CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Prologue

In the new millennium social media have emerged as the most popular media of communication. There are several factors which have contributed to this rapid growth and development of social media. Prominent among them include technological factors (increased broadband availability, the improvement of software tools and the development of more powerful computers and mobile devices), social factors (rapid uptake of social media by younger age groups), economic factors (increasing affordability of computers and software and growing commercial interest the social media sites) and political factors (increasing political mobilization and several political changes across the world). The world has witnessed a shift in the focus of Web applications towards social interaction, collaboration and networking. This development has also influenced education. Social media application has become a new way of life in the field of education. Scholars and technocrats had identified the ways and means for the inclusion of various social media applications in the learning process in higher education. The tools range from general-purpose tools for the generic community of interest to highly specialized tools for the support of learning in higher educational environment. The present study evaluated the impact of social networking sites on Iranian students who are pursuing higher education in Karnataka state. The salient aspects of the study namely features of social media, development of social media, impact of social media on society, application of social media for educational development, application of social media for higher education management, application of social media for personality development of students, significance of the study, statement of the problem and objectives of the study are amplified in this chapter.

1.2 History of Social Media

Early Social Media

The origin of social media can be traced back to the written correspondence delivered by hand from one person to another. Letters were exchanged individually.
The postal service had begun in 550 B.C and it continued for several centuries as a prominent means of social communication. In 1792, the telegraph was invented by Graham Bell and it allowed messages to be delivered over a long distance far faster than a horse and rider could carry them. The telegraph messages were also effective means of social communication. The telephone was also discovered in 1890 as an effective means of social communication. But, the invention of radio in 1891 by Marconi remarkably widened the scope of social media and communication all over the world. The telephone lines and radio signals enabled people to communicate across great distances instantaneously.

**Social Media in the 20th Century**

Jasra (2010:120) writes: “The scientists and technocrats contributed immensely for the development of communication science and technology. The advent of television by J.L.Baird revolutionized the concept of mass communication in the world. The super computers were created in the 1940s by the scientists and engineers. They had developed the ways to create networks between those computers. Subsequently, the technocrats also gave birth to Internet which emerged as an informal university. The earliest forms of the Internet, such as CompuServe, were developed in the 1960s. Primitive forms of email were also developed during this time. In 1971, the first e-mail service began by connecting two computers. In 1978, exchange of data over phone lines took place. The first copies of early web browsers were distributed through Usenet in 1979 to enable the users to communicate through a virtual newsletter”.

During the last quarter of 20th century, new communication technologies were developed to ensure telecommunication, space communication and computer communication to the mankind. The home computers were developed in 1980s and paved the way for the emergence of more sophisticated Internet relay chats, or IRCs which were used as popular means of social communication 1990’s. The Geocities was the first web-based social networking site developed in 1994. It allowed the users to create their own websites. In 1995, TheGlobe.com emerged as another site and allowed the users to publish their content and interact with the other users sharing similar interests. In 1997, AOL Instant Messenger was launched for the purpose of instant messaging.
Carton (2009:48) observes: “The first recognizable social media site, Six Degrees, was created in 1997 by Andrew Weinreich. The SixDegrees.com was a social network service website which was based on the Web of Contacts model of social networking. It functioned effectively as a social media network till 2001. It was named after the six degrees of separation concept and allowed users to list friends, family members and acquaintances both on the site and externally; external contacts were invited to join the site. Users could send messages and post bulletin board items to people in their first, second, and third degrees, and see their connection to any other user on the site. It was one of the first manifestations of social networking websites in the format now seen today”. From Six Degrees, the Internet moved into the era of blogging and instant messaging. Although blogging may not seem like social media precisely, the term fits because people were suddenly able to communicate with a blog other instantly as well as other readers.

