Facebook and Twitter, posting and sharing an update as well as replying to something a friend has posted.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a construct that links individual strengths, competencies, natural helping systems and proactive behaviour to social policy and social change. Empowerment theory and research link individual wellbeing with the larger social and political environment. Empowerment suggests that individual with others to achieve goals, efforts to gain access to resources and some critical understanding of the sociopolitical environment as basic components of the construct. Empowerment is a process of transition from a state of powerlessness to a state of relative control over one's life, destiny and a critical understanding of their environment. This transition can manifest itself in an improvement not only in the perceived ability to

control but also in the actual ability to control. Thus, empowerment is a transition from the passive situation to a more active situation of control. It is part of the realization of one's humanity, as a person who is powerless with regard to one's life and environment is not realizing one's innate human potential. Since the sources of powerlessness are rooted in social processes that disempowered entire populations. Thus, the empowerment process aims to influence the oppressed.

Objectives

➢ To increase the participation of women in decision-making through the media
➢ To know the aim and kind of social media used by women
➢ To accelerate women's empowerment through social media

Role of Media in Women Empowerment

The role of Media is very important to accelerate Women empowerment which will lead to social and economic empowerment of women. The Mass Media, however, like all social media, are good and practical means to increase, through the dissemination of healthy concepts of being woman, of what is the role of women in modern society, of good examples that women give us every day, of the results they have achieved and continue to reach out to women in many fields of economics and beyond, the social consideration of women, giving to young women good ideas and examples for their economic empowerment. Women, in Indian society, are traditionally expected to confine themselves to domestic environment. Woman's perceived interests linked to domesticity may adversely affect her empowerment outcomes.

It was found from the women empowerment survey that the women in India are empowered but still her interest towards domesticity affects her empowerment otherwise women would have been more empowered. In fact, social power plays an important role in generating/sustaining inequalities between men and women, which plays an important role in generating and sustaining gender inequalities. Also, the hypotheses I have tested have a positive significant relation between dependent variable and independent variables. Only the less percentage of social empowerment and the knowledge of their rights show that the women in India are still not feel secure outside. The freedom of press in the country is a blessing for the people.

The government and non-government agencies can work on towards enhancing the women's traits and capabilities. Participation in seminars and lecturers and encouragement for taking waged employment would help or strengthen the role of women in decision making. Mass Media could also make a strong contribution, with the implementation of media campaigns, to the dissemination of the concept of gender equality. If people see in the media the overcome of the differences between

men and women will bring him back into everyday life. The Mass Media have always unconsciously affected and influenced the thinking and behavior of society. Media should focus success stories of established, successful and renowned women in spite of indecent representation of women.

As an important agent of socialization shaping of gender roles, its mechanisms for checks and balances with respect to gender need to be strengthened. The media should enable projection of women in a decent and dignified way and promote respect and dignity to women avoiding negative portrayal of women. New innovative decent presentation of women, based on Indian culture and society through media must be introduced. A strong legislative effort coupled with a wide spread social awareness with morality and ethics is needed to fight this menace so that women are not perceived as a commodity but as individual with right and dignity.

Impact of Social Media on Women

Social media is emerging as an alternative media as a platform to share and raise the voice of women when their voice is restricted. People are joining Cyber hands to help women and share their voices in each and every protest. The subject of empowering women is now being linked to social media as it is emerging as a powerful tool for awareness and action. Empowerment of women is necessary for a bright future of the women, family, society and country so as to make them take their own decisions for personal growth. For a long time voice of women is restricted and it can be made loud by way of social media. Social media is the latest technological tool for Economic Empowerment of Women. The concept of entrepreneurship has helped women to get rid of the tag of being a burden on others economically. Online presence in social media is providing women with new freedom, independence and control, liberty, and empowerment like never before. It helps them to try things that were impossible in the real scenario.

