

## **CHAPTER- IV**

### **THE SOCIAL MEDIA**

Connecting with the world is just a click away' this new catch phrase of the 21<sup>st</sup> century owes its emergence to the latest technological innovations in communication. The internet along with the various applications and social networking sites has shrunk the world, making communication easier and faster. These new communication technologies has ushered in an era marked by the availability of a wide range of information which is easily accessible and which can be shared around the globe within seconds. These new developments in communication technology have brought pivotal changes in the way human beings interact with each other.

It is without a doubt that every new development in communication has brought forth immense changes in the society and in the everyday life of the individual. For instance, Gutenberg's printing press in the 15th century played a crucial role in weakening the power of the medieval church leading ultimately to the Renaissance, and later the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution. While the invention of the telephone in 1876 by Alexander Graham Bell made the world smaller and more accessible to all; it has also fostered a whole host of new inventions like the cellular phone and the internet. In this new era of digital revolution, the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) consisting of the internet and social media has led to more efficient means of sharing information. Traditional technologies which were earlier limited to agencies and research institutes are now being made accessible to the non technical citizens.

This new digital age, has enabled the citizens from across the globe to interact with each other within the click of a button. Moreover, with the absence of control over the flow of information, sharing of information has reached a whole new level, extending even to the sharing of personal information. For instance, the users of the social networking sites like facebook, twitter and youtube constantly upload pictures and videos and share personal information about their everyday lives on these sites. However, this unrestricted flow of information is not only confined to sharing of personal information rather it has also become a platform for advancing important social and political issues as well as promoting societal change. On January 17, 2001, during the impeachment trial of Philippine President Joseph Estrada, loyalists in the Philippine Congress voted to set aside key evidence against him. Less than two hours after the decision, activists, with the help of forwarded text messages, were able to organize a protest at a major crossroads in Manila. Following the protests, on January 20, 2011, Estrada resigned from power.<sup>1</sup> In India, following the gang rape of a physiotherapy intern on 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2012, in Munirka, South Delhi, protests occurred online on the social networking sites like WhatsApp and Facebook, where thousands of people signed online petitions protesting the incident. These social networking sites were also utilized to co-ordinate the activities of the social activists and the masses who participated in the protests.<sup>2</sup>

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century is witnessing the emergence of a networked society which operates across borders, through online communities which cross over national boundaries and are bound together by common concern for promoting peace, freedom and a better world. Social media which is a sub aspect of the ICTs has emerged as a

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<sup>1</sup> See Rita Safranek, *The Emerging Role of Social Media in Political and Regime Change*, March 2012, p.3, <http://www.csa.com/discoveryguides/discoveryguides-main.php>

<sup>2</sup> See for details [http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012\\_Delhi\\_gangrape](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Delhi_gangrape)

powerful tool in the hands of the ordinary citizens, directly challenging the manipulation of the media by the rich corporations. Citizens' journalism and cyber activism is on the rise now on account of social media which has provided the people a platform to stage their discontentment against abuses of power as well as against important social and political issues.

The new ICTs have given a new voice to the people, by making them more interconnected than ever along with the realization that the world is not limited by national boundaries. This free flow of information has given birth to a brave new world, where, the voice of the ordinary people are no longer suppressed or restricted by the authoritarian regimes. However, like every new development these ICTs also have certain negative implications, for example, the growing dependence on the internet has led to the growing isolation of the individual from the society. Life of the individual in this digital era is generally leading to the confinement of the individual within the four walls of his house. Nevertheless, these negative implications cannot sidetrack the positive impacts of ICTs like cyber activism and its mass mobilization capacities, greater scope for freedom of speech and expression, citizen journalism etc. According to Henry A. Giroux, "the internet, youtube, twitter, and facebook have reconstituted, especially among young people, how social relationships are constructed and how communication is produced, mediated, and received. They have also ushered in a new regime of visual imagery in which screen culture creates spectacular events just as much as they record them. Under such circumstances, state power becomes more porous and there is less control. Text messaging, facebook, twitter, youtube and the Internet have given rise to a

reservoir of political energy that posits a new relationship between the new media technologies, politics, and public life.”<sup>3</sup>

#### **4.1. Concept of Social Media**

Bill Gates (Microsoft), Steve Jobs (Apple Corporation), Andy Grove (Intel) and Nicholas Negroponte (MIT Media Lab) are some of the names associated with the digital revolution. If the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was marked by the Industrial Revolution, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has witnessed the rise of the Information Age or the Digital Revolution through the aid of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). ICTs includes any communication device or application comprising of radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems as well as the various services and applications associated with them which enable users to access, store, transmit and manipulate information.<sup>4</sup> According to the European Commission, the importance of ICTs lies less in the technology itself than in its ability to create greater access to information and communication in underserved populations.<sup>5</sup> However, the development of this new Digital Revolution has been a slow and gradual process; its emergence can be traced to the competitive environment where ‘time is money’ and ‘money is time.’ The growing competitive environment has led to the pursuance of more faster and more efficient ways and means of getting things done. It is this drive for speed and efficiency that has led to the development of ICTs particularly in the economic field, what Bill Gates describes in his two books *The Road Ahead* (1995) and *Business @ the Speed of Thought* (1999). Gates envisages a ‘New Economy’ lubricated by ICTs. Within

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<sup>3</sup> See for details Henry A. Giroux as quoted by Rita Safranek, Note 1, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://searchcio.techtarget.com/definition/ICT-information-and-communication-technology-or-technologies>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

a short span of time beginning with the 1990s the world has been quickly introduced to the Internet, email, mobile phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), scanners, digital video cameras, home, school and work based networked PCs and so forth.<sup>6</sup>

However, the most important contribution of these ICTs is the internet. Manuel Castells in his book, *The Internet Galaxy* (2001) has rightly stated that, “the Internet is the fabric of our lives. If it is the present day equivalent of electricity in the industrial era, in our age the Internet could be likened to both the electrical grid and the electric engine because of its ability to distribute the power of information throughout the entire realm of human activity.”<sup>7</sup>

The internet emerged on account of the work carried out by the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) during the early 1960s. The next development came with the formation of ARPANET in 1969, consisting of a computer network of research agencies of the US government along with some major research centres in the universities. Following their intense research ARPANET in 1972 demonstrated to the public its data retrieval, real time data access and interactive cooperation capabilities at the International Conference on Computer Communication in Washington, DC; it was in 1972 when the first email was sent.<sup>8</sup> Following these technological developments, what proceeded was a series of developments which would later go on to create the networking system as we know it today.

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<sup>6</sup> See Robert Hassan, *Media, Politics and the Network Society*, (Open University Press, England, 1st Edition, 2004), p.10.

<sup>7</sup> See for details Manuel Castells as quoted by Robert Hassan, Note 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.13.

Within a short span of time, the internet has become host to a wide number of applications and social networking sites. And the most important outcome of these developments is the emergence of social media. A brief outline of the history of social media:<sup>9</sup>

1978: First dial up BBS (Bulletin Board System) is launched. This software allows the users to connect and log into the system using a terminal program. Once logged in, a user can perform functions such as uploading and downloading data and software.

1995: Personal home page service Geocities is launched which went public in 1998. It was originally founded by David Bohnett and John Rezner in late 1994. The site allowed the users to choose a 'city' to place their web pages. For instance, computer related sites were placed in 'Silicon Valley,' while those dealing with entertainment were placed in 'Hollywood.'

1997: Early social media service SixDegrees.com is launched. At its height, the service claims to 1 million users. This site allowed users to list friends, family and acquaintances on the site. The users could send messages and post bulletin board items to those in their list as well as view their connection to any other user on the site.

1999: Blogging service Blogger is launched and purchased by Google in 2003. It is one of the earliest blog publishing tools, credited for helping popularize the format.

2002: Social media site Friendster is launched by Jonathan Abrams. The service allowed the users to contact other members and share online content with those contacts. In June 2011, this site was redesigned and re launched as a social gaming site.