The Six Degrees was followed by more successful social networking sites based on the ‘social-circles network model’ such as Friendster, MySpace, LinkedIn, XING and Facebook. An era of blogging began subsequently. Jorn Barger coined the word ‘Weblog’. A weblog or blog is a listing of text, images, or other objects that are arranged in a chronological order. The weblog appeared in 1998 and blogs were maintained and run by a single individual. A weblog, sometimes written as web log or Weblog is a Web site that consists of a series of entries arranged in reverse chronological order, often updated on frequently with new information about particular topics. The information can be written by the site owner, gleaned from other Web sites or other sources, or contributed by users. They were updated daily in order to disseminate personal remarks about current issues or personal issues. The weblogs are like a personal journal or a look into another individual's life and can be a way to learn about people, events, places, and more from people around the world.

Social Media in the New Millennium

By the year 2000, around 100 million people had access to the internet, and it became quite common for people to be engaged socially online. LinkedIn was founded in 2002 by Reid Hoffman but it was officially launched on May 05, 2003. It was basically business-oriented social networking service. It is mainly used for
professional networking. As of 2016, most of the site's revenue comes from selling access to information about its users to recruiters and sales professionals.

MySpace was the original social media profile website, leading into and inspiring websites like Facebook. MySpace was invented in 2003 by using ColdFusion. The project was managed by Brad Greenspan and a team of specialists and programmers. Toan Nguyen played a crucial role in stabilizing the MySpace platform. By 2004, it was transitioned from a file storage service to a social networking site. But even though MySpace has a very small user base today compared to Facebook and Twitter, there are musicians who have used MySpace to promote their music and even be heard by record producers and other artists.

Boyd and Ellison (2007:38) note: “MySpace was considered as the leading social networking site, and consistently beat out main competitor Facebook in traffic” subsequently. Angwin (2009:17) adds: “MySpace had attempted to redefine itself as a social entertainment website, with more of a focus on music, movies, celebrities, and TV, instead of a social networking website. MySpace also developed a linkup with Facebook that would allow musicians and bands to manage their Facebook profiles”.

Stelzner (2009:226) says: “Mark Zuckerberg with his Harvard College roommates and fellow students Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes established another social networking site called Facebook in Menlo Park, California. The users were enabled to create a user profile, add other users as ‘friends’, exchange messages, post status updates and photos, share videos and receive notifications when others update their profiles”. The users were able to join common-interest user groups, organized by workplace, school or college, or other characteristics, and categorize their friends into lists such as ‘People from Work’ or ‘Close Friends’. Facebook had over 1.20 billion monthly active users as of December 2015.

Twitter was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone, and Noah Glass. The site was launched in July 2006. Hart (2009:104) states: “Tweets are publicly visible by default, but senders can restrict message delivery to just their followers. Users can tweet via the Twitter website, compatible external applications such as for smart phones or by Short Message Service (SMS) available in certain
countries”. The individual tweets can be forwarded by other users to their own feed, a process known as a ‘retweet’. Users can also ‘like’ (formerly ‘favorite’) individual tweets. It gained immense worldwide popularity, with more than 100 million users posting 340 million tweets a day in 2012. The Twitter had more than 500 million users by the end of 2015.

Pirillo (2010:192) remarks: “Flickr was created as a web service suit by Ludicorp in 2004 and acquired by Yahoo in 2005. The site emerged as a popular website for users to share and embed personal photographs, and effectively an online community. The service is widely used by photo researchers and by bloggers to host images that they embed in blogs and social media”.

Flickr was one of the earliest and still is one of the most popular photo sharing sites. It had about 87 million registered members by the end of 2013. Photos and videos can be accessed from Flickr without the need to register an account but an account must be made in order to upload content onto the website. Registering an account also allows users to create a profile page containing photos and videos that the user has uploaded and also grants the ability to add another Flickr user as a contact.

Instagram was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. The site was launched in October 2010 as a free mobile app. The service rapidly gained popularity, with over 100 million active users as of April 2012. The service was acquired by Facebook in April 2012. Basically, it is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, and share them on a variety of social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr. In August 2015, version 7.5 was released, allowing users to post photos captured in any aspect ratio. Users can also apply digital filters to their images. The maximum duration for Instagram videos is 15 seconds. The network had crossed over 400 million in December 2015. Instagram is one of the top social media sites to include on business cards and other media.