The social networking offers more of an opportunity to network and get to know people and places. Women can neither be lost nor does she have to depend on others to carry out her requirements. Social Media is posing questions and answering questions that could raise and suggests solutions for every search of hers. It can really turnout to be a friend indeed that gives her both intellectual and emotional company without having to lose her identity. The more women use social media, the more she will benefit from it as well. Social media helps women to master with friends, followers and connections all over the country or even the world. She may start to like, tweet, share, follow be linked to a new sort of Technological empowerment and dynamism.

Benefits of Social Media

Social media is comparatively less expensive and easy for training, recruitment, and organization than traditional methods. Various studies have shown that people who are active online are likely to be active in group activities such as creating an online group for any cause, sharing their voices. It enables individuals to share them with friends, to see how many others share their perspective and to coordinate activity and get the word out about protests, social issues.

Social Media & Internet Impact on Women Empowerment

After the infamous 16th December Delhi gang rape incident, within two days Face book group "Delhi for Women's Safety' was created which received 1.75 lakh likes and many other such groups were created. Such groups on social media attracted public attention and created platform both for women justice and women empowerment at global level. Social Media has become so powerful today that in the face of such incidents social media becomes the voice of people. Everyone starts sharing, tweeting, hash-tagging their views, rage and demand for justice on social media; in order to do so they often even change their profile pictures with campaign picture to show their absolute support, as in the Delhi Gang Rape case, a simple black dot with a white background was seen as a profile picture throughout social media and also on Whatsapp. This Incident got so much social media attention, that Government of India was forced to take strict actions against the culprits, passing a more powerful law to prevent such incident in future. Social media has proven potential for mobilizing attention and accountability to women's rights, and challenging discrimination and stereotypes.

The social media has proved to be a powerful vehicle for bringing women's rights issues to the attention of a wider public, galvanizing action on the streets of cities around the world and encouraging policy makers to step up commitments to gender equality. The explosion of social media and unprecedented use by women of new technologies represents important opportunities to bring gender equality and women's rights issues to the forefront of both policy making and media attention. The study of Social Media Platforms and their impact in unlocking the financial success of the women entrepreneurs globally has been widely observed and quite vital to the new generation of gender based ventures that are digitally driven through the use of technology. This is leading to a new revolution of women job seekers becoming job creators and curators.

Social Media plays the significant role in creating such opportunities. The study of women entrepreneurs in Kancheepuram District showed that the growth of female owned businesses is growing along with increase in their standard of living, motivation, attitude and self-confidence, and ensures independence - a liberty of new form. Social media is becoming a women's info guide and empowering tool.

Internet along with Social Media has come up as a new form of media which has expanded dramatically over the past decade in India. There are websites that focus on women empowerment, covering diverse spheres such as health, knowledge, lifestyle, education and more. With such power of Social Media, today it is easily possible to find any information related to women empowerment. When any incident happens, social media becomes a faster media that helps people from round the world to participate and show their concern and sympathy towards such incidents. Governments across the world had to take action against such incidents when everywhere people condemned such happenings. Awareness and outburst such as this could only occur with the existence of both Internet and Social Media. Women are now also getting more knowledge about their rights and powers that every woman in a society holds, with equal rights as men in every respect. All these positive changes are now triggered to only increase their pace with time due to Internet and Social Media. However, cybercrime is creating hurdles in women empowerment and they are not able to fully utilize the benefits of IT revolution.

Cybercrime

Cybercrime is a global phenomenon. With the advent of technology, cybercrime and victimization of women are on the high and it poses as a major threat to the security of a person as a whole. Even though India is one of the very few countries to enact IT Act 2000 to combat cybercrimes, issues regarding women still remain untouched in this Act. The said Act has termed certain offences as hacking, publishing of obscene materials in the net, tampering the data as punishable offences. But the grave threat to the security of women in general is not covered fully by this Act. Amongst the various cyber-crimes committed against individuals and society at large, crimes that are specifically targeting women are such as cyber-stalking, harassment via emails, cyber bullying, morphing, email spoofing and cyber defamation. While cyber stalking affects both men and women, women are disproportionately targets, especially of age group of 16-35, who are stalked by men. It is believed that Over 75 percent of the victims are female. The astonishing fact is that one in twelve women and one in forty-five men will be stalked in their lifetimes.