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<sup>9</sup> See for details <http://www.mofo.com/sociallyaware>

May 2003: Corporate social networking site LinkedIn is launched. This site is a business oriented social networking service which allow the users to create ‘profiles’ and connect with others representing real world professional relationships.

July 2003: MySpace is launched and the site is later acquired by News Corp in 2005. It is a social networking site which allows users to post updates which can be viewed by the user’s friends list.

February 4, 2004: Facebook is launched, however initially it is open to only Harvard students.

February 2005: YouTube a video sharing website which allows the users to upload, view and share videos is launched.

March 2006: Text based social media service Twitter is born.

Broadly defined social media is “a variety of websites, services and applications that allow users to engage in social behaviours online or on a mobile phone.”<sup>10</sup> Social media is also defined as, “the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, micro blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social duration, and wikis are among the different types of social media.”<sup>11</sup> Social media sites include web pages which allow the users to build their own personal web pages to connect with friends. To put it simply, social media can be considered as the platform where the people can find information and inspiration, connect with like minded people, communities and collaborate with each other towards pursuing common interests or

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<sup>10</sup> See for details Suw Charman Anderson, *Making the Connection: Civil Society and Social Media*, (Carnegie UK Trust, 2010), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> See for details [http://www. http://whatistechtarget.com/definition/social-media](http://www.whatistechtarget.com/definition/social-media)

issues. Some of the most popular social media sites are facebook, twitter, linkedIn, youtube, pinterest, flickr etc. The social networking sites consist of creating user profiles, posting comments, uploading videos and text, basically allowing the users to connect with other users.

Social media content generally takes the form of

-Text

-Image/ Picture

-Audio

-Video

### **Types of Social Media**

▶ Web pages with personal portfolios. For example, facebook, linkedIn, myspace and bebo.

▶ Personal online journals. For example, word press and blogger.

▶ Microblogs (short posts including uploading of individual images and videos). For example, twitter and tumblr.

▶ Content communities (users on content communities share and comment on different types of contents like videos and images). For example, youtube and flickr.

▶ Wikis (it allows a community of people to edit in a community based database). For example, wikipedia.

▶ Podcasts (audio or video files available through subscription services). For example, apple itunes.

▶ Social bookmarking like stumble upon.



▶ Virtual social worlds. like, world of warcraft.

▶ Forums and discussion boards. like yahoo answers.

According to Antony Mayfield social media denotes five important elements:<sup>12</sup>

▶ Participation: Social media encourages participation through contributions and feedbacks. For instance, social networking sites like facebook enable users to participate by providing options like comment, voting and sharing of information.

▶ Openness: Social media provides open access to information and encourages participation. The users generally have open access to accessing and making use of any information.

▶ Conversation: While traditional media like radio or television are seen as one way communication, social media is seen as a two way conversation transforming the ‘broadcast’ role of media by promoting greater interaction between the ‘media and the audience.’

▶ Community: Social media allows the users to form online communities effectively based on their interests ranging from photography to political issues.

▶ Connectedness: The key element of social media is connectedness. It links the users with each other as well as to other sites and resources.

In comparison to the other modes of communication like television, radio or even print media, social media possesses two important advantages firstly; it increases the flow of information. Sharing of information on social media is faster as information does not usually go through the filtering process like most of the other modes of communication; the users generally have greater control over the flow of information or content.

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<sup>12</sup> See for details Antony Mayfield, *What is Social Media?*, p. 5, <http://www.iCrossing.com/ebooks>

Secondly, it creates new communities which can cut across borders. Social media provides opportunities for creating online communities, the membership of which is most of the time open to all. Since most of these online communities are based on specific interests of the users ranging from movies to political issues it brings together a wide range of like minded people from all across the globe. The number of users in the social networking sites has greatly increased over the years and it still continues to grow. According to the 'We are Social' (a global social media agency) report, there are about 2.5 billion internet users at a global level as of the beginning of 2014, in addition to this there are about 2 billion active social network users in the world.<sup>13</sup> Within the last decade social media has become an important platform for marketing, news updates, social interaction, entertainment and the promotion of social and political issues.

The appeal of social media lies in the fact that it facilitates free and open communication unlike traditional media limited by too many restrictions and censorships. In recent years, participation in social networking sites has gone from sharing personal information to sharing news updates about local, national and global issues and causes. With the increasing number of users and the ever increasing audience social media has become an efficient tool in marketing, social activism and political campaigning. Before the advent of social media the ability to create and distribute information solely rested with the media, however, the social networking sites has now shifted this capacity to the users, the ordinary people, by enabling them to create and distribute their own content in the form of texts, images, audios and videos. Within the last two decade social media has revolutionaries the way people communicate and interact with each other and it still continues to bring in new changes through the introduction of new applications (apps)

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<sup>13</sup> See for details <http://www.wearesocial.net/blog/2014/01/social-digital-mobile-worldwide-2014/>

and features. Even though social media is being heralded as the new communication revolution, some critics view it simply as a passing fad. However, in spite of the criticisms social media is not just a trend which would fade out soon nor can its impact be undermined. In the words of Rupert Murdoch, Executive Chairman of News Corp:“It is difficult, indeed dangerous, to underestimate the huge changes this revolution will bring or the power of developing technologies to build and destroy not just companies but whole countries.”<sup>14</sup>

## **4.2. Social Networking Tools**

The social networking sites are the most widely used social networking tools and are mostly owned by private companies. Often referred to as Web 2.0 (a term first used as the title of a conference by technology publisher O'Reilly Media) is generally used to refer to the web as a platform for software development, as opposed to computer desktops.<sup>15</sup> According to wikipedia:“a social network service consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his or her social links, and a variety of additional services.”<sup>16</sup>

Social networking sites allow the users to interact over the internet through e-mails, instant messaging and also include features such as uploading of videos and images and blogging. Through these social networking sites the users are able to share their interests, life events, opinions and views with other users. The late 1990s saw the emergence of a rough form of the social networking tools that are prevalent today. One of the first primary efforts aimed at online social interaction were chat rooms which were online communities where the users can interact with each other by logging in to a

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<sup>14</sup>See for details Rupert Murdoch as quoted by  
<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2006/mar/14/newsmia.studentmediaawards>

<sup>15</sup> See Suw Charman-Anderson, Note 10,p. 5.

<sup>16</sup>See for details [http://www.en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/social\\_networking\\_service](http://www.en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_networking_service)

particular website and interact with other users through instant messaging. Within the last two decades the world has witnessed a rise in the number and popularity of the social networking sites. Since its emergence, the social networking sites has gone from instant messaging and emails to sharing of almost any kind of information whether audio or visual with people from all over the globe.

These social networking tools share certain similar features<sup>17</sup>

- ▶ User profiles: Profiles includes personal information about the user such as age, location, relationship status, contact information, hobbies and interests, employment information and educational history.
- ▶ Connecting people: Social networking sites enable its users to connect with people and brands, business, artists and others.
- ▶ Private messaging: Akin to emails social networking sites contain a form of private messaging which are typically sent from one user to another. It can also be sent by a group member to the other members as well.
- ▶ Public messaging: Public messages are called comments in my space, and wall messages in facebook. The commenting section can be found on profiles, photos, events, groups, business pages etc.
- ▶ Online communities or groups: Most social networking sites contain online communities a collection of users connected by some common interest ranging from movies to some social cause. The members of these online communities share information and discussions with each other.

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<sup>17</sup> See Dan Zarrella and Alison Zarella, *The Facebook Marketing Book*, (O'Reilly Media Inc., Canada, 2011), p. 53.

► Events: Most social networking sites allow the users to create an event and send invitations to other users. These events can be in reference to an event in the real world or an online event.

► Applications: Applications acts as add-ons to a profile or web page to enhance its functionality. Applications or Apps usually allows the user to add calendars and play games etc.

► Status updates: Several social networking sites allow their users to post texts, videos, links etc allowing the other users to view and comment upon these updates.

#### **4.2.1. Facebook**

The official facebook website described it in the following lines: “millions of people use facebook everyday to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos and learn more about the people they meet.”<sup>18</sup>

##### Facebook Basic Facts:

Headquarters: Menlo Park, California, United States.