Tumblr is a micro blogging platform and social networking website founded by David Karp. The network is presently owned by Yahoo. The service allows users to post multimedia and other content to a short-form blog. Users can follow other
users' blogs, as well as make their blogs private. Much of the website's features are accessed from the ‘dashboard’ interface, where the option to post content and posts of followed blogs appear. As of January 1, 2016, Tumblr hosts over 272.4 million blogs, 127 billion posts and 363 employees. Presently, the website had 555 million monthly visitors.

Pinterest is a web and mobile application company that operates an eponymous photo sharing website. The site was founded by Ben Silbermann, Paul Sciarra and Evan Sharp in March 2010. It is managed by Cold Brew Labs and funded by a small group of entrepreneurs and investors. It is a ‘catalog of ideas’ rather than as a social network that inspires users to go out and do that thing. Pinterest is a free website that requires registration to use. Users can upload, save, sort, and manage images—known as pins—and other media content (e.g., videos) through collections known as pin boards. Pinterest acts as a personalized media platform. Users can browse the content of others in their feed. Users can then save individual pins to one of their own boards using the ‘Pin It’ button, with Pinboards typically organized by a central topic or theme. Users can personalize their experience with Pinterest by pinning items, creating boards, and interacting with other members. By doing so, the users ‘pin feed’ displays unique, personalized results.

The Pinterest had recorded unique users moving average growth of 85% from mid-January to mid-February and a 17% growth from mid-February to mid-March. It overtook competing micro-blogging site Tumblr for the first time in terms of unique monthly visitors, clocking in at just fewer than 25 million. It also had 48.7 million users globally. In 2014, Pinterest generated its first revenue, when it begins charging advertisers to promote their wares to the site's millions of hobbyists, vacation planners, and do-it-yourselfers. At present, the site generates as much as $500 million in January 2016.

Cohen (2009:58) comments: “Social media today consists of thousands of social media platforms, all serving the same – but slightly different purpose. Of course, some social media platforms are more popular than others, but even the smaller ones get used by a portion of the population because each one caters to a very different type of person”. The most popular social networking sites and apps include –
The Twitter is the simplest of all social media platforms wherein the interface is easy to learn and use. Kirkpatrick (2011:135) highlights: “The Facebook is mainly centered on sharing photos, links, and quick thoughts of a personal nature, individuals can also show their support to brands or organizations by becoming fans”.

LinkedIn was one of the beginning social media websites which is geared specifically towards professionals who want to network with each other. The LinkedIn is the only mainstream social media sites that are actually geared towards business. The Xing is a professional networking and recruitment site. While MySpace was a general social media site, LinkedIn is meant for professional business people to connect with each other to network, find jobs and socialize. The Renren is China’s largest social platform which allows the users to share quick thoughts, update their moods, connect with others, and add posts or ideas to a blog-like stream. The Google+ combines the best of Facebook and Twitter into one site and emerged as the world’s largest search engine.

The Disqus provides opportunities to the users to improve their social engagement. LinkedIn Pulse serves as something between a blog and ‘best of’ outlet. The Snapchat has the ability to take a picture, add art and text. The Tumblr is different from many others in that it essentially hosts micro blogs for its users. The Pinterest enables the users to share pictures, creative thoughts and other contents. The YouTube has become ‘the world’s second-largest search engine’ and allows the users to share, rate and comment on current affairs. The Instagram is a convenient connection between the camera feature on the smart phone and all social profiles. The WhatsApp is the world’s most popular messaging platform.