Cyber bullying is a typical type of online harassment, which can be defined as hurling harsh, rude, insulting, teasing remarks through the message box or in open forums targeting one's body shape and structure, educational qualifications, professional qualifications, family, gender orientation, personal habits and outlook. Harassment through e-mails is not a new concept. It is very similar to harassing through letters. Harassment includes blackmailing, threatening, bullying, and even cheating via email. E-harassments are similar to the letter harassment but creates problem quite often when posted from fake ids. Cyber pornography is the other threat to the women which include pornographic websites; pornographic magazines produced using computers (to publish and print the material) and the Internet (to

download and transmit pornographic pictures, photos, writings etc.) Internet has provided a medium for the facilitation of crimes like pornography. There are gender gaps in literacy in India as literacy rate for males is 82.14 percent and for females is 65.46 percent as per 2011 Census which further restricts the use of IT and social media by women. However, on the whole the women are getting benefits by use of social media**.**

Data Analysis & Discussions

Survey conducted: A survey of 5 questions was released online asking 200 online activists about the role of social media in women empowerment. The results came as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of Age

S. No	Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 10	15	7.50
2	15-25	40	20.00
3	25-35	95	47.50
4	35-45	25	12.50
5	50 above	25	12.50
Total		**200**	**100.00**

Source: Primary data

According to Table 1 the age composition of the respondents, out of 200 respondents 7.5 percent of the belong to the age group below 10 years, 20 percent of them age group 15-25, 47.5 percent of them age group 25-35, 12.5 percent of the respondents belong to the age group 35-45and above 50 respectively.

Table 2: Distribution of Preferred Social Media Application

S. No	Social Media	Number	Percentage
1	WhatsApp	95	47.50
2	Face book	50	25.00
3	YouTube	30	15.00
4	Tiktok	22	11.00
5	Twitter	3	1.50
6	Skype	-	0.00
	Total	**200**	**100.00**

Source: Primary data

In accordance to Table 2, the finding indicates that 95 (47.5 percent) of the female students preferred using WhatsApp, 50 (25 percent) uses Face book, while 30 (15 percent) prefers youtube, 22 (11 percent) of the respondents using Tiktok and 3 (1.5 percent) of the respondents using Twitter. The Face Book is the most used SM application and it is used across different professions to connect friends and colleagues. But this study suggested WhatsApp to be the preferred SM application.

Table 3: Distribution of Use Aims of Social Media by Women

Social Media Use Aims	Frequency	Percent
Messaging (Texting)	55	27.50
Finding /Following their friends	20	10.00
Catching up the news	35	17.50
Taking photo or record video and sharing	45	22.50
Being aware of the trends	10	5.00
Listening to music	15	7.50
Following the applications	7	3.50
Making new friends	6	3.00
Making Checking	-	0.00
Downloading new application	7	3.50
Total	**200**	**100.00**

Source: Primary data

In this table explains 27.5 percent of the respondents using social media for texting, 10 percent of the respondents using social media for the purpose of Finding / Following their friends. Also, 17.5 percent of the respondents using the purpose of Catching up the news and 22.5 percent of the respondents using social media for the purpose of taking photo or record video and sharing, and 3.5 percent of the respondents using social media for the purpose of Following the applications and Downloading new application respectively.