Founders: Mark Zuckerberg and co- founders Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes.

Chairman and CEO: Mark Zuckerberg.

Website: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).

Number of registered users as of 30 June, 2016. <sup>19</sup>
1.13 billion daily active users on average in June 2016.
1.03 billion mobile daily active users on average in June 2016.

<sup>18</sup> See for details <http://www.facebook.com/about>

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>

1.71 billion active users as of June 30, 2016.
1.57billion monthly active users as of June 30, 2016.
Approximately 84.5 % of the daily active users are outside the U.S and Canada.

Timeline of important Facebook events as per the official Facebook website:<sup>20</sup>

Year	Event
February 4, 2004	Mark Kuckerberg and co- founders Dustin Moskovitz, ChrisHughes and Eduardo Saverin launch Facebook.
March 2004	Facebook expands from Harvard to Stanford, Columbia to Yale.
September 2004	Launch of the Facebook Wall, giving people a place to post their messages to their friends.
December 2004	Facebook reaches 1 million users.
May 1, 2005	Facebook grows to support more than 800 college networks.
September 20, 2005	Thefacebook.com officially drops the “the” and becomes Facebook.
October 2005	Facebook begins to add international school networks.
September 26, 2006	Facebook expands registration so anyone can join.
October 2007	Launch of Platform for Mobile.
December 2009	Facebook reaches 360 million users.

<sup>20</sup> See for details <http://www.newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>

December 2010	Facebook reaches 608 million users
April 20, 2011	President Barack Obama visits Facebook.
April 9, 2012	Facebook announces acquisition of Instagram.
October 4, 2012	More than one billion are active on Facebook.
December 12, 2013	Instagram Direct Launched
February 19, 2014	Facebook announces acquisition of WhatsApp
March 25, 2015	Messenger Platform launched at F8.
September 27, 2015	Q&A with Mark Zuckerberg and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
April 6, 2016	New ways to create, share and discover Live Video on Facebook introduced.

Facebook basic features:

- ▶ Wall: This feature allows the user to post text messages, upload images, videos, audio or links known as ‘Wall posts/ updates.’ These posts or updates generally display the date and time when the posts or updates were written or uploaded by the user. It also includes messages, shared links or tagged images and videos posted on the user’s Wall by the other users. These posts/updates contain three features comment, like or share.
- ▶ News Feed: News Feed contains highlights of information like profile changes, upcoming events, birthdays and other updates from other users, groups or pages etc.
- ▶ Messages: This feature allows the user to send messages to other users in his/her friend list.

- ▶ Events: facebook users can create offline or online events and send out invitations to other users in their friend list. Using facebook to send event information is a lot faster (and cheaper) than printing and mailing invitations.<sup>21</sup>
- ▶ Friends: facebook users can add people that they know or sometimes random strangers in their contact list or friend list. This feature also includes the ‘unfriend’ and ‘block’ options as well.
- ▶ Applications: Facebook applications or apps include utilities like notes to Zynga games and online quizzies. These apps can be added to the user’s profile or web page.
- ▶ Groups: groups can be easily created and administered by the users. Groups work well when the users want to take quick action around a time- sensitive issue, and they’re often used to rally people around causes or current events.<sup>22</sup>
- ▶ Pages: pages are similar to user’s profiles are they usually created for brands (e.g., products), services (e.g. restaurants), People (e.g. celebrities) and entertainment (e.g. movies).
- ▶ Privacy: facebook privacy contains settings that allow the user to manage the types of profile content that can be seen by the other users.

#### **4.2.2. Twitter**

The official Twitter websites describes Twitter in the following lines:“Twitter helps you create and share ideas and information instantly without barriers.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See for details Dan Zarrella and Alison Zarrella, Note 17, p. 95.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 69.

<sup>23</sup> See for details <http://about.twitter.com>



While it explains a Tweet as, “a tweet is an expression of a moment or idea. It can contain text, photos, and videos. Millions of Tweets are shared in real time, every day.”<sup>24</sup>

Twitter basic facts:

Headquarters: San Francisco, California, United States.

Founders: Evan Williams, Noah Glass, Jack Dorsey and Biz Stone.

Chairman and CEO: Jack Dorsey (Chairman), Dick Costolo (CEO).

Website: [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com).

Number of registered users as of June 30, 2016. <sup>25</sup>
313 million monthly active users.
1 billion unique visits monthly to sites with embedded Tweets.
82% of Twitter active users are on mobile.
79% of accounts are outside the U.S.
Twitter supports 40+languages.

Timeline of important Twitter events as per the official Twitter website:<sup>26</sup>

Year	Event
March 2006	Jack Dorsey’s early sketch of Twitter; he sends the first Tweet on March 21.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> See <http://about.twitter.com/company>

<sup>26</sup>See for details <http://www.about.twitter.com/milestones>

April 2007	Twitter is spun off from Obvious Corp. into a separate company, Twitter, Inc., with Delaware incorporation filing on April 19.
August 2007	The hashtag (#), first proposed by user Chris Messina, debuts on Twitter.
January 2009	The U.S Airways plane crash in NYC's Hudson River is shared on Twitter; the photo is the first from the scene, breaking the news before traditional media knew it
April 2010	Twitter launches Promoted Tweets.
March 2011	Twitter shares milestone numbers for its 5 <sup>th</sup> birthday, including 1 billion Tweets sent per week.
September 2011	Twitter announces 100 million monthly active users, worldwide.
June 2012	Twitter announces the new Twitter bird design.
November, 2012	President Barack Obama marked his win with this Tweet ("Four more years") which became the most retweeted.
January 2013	Twitter launches Vine.
August 2013	500 million Tweets are sent per day, or 1 billion every 2 days.
March 2014	#Oscars Tweets made an unprecedented 3.3 billion impressions, and become the most retweeted
April 2013	The MoPub Marketplace and Twitter Publisher Network reach over 1 billion mobile devices.
March 2014	Oscar Tweets made an unprecedented 3.3 billion impressions and this Tweet surpassed the previous record to become the most

	Retweeted.
June 2014	Twitter acquires Nano Media, SnappyTV, TapCommerce
August 2015	Expansion of the Twitter Audience Platform. Direct Messages are no longer limited to 140 characters.
January 2016	View live Periscope broadcasts directly within Tweets.

Twitter Basic features:

- ▶ Accounts: Twitter accounts comprises of personal and company accounts.
- ▶ Avatar: Tweets are accompanied by pictures or avatars, consisting of a 48x48 pixel square image of the person or the logo of the company uploading the tweet.
- ▶ Bio: While creating a Twitter account there is a section entitled ‘Bio,’ this section which comprises of 160 characters enable the users to write personal details about themselves.
- ▶ Background: Twitter allows the users to design and upload a custom image for their account pages. Some users add in extra information about themselves which may include the other social sites where they can be found for instance, like facebook or myspace.
- ▶ Follow button: The Follow button is a small widget which allows users to easily follow a Twitter account from any webpage.<sup>27</sup>
- ▶ Tweets: A Tweet consists of 140 characters or less text messages which are posted by the users on their Twitter web pages. Since Tweets comprises of about only 140 characters, the users can make use of a URL shortened which will shorten the URL to about 10-20 characters.

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<sup>27</sup> See for details <http://dev.twitter.com/we/follow-button>.

- ▶ Replies/Mentions: Replies/Mentions to Tweets are accompanied by ‘@username.’ Replies/Mentions are public and are visible to all the Twitter users from the user’s Twitter page. If a user includes @username of more than 2 persons in a Tweet, then the Tweet will appear in the Mentions tab of other users.
- ▶ Retweets: A retweet is a re posting of someone else’s Tweet.<sup>28</sup> Twitter’s retweet feature allows the users to quickly share Tweets with their followers.
- ▶ Trending topics: Trending topics generally comprises of popular news and events.
- ▶ Hashtags: A hashtag is used to indicate that a certain Tweet is about the same topic as every other Tweet using the same tag.<sup>29</sup> They are generally used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet.<sup>30</sup> For example, users Tweeted about the Egyptian Revolution (2011) using hashtags like #jan25 and #Egypt.
- ▶ Direct messaging (DM): Direct Messagings or DMs are private messages. A user can DM another user who is following his/ her Twitter account.