The Pew Research Centre has carried out an investigation on the present status of social networking sites in the world. The Facebook has dominated over other social media sites in terms of access and usage. It remains the king of social media as on today. A majority of the users are Smartphone users. Approximately, 80% of internet users are also Smartphone users. The Pinterest and Instagram are the fastest growing social networking sites in the world. Facebook continued to grow slightly, whilst LinkedIn actually saw a slight dip on 2015. Facebook is the number one social media website today and it currently boasts over a billion users.
The Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are growing constantly in the markets as prominent social media. The Pinterest and Instagram are more effective than Twitter as tools of business communication. Facebook still comes top for engagement, with 70% of users reporting that they log in daily. The social media have become prominent tools of participatory communication, governance, business and development all over the world. They continue to influence the attitudes and behaviors of the people and contribute significantly towards the educational, social and political mobilization of the people in the world.

**The Future of Social Media**

Social media are not only widely used, but they have become widespread in business. Social media icons are seen everywhere and it became almost unusual to see businesses or brands without them. Social media have enabled the internet marketers and website owners to enjoy great visibility of their websites across the world. The benefits of social media marketing for business began to become quite clear to business owners large and small. Social media bookmarking have become quite popular. There are services that would bookmark a post or a website across dozens or even hundreds of social media services. Social media today consists of thousands of social media platforms, all serving the same – but slightly different purpose. The social media platforms are more popular than others, but even the smaller ones get used by a portion of the population because each one caters to a very different type of person. Modern businesses are using social media to promote their products and services in a brand new way. The social media platforms serve multi-purposes and they continue to play a vital role in future.

**1.3 Contemporary Relevance of Social Media**

**Concept of Social Media**

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a ‘social network’ is a dedicated website or other application that enables users to communicate with each other by posting information, comments, messages, images, etc. A social networking service is a platform to build social networks or social relations among people who share similar interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections. A social network service
consists of a representation of each user and provides various services to the mankind. The social network sites are web-based services that allow individuals to create a public profile, create a list of users with whom to share connections, and view and cross the connections within the system. The online community services are sometimes considered a social network service, though in a broader sense, social network service usually means an individual-centered service whereas online community services are group-centered. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, pictures, posts, activities, events, and interests with people in their network.

Scholars have examined the nature and diversity of social media platforms and offered various definitions. Drury (2008:65) defines social media as —online resources that people use to share content: video, photos, images, text, ideas, insight, humor, opinion, gossip, news. The scholar has emphasized the social media behavior of people. Dykeman (2008:69) defined social media as the means for any person to: publish digital, creative content; provide and obtain real-time feedback via online discussions, commentary and evaluations; and incorporate changes or corrections to the original content. The scholar has highlighted the features of social media. Marchese (2007:159) distinguished social media from traditional media by stating that social media is not the media itself, but the system of discovery, distribution, consumption and conversation surrounding the media.

Safko and Brake (2009:209) considered social media as —activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media. Conversational media are Web-based applications that make possible for one to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios. In general, social media can be understood as online platforms for the interaction, collaboration, and creating/sharing of various types of digital contents Eisenberg (2008:70) opined that social media allow people to actively engage in a communication process not only as information receivers but also as message creators. The online applications are designed to facilitate information sharing, knowledge distribution, and opinion exchanges.

The social network sites (SNSs) are increasingly attracting the attention of academic and industry researchers intrigued by their affordances and reach. The term ‘social media’ refers to the wide range of Internet-based and mobile services that
allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content or join online communities. The social network sites are commonly defined as web based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system by Boyd and Ellison (2007:38) They are commonly viewed as part of the overall Web 2.0 revolution that aimed to enhance creativity, communications, secure information sharing, collaboration and functionality of the Web. The social network sites have attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily practices. The social media enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks.

The social media are indeed the forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other contents. The Wikipedia defines social media as “media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques. Social media is the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue”. The social media platforms enable the interactive web by engaging users to participate in, comment on and create content as means of communicating with their social graph, other users and the public.