Table 4: Social Media Perspective in Psychological Aspects of Respondents

S. No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	Social media usage has increased the rate at which students participate in class group discussions	85	75	40	-	-
2	Participating in group discussions on social media platforms has helped in improving my understanding of certain topics that are taught in class	96	54	34	16	10
3	Social media makes learning easy for me because I can easily seek the views of my course mates and other friends on a particular topic at the comfort of my room	155	45	-	-	-
4	Social media usage has the ability to distract and reduce the level of concentration in class	65	75	45	10	5
5	Social media usage has the ability to negatively affect grades	54	45	23	85	-
6	Social media allow people to make more friends than in real life	150	50	-	-	-

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

This table shows the media perspective in Psychological aspects of the respondents. Social media usage has increased in psychological aspects out of 200 respondents, wherein 85 respondents have strongly agreed to the first statement and 96 respondents to have strongly agreed to the second statement. Interestingly, most of the respondents have strongly agreed to third statement because social media makes learning and enables meeting friends comfortable. Also, 75 respondents have agreed to fourth statement because some of the respondents possesses psychological aspects to believe social media to reduce the level of concentration in class and a vast majority (150 respondents) of the respondents have strongly agreed to the final statement because social media allow people to make more friends than in real life.

Table: 5: Importance of Social Media in Women point of view

S.No	Importance of Social Media	Frequency	Percent
1	Extremely Important	155	77.50
2	Very Important	35	17.50
3	Moderately Important	5	2.50
4	Slightly Important	5	2.50
5	Not at all important	-	0.00
	Total	**200**	**100.00**

Source: Primary data

This table shows the importance of Social Media. Out of 200 respondents 77.5 percent of the respondents to gives extremely importance for social media.17.5 percent of the respondents says very important and 2.5 percent of them revealed media is moderately / Slightly important respectively.

Findings

- Majority 47.5 percent of the respondents using Social Media in the age group of 25-35.
- It is observed apart from whatsapp, 47.5 percent of respondents have account, 25 percent of the respondents have face book account, 15 percent of the respondents to preferred YouTube link,11 percent of the respondents to having Tiktok app respectively.
- The aim of social media in varies aspects majority 55 (27.5 percent) of the respondents using messaging and 20 (10) respondents using for social media for the purpose of finding / following their friends, 17.5 percent of the respondents for the aim of social media catching the news, 22.5 percent of the respondents for the aim of taking photo or record video and sharing (Tiktok) respectively

- Most of the respondents using for social media for the purpose of to relive their stress
- 77.5 percent of the respondents to give more importance to social media.

Suggestion & Recommendations

- Media have a huge potential for the empowerment of women, however the overall use of this media by women is very low. Media has played an important role in empowering the women.
- The way media has played its part in portraying about the atrocities faced by the women and empowering the women, no other sector has done.
- Media should create awareness about risks prevailing at home, in work places and while travelling and staying outside home. Economic self-sufficiency is necessary, though it is not a sufficient condition for empowerment of women.
- Public policies are extremely important to strengthen the legal institutions that guarantee equal rights and opportunities to women.
- The Media should provide political and legal and economic and health awareness. They should provide knowledge about support groups. Mass Media should have the positive attitude towards life. Under any adverse circumstance they should not loose courage and confidence and try to end their life.
- They should have a strong will power to succeed in life. In short, the inner strength of women has to be built by success stories of other women.

Conclusion

Women who are being deprived of basic human rights and life chances are becoming empowered due to social media. They can reach various helpline through the initiative of alternative media groups and members and connect with people. There is no doubt that the developmental facts of women have always been the prime focus of planning since independence and a clear vision is needed to remove the obstacles on the path of women emancipation from the government and women themselves. The various challenges posed by the new era have forced us to provide a concrete and developmental aspects alternatives in lieu of empowerment of women through the possible available media. We need more action oriented programmed and policies which inculcate in understanding the various technicalities and prospects of media keeping into consideration women's empowerment a must need of the society. Also, various studies of popular media throw light on empowering and debilitating influence of media. The generation of alternate media for women's empowerment and protest against derogatory and indecent portrayal of women in media must go on simultaneously.

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