### **4.2.3. YouTube**

The official YouTube website describes YouTube as “YouTube allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally created videos. You Tube provides a forum for people to connect, inform and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small.”<sup>31</sup>

#### **YouTube Basic Facts:**

Headquarters: San Bruno, California.

Founders: Steve Chen, Chad Hurley and Jawed Karim.

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<sup>28</sup> See for details <http://support.twitter.com/articles/77606-faqs-about-retweets-rt>

<sup>29</sup> See Dan Zarrella and Alison Zarrella, Note 17, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> See <http://support.twitter.com/articles/49309-using-hashtages-on-twitter>

<sup>31</sup> See <http://www.youtube.com/yt/about/>.

Chairman and CEO: Susan Wojcicki (CEO).

Website: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

Number of registered users as of June, 2016 <sup>32</sup>
YouTube has over a billion users and every day people watch hundreds of millions of hours on YouTube and generate billions of views.
Growth in watch time on YouTube has accelerated and is up at least 50% year over year for three straight years.
80% of YouTube views are from outside the U.S.
The number of hours people spent on watching videos on mobile is up 100% year after year.

Timeline of important YouTube events:

Year	Event
February 14, 2005	Launching of YouTube by the three former PayPal employees, Steve Chen, Chad Hurley and Jawed Karim.
April 23, 2005	First YouTube video entitled ‘Me at the Zoo’ was uploaded, showing co founder Jawed Karim at the San Diego Zoo. <sup>33</sup>
October 9, 2006	Google purchased YouTube for US\$1.65 billion in stock. <sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See for details <http://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html>

<sup>33</sup> See for details Richard Alleyne, *YouTube: Overnight success has sparked a backlash*, 31 July, 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/newsuknews/2480280>.

June 19, 2007	YouTube launches the new localization system. <sup>35</sup>
July 25, 2007	YouTube and CNN produced the televised presidential debates which marked the highest viewership for a debate among adults 18- 34 in cable news history. It was viewed by 2.6 million viewers. <sup>36</sup>
November, 2008	YouTube reaches an agreement with MGM to show some full length television shows and films from MGM. <sup>37</sup>
20 January, 2010	YouTube landed its first live major sporting deal to stream/ host live the Indian Premier League Cricket matches in the UK. <sup>38</sup>
May 2011	YouTube announces that it receives more than three billion views per day. <sup>39</sup>
October 2012	YouTube partners with ABC News to offer the first ever live stream of the US Presidential Debates. <sup>40</sup>
March 21, 2013	The number of users visiting YouTube every month reached 1 billion. <sup>41</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See for details Paul R. La Monica, *Google to buy YouTube for \$1.65 billion*, October 9, 2006, [http://www.money.cnn.com/2006/10/09/technology/googleyoutube\\_deal/index.htm?cnn=yes](http://www.money.cnn.com/2006/10/09/technology/googleyoutube_deal/index.htm?cnn=yes).

<sup>35</sup> See for details <http://www.pcadviser.co.uk/news/internet/9772/google-launches-youtube-france/>

<sup>36</sup> See for details Paul J. Gough, *CNN's YouTube debate draws impressive ratings*, July 25, 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN2425835220070725?irpc=932>.

<sup>37</sup> See for details Brad Stones and Brooks Barnes, *MGM to Post Full Films on YouTube*, November 9, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/10/business/media/10mgm.html?ref=Technology>

<sup>38</sup> See for details Mark Sweney, *YouTube confirms worldwide deal for live Indian Premier League cricket*, 20 January, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2010/jan/20/youtube-live-india-premier-league>

<sup>39</sup> See for details Shane Richmond, *YouTube users uploading two days of video every minute*, 26 May, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/google/8536634/YouTube-users-uploading-two-days-of-videos-every-minute.html>

<sup>40</sup> See for details Frederic Lardinois, *YouTube Partners with ABC News to Offer its First- Ever Live Stream of the U.S Presidential Debates*, 1 October, 2012, <http://www.techcrunch.com/2012/10/01/youtube-partners-with-abc-to-offer-its-first-ever-live-stream-of-the-us-presidential-debates>.

November 2014	YouTube announces plans for a subscription music service. <sup>42</sup>
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Some YouTube Basic Features:

- ▶ **User Account:** User accounts on YouTube are called channels; the user's username generally defines his/her YouTube URL. YouTube allows its users to customize their profiles with specific foreground and background colors as well as adjust the font size. The users are also allowed to hide or rearrange specific parts of their profiles.<sup>43</sup>
- ▶ **Uploading videos:** By default YouTube allows its users to upload videos up to 15 minutes each in duration; however, may be offered the ability to upload videos up to 12 hours in length, which requires verifying the account through a mobile phone.<sup>44</sup>
- ▶ **Downloading and sharing videos:** YouTube users allow its users to save, download and share any of the videos. It also comes with a share button, which allows the user to share the video on any of the social networking sites or other web sites.

Some additional features of YouTube are:<sup>45</sup>

- ▶ **Monetization:** It allows a user to earn money from his/her videos.
- ▶ **Longer videos:** It allows a user to upload videos which are longer than the standard 15 minute limit.
- ▶ **External annotations:** This feature allows a user to link annotations to external sites.
- ▶ **Custom thumbnails:** It allows the users to choose their video's thumbnail.

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<sup>41</sup> See for details <http://m.cnbc.com/id/100575883>

<sup>42</sup> See for details <http://theverge.com>

<sup>43</sup> See for details Dan Zarrella and Alison Zarrella, Note 17, p. 85.

<sup>44</sup> See <http://www.m.youtube.com/watch?v=mpEjjXRszY>

<sup>45</sup> See <http://www.support.google.com/youtube/answer/2498474?hl=en>.

- ▶ Paid subscriptions: This feature allows the user to earn revenue by charging a subscription fee to users who want to watch the user's videos.
- ▶ Live events: This feature allows the user to create a live streaming event.
- ▶ Series playlists: This feature allows the users to create a playlist of their videos.

#### 4.2.4. **WhatsApp**

WhatsApp Messenger is an instant messaging application that uses the internet to send text messages, images, videos, audios, documents and user location.

##### WhatsApp basic facts:

- ▶ Founded in 2009 by two ex- yahoo employees Brian Acton and Jan Koun.
- ▶ Headquarters: California, Mountain View, California, United States.
- ▶ CEO- Jan Koun
- ▶ Website: [www.whatsapp.com](http://www.whatsapp.com)

WhatsApp Statistics as of April 12, 2016 <sup>46</sup>
1 billion users.
Percentage of monthly WhatsApp users that use it daily 70%
Average number of new WhatsApp users that register daily 1 million
Number of countries WhatsApp is used in 109 countries.
Number of messages sent via WhatsApp daily 42 billion.

##### Timeline of important events:<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See for details <http://successstory.com>products>whatsapp>

<sup>47</sup> See for details <http://successstory.com>products>whatsapp>.



Year	Event
2010	WhatsApp released for Symbian OS and Android OS.
September, 2011	WhatsApp released a new version of the Messenger for iPhones having closed the security holes.
2013	It released for Windows Phones and Blackberry 10
2014	They released a version for smartwatches running Android OS.
February, 2014	Acquisition by Facebook for US \$ 19 billion.
January, 2015	WhatsApp added a call feature to target a totally different group of users.

#### 4.4.5. **Instagram**

Instagram is home for visual storytelling for everyone from celebrities, newsrooms and brands to teens, musicians and anyone with a creative passion.<sup>48</sup>

##### Instagram Basic Facts:

- ▶ Founded by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010
- ▶ CEO- Kevin Systrom
- ▶ Website- [www.instagram.com](http://www.instagram.com)

Instagram Statistics: <sup>49</sup>
500 million monthly active users.