Joe Cothrel opines that social media include the channels for user-generated content based on social technologies. Sam Decker describes social media as a digital interaction oriented channels and contents created by and between people. Gini Dietrich states that social media allow people to network, to find people with like interests and to meet people who can become friends or customers. Bryan Eisenberg notes that social media are platforms for interaction and relationships, not content and advertisements. Howard Greenstein remarks that social media are online technologies and practices that people use to share content, opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives.

Haythornthwaite (2005:107) writes: “What makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. This can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made, but that is often not the goal,
and these meetings are frequently between latent ties who share some offline connection. On many of the large SNSs, participants are not necessarily networking or looking to meet new people; instead, they are primarily communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network. To emphasize this articulated social network as a critical organizing feature of these sites, we label them social network sites”. Basically, social media facilitate social interaction and participation in modern society.

The social media are the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. The websites and applications dedicated to forums, micro blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media. The social media have become an integral part of life online as social websites and applications proliferate. The social media have also become an all pervasive online media which include social components, such as comment fields for users.

The social media are commonly defined as internet or cellular phone based applications and tools to share information among people. Social media includes popular networking websites, like Facebook and Twitter; as well as bookmarking sites like Digg or Reddit. The social media also involve blogging and forums and any aspect of an interactive presence which allows individuals to engage in conversations with one another, often as a discussion over a particular blog post, news article, or event. In the present times, people use one form of social media or another primarily online, in order to keep in touch with family or friends; or to either be informed or to inform others about a variety of topics concerning their lives and activities. The social media have made the world too small since the people are able to use cellular phones and social media sites such as Facebook to stay up to date on the happenings of their family, friends, and the world in general.

**Social Media vs. Social Networks**

Social media can be called a strategy and an outlet for broadcasting, while social networking is a tool and a utility for connecting with others. Cohen (2009:58) observes: “The difference is not just semantics but in the features and functions put into these websites by their creators which dictates the way they are to be used.”
Hartshorn (2010:106) writes: “There are several differences between social media and social networks. The first one could be the definition; social media is still a media which is primarily used to transmit or share information with a broad audience, while social networking is an act of engagement as people with common interests associate together and build relationships through community”. Bedell (2010:30) notes:

“Indeed, social media is simply a system, a communication channel; it is not a location that you visit. In contrast, social networking is a two-way communication, where conversations are at the core, and through which relationships are developed”.

Forms of Social Media

There are several forms of social media which are used by the people for various endeavors. They include:

Social Networks

The social network services allow the users to connect with other people of similar interests and background. The most popular are Facebook and LinkedIn sites which allow people to build personal web pages and then connect with friends to share content and communication. The biggest social networks are MySpace, Facebook and Bebo.

Bookmarking Sites

The benchmarking sites allow the users to save, organize and manage links to various websites and resources around the internet. The most popular are Delicious and Stumble Upon which enable the users to tag their links to make them easy to search and share. The search engines like Google come in very handy and help the users to find out the appropriate bookmarking sites such as Stumble Upon, Pinterest, and Flip board and obtain the contents from elsewhere on the Internet and save them to their account on the platform. The contents can be private or public, and shared with other users.
Social News

The social news services allow the users to post various news items or links to outside articles and permit them to vote on the items. The voting is the core social aspect as the items that get the most votes are displayed the most prominently. The community decides which news items get seen by more people. The most popular sites are Digg and Reddit.

Media Sharing

The media sharing services allow the users to upload and share various media such as pictures and video. The most popular sites are YouTube, Instagram and Flickr which deliver services like profiles, commenting, etc. The users have to choose, upload and edit image files before proceeding with anything else, such as captions or mentions of other users. Similarly, with sites such as YouTube and Vimeo or apps like Vine and Snapchat, video is the primary mode of communication.

Microblogging

The micro blogging services allow the users to receive the updates since the social networking combined with bite-sized blogging, where small amounts of content updates are distributed online. The most popular site is Twitter which focuses on short updates that are pushed out to anyone subscribed to receive the updates.