<sup>48</sup>See <http://www.instagram.com>

<sup>49</sup> See for details <http://www.instagram.com>

300 million daily active users
80% of users outside the United States
4.2 billion likes daily.
95 million photos/ videos per day.

Timeline of important Instagram events:<sup>50</sup>

Year	Event
October 6, 2010	Instagram launches.
December 12, 2010	Instagram has 1 million users.
March 21, 2011	First Worldwide Instameet.
August 3, 2011	150 million photo upload.
September 20, 2011	Introducing v2.0 with 4 new filters.
December 9, 2011	Instagram is 'iPhone App of the year.'
April 9, 2012	Facebook buys Instagram.
June 28, 2012	Instagram redesigns photo pages for web.
July 26, 2012	Instagram has 80 million users
September 13, 2012	New mobile Profile pages.
November 5, 2012	Instagram rolls out Profiles for Web.
February 25, 2013	Celebrating 100 million users.
May 2, 2013	Tag photos on Instagram.
June 20, 2013	Introducing Instagram videos.
August 7, 2013	Announcing v4.1.

<sup>50</sup>See for details <http://www.wersm.com>the-complete-history-of-instagram>

October 24, 2013	Launching sponsored photos and videos.
December 12, 2013	Introducing Instagram Direct.

Instagram Basic Features:

- ▶ Username: Username is followed by a ‘@’ symbol and can include numbers, letters, periods and underscores.
- ▶ Profile: Instagram profile contains information relating to the user and his/her likes
- ▶ Posts: Posts are photos and videos a user shares on Instagram.
- ▶ Hashtags: Hashtags are used to find and give context to a particular post of comment.
- ▶ Direct post: Instagram Direct lets a user send pictures or videos privately to 15 people
- ▶ Explore: The explore tab lets a user see the recommended or trending posts and accounts.
- ▶ Follow: The follow button lets a user follow another Instagram account.

4.2.6. **WeChat**

WeChat is a micro messaging and calling application that allows the user to connect with other users around the world.

WeChat Basic Facts:

Launched in January 2011 by Tencent Holdings Ltd.

Website: [www.wechat.com](http://www.wechat.com)

WeChat important timeline events:<sup>51</sup>

Year	Event
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<sup>51</sup>See for details <http://www.whatsonweibo.com>whatswechat>.

January 21, 2011	Launch of WeChat
March, 2012	100 million users
January 2013	300 million users
June 2013	400 million users

WeChat Basics:

The core function of WeChat is its messaging function: sending free messages to phone contacts that also use WeChat. It has more or less the same function as WhatsApp which allow the user to send text, images, videos, audios and documents.

4.2.7. **Tumblr**

According to the official Tumblr site:“Tumblr lets you effortlessly share anything. Post text, photos, quotes, links, music and videos from your browser, phone, desktop, email or wherever you happen to be.”<sup>52</sup>

Tumblr Basic Facts:

Founded in 2007

Founder and CEO- David Karp

Headquarters New York City.

Languages- 16

Acquired by Yahoo for \$1.1 billion on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

Statistics <sup>53</sup>
Blogs- 309.3 million

<sup>52</sup>See for details <http://www.tumblr.com>.

<sup>53</sup> See <http://www.tumblr.com>

Posts-138.0 billion
Daily posts- 43.1 million
Domestic (U.S) traffic- 42%

### Tumblr basics:

- ▶ Dashboard: The dashboard consists of live feed of recent posts from blogs which the user is following. It also allows the user to upload text, images, videos, quotes or links to their blog.
- ▶ Tags: By adding tags a user can find posts about certain topics.
- ▶ Queue: This button allows the user to delay posts over several hours or even days.

### **4.3. Networked Citizens and Cyber Activism**

“If you’re not in the network, you will not be able to fully be part of the network society.”<sup>54</sup> Manuel Castells the emergence of the internet followed by social media have led to the rise of two important inter- related concepts networked citizens and cyber activism. Since the development of the internet during the early 1960s by the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the world has witnessed the rapid rise of the new communication technologies aimed at making communication faster and more efficient. In their report, Public Media 2.0: Dynamic, Engaged Publics, Jessica Clark and Patricia Aufderheide (2009) describe the landscape we now inhabit:

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<sup>54</sup>See for details Manuel Castells as quoted by <http://www.socialmediasm.wordpress.com/2012/10/30/network-society-manuel-castells/>

“Commercial media still dominate the scene, but the people formerly known as the audience are spending less time with older media formats. Many (people) now inhabit a multimedia saturated environment that spans highly interactive mobile and gaming devices, social networks, chat and only sometimes television or newspapers. People are dumping land lines for (mobile) phones and watching movies and TV shows on their computers. While broadcast still reaches more people, the Internet (whether accessed through phones, laptops, or multimedia entertainment devices) has become a mass medium.”<sup>55</sup>

The interaction of the new information technologies with the social organization has resulted in changes in the social structures leading to what Sociologist, Manuel Castells, termed as the emergence of a network society. For Manuel Castells, the networked society is simply the outcome of the interaction between the communication technologies and the social organization. “The network society, in the simplest terms, is a social structure based on networks operated by information and communication technologies based in microelectronics and digital computer networks that generate, process, and distribute information in the basis of the knowledge accumulated in the nodes of the networks.”<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, the networked society is a hyper social society and not a society of isolation as it does not isolate the individuals from the society, rather the use of the internet increases sociability as studies in different countries shows

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<sup>55</sup>See for details Jessica Clark and Patricia Aufderheide as quoted by Suw Charman Anderson, Note 10, p.9.

<sup>56</sup> See for details Manuel Castells and Gustavo Cardoso, *The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy*, (John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2009), p.7.

that internet users are more social, have more friends and are more socially and politically active than non internet users.<sup>57</sup> Sociability is further accelerated by the new media which Castells terms as ‘self directed mass communication.’ With the advancement of the new information technologies, mass communication tools are being slowly shifted from the hands of the big corporations to the individuals and groups through the varied social networking tools, thereby, enabling the individuals and groups to interact and communicate with each other directly without going through the channels set up by the society for socialized communication i.e., the traditional mass media like radio, television and print media. This new development has in turn affected the political process which is mostly dependent upon the traditional socialized communication system. Media politics has undergone a massive change owing due to the new ‘self directed mass communication.’ Political opinions and behaviours are mostly shaped by the media, and most politicians tend to monopolize media to further their own political interests or to maintain their political hegemony. But with the development of the new communication technologies this monopoly has been to a certain extent broken, as the masses are now slowly gaining more and more control over the socialized communication with the aid of the prevalent social media. Furthermore, the network society is not limited by time and space, “because the network society is based on networks, and communication networks

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<sup>57</sup>See for details Manuel Castells and Gustavo Cardoso, *The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy*, (John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2009), p.5.

transcend boundaries, the network society is global, it is based on global networks. So, it is pervasive throughout the planet.”<sup>58</sup>

Certain important conclusions can be drawn from Manuel Castells conception of network society; firstly, the information technologies enable change in the social structures. Secondly, the network society is a society of networked individuals. Thirdly, the network society constitutes and facilitates ‘self directed mass communication’ as opposed to corporation controlled socialized communication. Fourthly, through the new ‘self directed mass communication’ the network society can change the political institutions and system in the society. Lastly, it transcends boundaries. The above conclusions will form the basis in explaining who or what a network citizen is, its role as a catalyst for change in the society and the concept of cyber activism.

The digital revolution has ushered in a new era of the networked citizens often referred to as citizens without borders, citizens 2.0 (in reference to Web 2.0 which offers second generation services, where contents can be produced and shared by the users) a concept akin to that of global citizenship. With the emergence of social media, the traditional notions of citizenship limited by boundaries are now being contested by a new concept of citizenship defined by the use of the information technologies and which transcend boundaries. As citizenship ceases to be defined or shaped by place based community, individuals turn to geographically diffuse networks as sources of knowledge and information, which would enable them to be more active, resourceful, creative and

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<sup>58</sup> See for details Manuel Castells and Gustavo Cardoso, *The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy*, (John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2009), p.11.



influential.<sup>59</sup> John Katz portrays the network citizen as a person who uses the internet on a daily basis, as a tolerant, freedom loving type of person, who feels responsible for public affairs and has a strong civic sense.<sup>60</sup> Networked citizens are generally characterized by the following,

- ▶ They are highly dependent on the use of the internet, particularly social media and its varied social networking tools like *blogs, wikis, Twitter, YouTube* etc.
- ▶ They are usually active members of online communities or in other words they are generally branded as hyper- social.
- ▶ They operate beyond narrow national boundaries.
- ▶ They facilitate ‘self directed mass communication,’ with the aid of the various social networking tools.
- ▶ They are socially and politically aware of the issues around them and hence strive to bring about change in their societies and in the world.

As opposed to the view that the use of the internet isolates its users from the society, the rapid growth of the network society in recent years basically showcases that the internet or social media does indeed encourages its users to be more social, better informed and more socially and politically aware of the issues around them. Some of the main causes behind the rise of networked citizens are:

- ▶ Information on the internet is easily accessible and it comes at a low cost.

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<sup>59</sup> See Stephen Coleman, *The Network- empowered citizen: How people share civic knowledge online*, University of Oxford, p. 1, <http://www.ippr.org>.

<sup>60</sup> See for details John Katz as quoted by Bence Kollanyi, Szilard Molnar and Levente Szekely, *SocialNetworksandtheNetworkSociety*, Bhudapest, July 2007, p.15, [http://www.ittk.hu/netis/.../04\\_MKSZ\\_final.pdf](http://www.ittk.hu/netis/.../04_MKSZ_final.pdf)

► Groups with common interests who were previously geographically dispersed, now find it easier to ‘gather together’ online in a variety of synchronous and asynchronous ways.<sup>61</sup>

► The internet allows the users to connect with other like- minded users from all over the world, thereby, increasing online sociability.

ICTs have revolutionized the way people interact with each other; it has also produced a new generation of connected and empowered citizens who are not afraid to speak their minds. These new brands of networked citizen strive for the creation of an ideal society with a responsive political system; they are motivated by the belief that they have the capacity to change the world through collective action. This belief has in turn produced a new phenomenon known as cyber activism or online activism, internet activism or e advocacy. Cyber activism involves the process of using interactive communication technologies to operate and manage activism of any type; it allows any individual or organization to utilize social networks and other online technologies to reach and gather followers, broadcast messages and progress a cause or movement.<sup>62</sup> Cyber activism manifests itself in the form of creating awareness, gathering and organizing followers and initiating reactions. It employs social media as a platform to share and broadcast information necessary for mobilizing the masses. These social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube etc. One of the most important elements of cyber- activism is online mobilization. Mobilization in cyber- activism is highly dependent on the social networking tools or self- directed mass communication

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<sup>61</sup>See for details John Katz as quoted by Bence Kollanyi, Szilard Molnar and Levente Szekely, *SocialNetworksandtheNetworkSociety*, Bhudapest, July 2007, p.17, [http://www.itk.hu/netis/.../04\\_MKKSZ\\_final.pdf](http://www.itk.hu/netis/.../04_MKKSZ_final.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> See <http://www.techopedia.com/definition/27973/cyberactivism>.

systems as it encourages the creation of online communities which alternately promotes and increases online social solidarity. According to Kenneth C. Killebrew, “In the distant past, voices were determined by who owned the press, but as new media formats were invented, developed and cast on the public landscape, the expectation of diverse voices became higher.”<sup>63</sup>

Cyber activism consists of three phases namely, Awareness/ Advocacy, Organization/ Mobilization and Action/Reaction.

### **Awareness/Advocacy: First Phase**

The first and foremost step in cyber- activism is to create awareness; it can be in regard to a certain social or political issue. Social networking sites help in creating awareness through links, photography, videos and text updates. Some of the social networking tools used in promoting awareness are

- ▶ Facebook and My Space enable its users to ‘like’ and share links or stories.
- ▶ Twitter allows its users to share messages and information by ‘tweeting’ and ‘retweeting.’
- ▶ Blogging sites like Word Press provides platforms to the users to raise awareness about specific issues or causes through their blogs.
- ▶ YouTube videos create awareness by providing visual contents to connect the users through emotions.
- ▶ Images can also be a powerful means for promoting awareness, one such site is instagram which allows its users to upload and share pictures/images.

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<sup>63</sup>See Kenneth C. Killebrew, *Managing Media Convergence: Pathways to Journalistic Cooperation*, (Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2005), p. 185.

### **Organization/ Mobilization: Second Phase**

Mobilization in cyber activism is largely dependent on the social media tools. This relationship can be analyzed from two angles, how social media helps in mobilizing the masses for collective action:

► Unlike the traditional broadcast media, social networking sites allow the information transmitters to interact with the targeted audience within few seconds after the transmission of the information. This quick and effective mode of transmission promotes greater feedback and encourages greater citizen participation.

► Cyber activists resort to the use of social media tools to mobilize the vast array of network citizens who are scattered across the globe. Online communities' helps in creating collective identities by bringing people together based on their common interests which in turn facilitate social solidarity making it easier for mobilization to take place.

How social media tools aid the cyber activists in mobilizing the masses:

► Social media enables mobilization by aiding the cyber activists to pass on the right information at the time.

► Social media also provides a common platform for exchange of views and opinions between the cyber activists and the target audience, this process helps in minimizing the problems which may arise during the course of the mobilization phase.

► With the aid of social media, the cyber activists are able to get a large number of ordinary citizens to get involved quickly at a low cost.

### **Action/Reaction: Third Phase**

Actions or reactions in cyber activism manifest itself in the form of signing online petitions and staging online and offline protests.

► Online protests/ virtual actions that are internet based: Online protests can be in the form of filling petitions, expressing views and opinions, sharing links or posts on social networking sites etc. For example, online petitions are regarded as an effective tool for staging online protests. An online petition or e - petition is a form of petition which is signed by the internet or the social media sites users by entering their names and email ids in support of a particular cause which the petition may contain. Online petitions are an important tool in cyber activism as they entail minimum costs. An example of online petition is the case of Molly Katchpole one of change.org's most successful online petitions of 2012. This online petition was targeted at Bank of America's plan to charge a \$5 monthly debit card fee. Katchpole, a 22 year old, underemployed college grad filed a petition and within a month, 300,000 people had electronically signed the petition against the charges. Later, the bank decided to drop its proposed new fee.<sup>64</sup> In addition to petitions, online protests can also assume different forms, for instance, one of the biggest online protests is the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA). This online protest was part of the protest by the popular internet sites like Wikipedia, Google, Reddit etc against the SOPA bill which was introduced in the US House of Representatives in the last quarter of 2011. This bill gave the government the power to shut down websites accused of copyright violations even if they are later found to be innocent of the charges.<sup>65</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2012, many of the popular websites like Wikipedia staged a 24 hours blackout while websites like Google put up their own protest messages. These series of online protests ended with a stunning win for the internet companies as the bill was indefinitely shelved.

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<sup>64</sup>See for details <http://www.change.org/p/tll-bank-of-america-no-5-debit-card-fees>

<sup>65</sup> See [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2012/17/glQA4WY16P\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2012/17/glQA4WY16P_story.html).

► Offline protests/ real actions that are facilitated by the internet: Cyber activists play a crucial role in building social movements. One of the most effective forms of cyber activism is staging offline protests, whereby, the cyber activists mobilize the masses online in order to stage offline street protests and demonstrations. One of the best demonstrations of this form of cyber- activism would be the Egyptian Revolution (2011) and the Occupy Wall Street protests (2011). The Occupy Wall Street is a people powered movement that began on September 17, 2011 in Liberty Square in Manhattan’s Financial District, and has spread over 100 cities in the United States and actions in over 1, 500 cities globally.<sup>66</sup> The protests began with a small group of activists whose objective was to fight against the richest 1% who were responsible for formulating rules leading to an unfair global economy. The main slogan of the movement “We are the 99%” refers to the income inequality and wealth distribution in the US between the wealthiest 1% and the rest of the 99% population. The movement took off with the creation of the web address OccupyWallStreet.org by a small group of activists; however, the movement spread quickly within a short span of time particularly on account of the social media tools like facebook, twitter, tumblr etc. On the facebook page, ‘occupy together’ which has more than 131, 000 members, an update about the planned demonstrations was shared by more than 500 people around the world while on Twitter, the protesters used hashtags like #OccupyLondon, #OccupyTokyo and #OccupySidney, to help organize the overwhelming stream of posts coming from around the world.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>See for details <http://occupywallst.org/about/>.

<sup>67</sup>See for details Jennifer Preston, *Social Media Gives Wall Street Protests a Global reach*, <http://www.nytimes.com/blogs/mediadecorder/2011/10/15/social-media-gives-wall-street-protests-a-global-reach>.

While critics continue to write off cyber activism as simply a trend, incapable of producing substantial offline participation, yet, the number of social movements in recent years along with their high usage of the internet and the social media tools suggest that cyber activism serves as a crucial platform for creating awareness and mobilizing the masses. According to Nancy Schwartzman, an American activist, director and producer, we need boots on the ground, people signing and creating petitions and all the in- person work. If social media can benefit social causes too, then great. Some people call (social media activism) ‘slacktivism,’<sup>68</sup> like it’s not the same as being on the ground but I don’t think that’s useful. We need all hands on deck.”<sup>69</sup>

#### **4.3. Impact of Social Media**

The impact of social media can be felt in almost every aspect of human life, whether, social, economic or political; the presence of the varied social media tools has enabled sharing of information or ideas within a few seconds, by anyone, anywhere. From Burger King’s advertising campaign to the Arab Spring, social media has played a crucial role in spreading the message or information across. The potentiality of social media as a platform for reaching the masses both locally or globally at a low cost has made it a feasible outlet for marketing and spreading awareness about social and political issues.

The impact of social media can be analyzed from four angles:

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<sup>68</sup> Slacktivism- Slacktivism is a term which combines the words ‘slacker’ and ‘activism’ to refer to simple measures used to support an issue or social cause involving virtually no effort on the part of the participants. See <http://www.techopedia.com/definition/28252/slacktivism>.

<sup>69</sup> See Nancy Schwartzman as quoted by Carrie Loewenthal Massey, *Tweets and Status Updates for a Cause*, SPAN, November/ December, 2013, Volume LIV, number 6, Public Affairs Section, American Centre, New Delhi, p.11.

- ▶ Social media and traditional media: This analysis will focus on how social media with its interactive user features has transformed the traditional mass media and they way it connect with the masses.
- ▶ Social media and the citizens: This analysis will be centered on how social media facilitates the growth of informed and empowered citizens and how it increases civic engagement or participation.
- ▶ Economic impact of social media: This analysis will focus on how social media serves as a marketing and advertising platform for the companies.
- ▶ Political impact of social media: This analysis will be based on examining the role of social media in aiding as well as disrupting political systems.

### **Impact of Social Media on Traditional Media**

Social media has been heralded as the new and improved form of mass media. Mass media is defined simply as those forms of communication channels which possesses the capacity to reach a large number of people. In the last two decades or so traditional or old mass media has undergone a change, owing due to the emergence of social media or new media. Distinction between traditional media and social media are made based on their mode of production and distribution/transmission. The production process involves collection of information, while the distribution process involves disseminating the information product to the consumers. Traditional or old media includes broadcast media (television, radio and films) and print media (newspapers, magazines and journals). In traditional media, the mode of production and distribution/ transmission denotes a ‘one way communication system,’ whereby; production and transmission are carried out by one producer and transmitted to the consumers. For instance, in the case of the news



channels, the production and distribution process solely rest with the channels and their news teams. Social media on the other hand, consist of the social networking sites. Unlike traditional or old media, social media involves a two way communication system, whereby, the participants act as both producers and consumers. For instance, social networking sites allow the users to share information and interact with a vast audience at the same time.

However, in recent years the distinctions between traditional and social media are getting blurred owing due to what Kenneth C. Killebrew calls ‘convergence.’ He defines convergence as, “convergence is a movement in the field of mass communications undertaken in the late twentieth century and now moving quickly in the early twenty first century, that weds previously competitive media delivery formats (platforms) to one another.”<sup>70</sup>

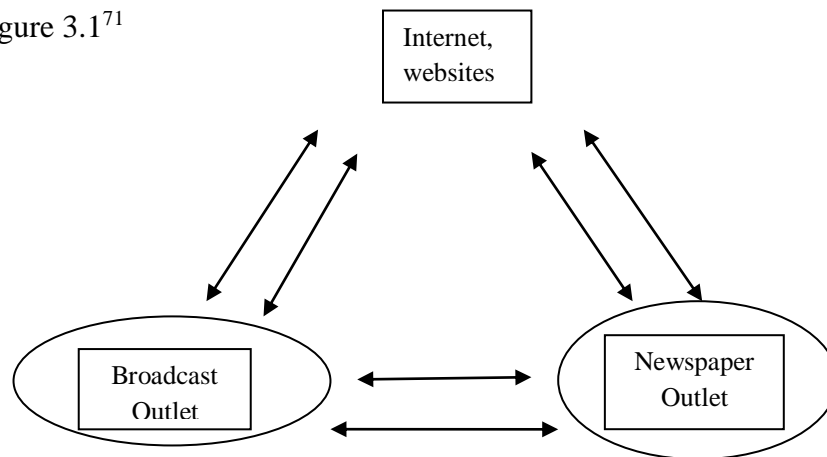
In explaining convergence Killebrew firstly, categorizes mass media into three distinct platforms based on their information delivery or distribution print media (newspapers, magazines), broadcast media (television and radio) and new media (internet and the other formats). The general idea behind this concept is to bring these three categories together in order to achieve relatively equal distribution of information from each platform.

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<sup>70</sup> See Kenneth C. Killebrew, *Managing Media Convergence: Pathways to Journalistic Cooperation*, (Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2005), p.40.

This process is illustrated in the figure below:

Figure 3.1<sup>71</sup>



The current impact of social media on traditional media can be explained based on Killebrew's convergence process. Social media with its interactive user features has produced a profound impact on traditional media. Social media is increasingly viewed as a threat to broadcast and print media as people are now relying more on social media sources for information. The social media outlets like blogs, forum, online communities etc with its capacity to share news to a vast audience within a few seconds have increased the reliance on social media tools for information. However, to counter this threat, traditional media has merged itself with the social media tools; many of the news channels and newspapers now have their own web pages with social media links to broadcast news online as well as to interact with their audience. There is now a three way interaction system between the three media sources broadcast, print and social media; with social media supplementing traditional media in terms of information sources and

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<sup>71</sup> See See Kenneth C. Killebrew, *Managing Media Convergence: Pathways to Journalistic Cooperation*, (Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2005), p.41.

valuable user inputs. The combination of traditional and social media together has the capacity to produce profound impacts, for instance, CNN's citizen journalism initiative, i-report, has grown to epic proportions, with over 1 million i-reporters around the globe submitting stories.<sup>72</sup> In recent years, social media and traditional media have come to play complementary roles. Social media benefits traditional media in three ways, firstly, it helps traditional media to reach a vast audience within a short span of time, secondly, it provides information sources which can be tracked down and verified, and thirdly, social media serves as a platform for advertisement for traditional media. Traditional media on the other hand benefits social media by providing media coverage to issues, news or events broadcast online via social media, moreover, it has the advantage of having a stable and established viewing audience.

### **Impact of Social Media on the Citizens**

As mass media shifts from the monopoly of the big corporations to the hands of the ordinary citizens, opinions and views which were once devoid of a platform are now being increasingly heard. Social media has enabled the citizens to raise their voices against the injustices of the society as well as to demand certain changes in their environment. Social media has given a voice to those who were once constrained by their societies and its rules. An overview of the blogs, discussion forums and online communities' showcases varied topics ranging from environmental protection to political issues. The user interactive features of social media have further enabled the connection of like minded people across the world that can share stories or information and work together at a global level.

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<sup>72</sup> See for details Ann Marie van den Hurl, *New Dynamics in Social and Crisis Communications*, May 9, 2013, <http://www.quepublishing.com/articles/article.aspx?p=2041296&seqNum=5>.

Perhaps, the most interesting impact of social media on the citizens is the emergence of citizen journalism. Citizen journalism is a broad term, at a basic level, the idea of citizen journalism is to have a thriving ecosystem, where people become more engaged with events around them.<sup>73</sup> It attempts to enhance citizen's ability to discuss the problems that are covered in the news and to contemplate solutions to these problems.<sup>74</sup> With the increasing use of social media, news/events which are happening around the world local, national or international can be posted on the social networking sites within a few seconds of the happening of the news or event. Important international events such as the Egyptian Revolution (2011) and the Occupy Wall Street Movement (2011) were mostly covered by the citizens who posted constant facebook and twitter updates as well as YouTube videos of the protests. These testimonial updates and videos were even included in the news channels coverage of the events. In addition to the above form of news coverage, citizen journalism also focuses on bringing into mainstream media, compelling stories about ordinary people, giving a voice to the unheard sections of the society. Recognizing the importance of citizen journalism CNN has come up with i-report a citizen journalism initiative which allows people from around the globe to share their stories and issues. Listed as a nominee for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual i-report Awards, 2013, the story of Adele Raemer, an English teacher living along the Gaza Strip, shared her feelings of fear and frustration after rocket attacks between the Palestinian territories and Israel. CNN i-report describes this story as, "Her first person take on the conflict offers more

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<sup>73</sup>See Anubha Bhonsle, *Better Journalism*, SPAN, September/October, 2012, Volume LIII, No. 5, Public Affairs Section, American Centre, New Delhi, p. 43.

<sup>74</sup>See Mohammed El- Nawawy and Sahar Khamis, *Cyberactivists Paving the Way for the Arab Spring: Voices from Egypt, Tunisia and Libya*, CyberOrient, Vol.6, Iss.2, 2012, <http://www.cyberorient.net/article.do?articleId-7994>.

emotion than any news report could.”<sup>75</sup> However, many critics have doubted this new form of citizen journalism branding it as unreliable. While the fact remains that amateur citizens can never replace the professional journalists, yet, they can provide the raw materials in the form of first hand information for the journalists to work upon. Moreover, citizen journalism can bring to the attention of the journalists stories about people who are largely neglected by the mainstream media.

### **Economic Impact of Social Media**

With the capacity of reaching millions of people within a few seconds at a cheap rate, social media has become an important platform for marketing and advertising for the companies and the big brands. Many of the companies are constantly seeking out ways to improve their image, and social media facilitates this by providing a platform for the companies to interact with their customers. The various social networking sites provide an opportunity to the companies to discuss their products with their customers. For instance, the big brands like IBM, Dell, Burger King, Starbucks etc has took to social media for promoting their brands. Aside from using social networking sites to promote their brands, the companies are also after feedbacks from the users to improve and enhance their products. Promotions or advertisements through social networking sites generally take the form of contests, polls, sweepstakes, games, videos etc. For instance, the recent 2014 FIFA World Cup offered spectacular opportunities for companies to get creative with their social media campaigns and promote their brand; Nike surpassed Adidas and produced eight campaigns that generated a total of 240.6 million views.<sup>76</sup> According to the Business Insider, in 2012, facebook got around \$1 billion dollars per

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<sup>75</sup>See for details <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/03/opinion/ireport-awards-hawkins-gaar/>.

<sup>76</sup> See for details <http://www.tintup.com>.

quarter in advertising revenue alone.<sup>77</sup> While in 2014, facebook advertising revenue for the quarter ending June 30<sup>th</sup> rose up to \$2.68 billion dollars per quarter.<sup>78</sup> Ford global sales and marketing VP, Jim Farley in an interview for Wall Street Journal stated that, “Someone who ‘likes’ you on facebook is substantially more willing to advocate the brand.”<sup>79</sup> The increasing big brand promotions on the social networking sites is attributed to the new era of ‘active consumerism’ where consumers want to get more involved with the product or service they invest in. Most of today’s businesses are now judged based on their facebook or linkedIn profiles, and, consumers expect companies to respond to the concerns and queries they have tweeted within the day or within the hour.<sup>80</sup> With billions of people around the world on social media, advertising or promotions on social networking sites is a great way to reach people at a relatively low cost.

### **Political Impact of Social Media**

Social media acts as an effective tool in political campaigns. The US President Barack Obama branded as the first social media President relied heavily on social networking sites like twitter, facebook, linkedIn, myspace etc during his political campaign in the US Presidential Elections in 2008. His website even contained a social media section where his supporters could create profiles and connect with each other.<sup>81</sup> Graham Felsen, the blog director of the US Presidential campaign 2008, referring to the growing influence of social media, had stated “twitter was around in 2008, but we had a few hundred-

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<sup>77</sup>See for details <http://www.businessinder.com/the-30-biggest-advertisers-on-facebook->

<sup>78</sup>See for details <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/jul/23/facebook-earnings-beat-expectations-ad-revenues>

<sup>79</sup> See [http:// www.s3.amazonaws.com](http://www.s3.amazonaws.com).

<sup>80</sup> See <http://www.oakshirefinancial.com/tag/nysegm/page/3/>

<sup>81</sup>See for details Dan Zarrella and Alison Zarrella, Note 17, p. 5.

thousand followers. Now (President) Obama's got tens of millions of followers and it's an incredible tool for quickly disseminating information and rebutting attacks."<sup>82</sup>

Additionally, social media tools are also utilized in spreading election news, propagandas and even to encourage voting amongst the young people as well. The elections in Egypt in 2014 witnessed many voters posting images of their inked fingers on social media sites like Twitter and instagram and they also used hashtags like #EgyPressElex and #Egyelections to share and spread the word.<sup>83</sup>

However, social media can also produce devastating effects on political systems as well. It can disrupt political systems and cause chaos and disorder. Following the 2009 Iranian Presidential Elections, protests broke out in Iran disputing the victory of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Supporters of the opposition rallied around the world, using Twitter as a base of operations; the Iranian authorities responded to the protests by closing universities, blocking websites, banning assembly and blocking cell phone transmissions.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, social media with its potentiality to disrupt the political systems has compelled many of the countries to put a ban on the use of the social networking sites. The Turkish government had banned the country's access to YouTube and Twitter in an effort to quell anti government sentiment prior to local elections on March 30, 2014.<sup>85</sup> Along with Iran and Turkey, China also banned facebook, twitter and youtube in 2009 while Pakistan banned YouTube in 2010.

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<sup>82</sup>See Graham- Felsen as quoted by Michael Gallant, Connecting Online and Casting Votes: New technologies reshape the face of American Elections, SPAN, September/October, 2012, Volume LIII, number 5, Public Affairs Section, American Centre, New Delhi, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup>See for details <http://www.socialmediasun.com/impact-of-social-media-on-society>.

<sup>84</sup> See for details <http://www.socialmediasun.com/impact-of-social-media-on-society>

<sup>85</sup>See for details <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/03/turkey-facebook-youtube-twitter-blocked>.

The impacts of social media are all encompassing, from raising political awareness to providing consumer centred services, social media has helped in bringing about changes in almost every aspect of human life. And in spite of the continued debates about the impact of social media, one cannot deny the presence of the social media revolution, sweeping swiftly across all spheres of life. Communication now and 20 years back are beyond comparison; people are now more aware of the world that they are living in. No longer are they being restricted by the narrow national boundaries, a person living in India can help fight against a social injustice or support a social or political cause in Africa through online petitions and by spreading awareness. No century has ever witnessed this much amount of power in the hands of the people, nor any country in its citizens. Social media has enabled the citizens around the world to raise their voices against the injustices in their societies; it has enabled them to seek support from all corners of the world to fight for their cause and to stand in solidarity against the prevalent foes; the Egyptian Revolution and the Occupy Wall Street Movement bears testament to this fact.