Blog Comments and Forums

The blog comments and forums allow the users to hold conversations by posting messages. Blog comments are similar except they are attached to blogs and usually the discussion centers around the topic of the blog post. There are many popular blogs and forums. The blog comments and forums are the best known form of social media since they are online journals which make the entries appear with the most recent first. The specific topics of interest are covered in the comments which ensure wide reach and share of collective knowledge. These websites allow people to add content to or edit the information on them, acting as a communal document or database.
Relationship Networks

The relationship networks allow the users to develop personal relationship and provide extensive information about the user and most often require them to register with their real name. Relationship networks also allowed the users to keep all their communications in one place, on the Walls. The users can also share updates with our entire networks in one click. They vary from professional relationship networks that help them find work, connect with other professionals in the field, and share recommendations, to romantic relationship networks that help them find single users in your area.

Online reviews

The online review services allow the users to consult the Internet along with their friends for recommendations of best dining spots. There are sites to review anything from hotels, restaurant or your latest employer—and user reviews have more weight than ever before. Sites like Airbnb and Uber are the biggest service providers in the emerging sharing economy, rely largely on host and driver reviews, respectively, to determine who benefits from the service.

Social publishing platforms

The social publishing platforms consist of blogs and micro blogs, where long and short-form written content can be shared with other users. These platforms range from real-time interaction networks such as Twitter—which, while still officially placed in the category of micro blogging platforms, is not normally included in the blogging category by most users—to Medium and Tumblr, which are battling it out for the title of the best interactive social publishing; to more traditional blogging platforms, such as Word Press and Blogger.

Interest-based networks

The interest – based networks provide wonderful opportunities to find people with common interests, no matter how niche these hobbies may first appear to be. In addition to Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+ communities, the users make use of other sites for various purposes. These networks are dedicated to exploration of
interest—such as Last.fm for musicians and music lovers, and Good reads for authors and avid readers.

Other prominent social media platforms include - Rating/Review Sites (Amazon ratings, Angie’s List), Photo sharing sites (Flikr, Instagram, Pinterest), Video sharing sites (YouTube, Vimeo, Viddler), Personal broadcasting tools (Blog Talk radio, Ustream, Livestream) Virtual worlds (Second Life, World of Warcraft, Farmville), Location based services (Check-ins, Facebook Places, Foursquare, Yelp), Widgets (Profile badges, Like buttons); and Group buying (Groupon, Living Social, Crowd savings).

The social networks operate on many levels, from families up to the level of nations, and play a critical role in determining the way problems are solved, organizations are run, and the degree to which individuals succeed in achieving their goals. Social networks are also powerful mechanisms for rapidly shifting and transforming social norms throughout the network, through a process of ‘social contagion’. Interest in social networks has grown exponentially with the development and spread of online social network sites.

**Characteristics of Social Media**

The social media have certain inherent characteristics. A social network is a social structure made up of a set of social actors (such as individuals or organizations) and a set of the dyadic ties between these actors. The social network perspective provides a set of methods for analyzing the structure of whole social entities as well as a variety of theories explaining the patterns observed in these structures.

Social networking sites also give users the ability to observe their connections and the connections of others on the site. These sites are about the facilitation of relationships, relationships that existed before the connection on the site as well as relationships that were created through the social networking site. Social networking sites are characterized by a user's ability to create a public profile which contains demographic and personal information, and is made visible based upon personal privacy settings, opine Boyd and Ellison (2007:38). Newer forms of social media include mapping and geo-tagging, sometimes known as location services. There are
many terms related to social media that are important to understand. Computer mediated communication (CMC) is the conversations facilitated through technology-based social media platforms, state Hughes et. al (2008:111).

Social media is one of the major methods of social interaction around the world today. Social media is user-generated content distributed through the Internet with the intent to be shared and facilitate conversation between users, observe Wright and Hinson (2010:250). Social media can create opportunities for two-way dialogue and interaction among organizations, the public, and individuals, according to Bortree and Seltzer (2009:35). Nielsen (2012:108) describes the weblogs thus: “Weblogs, often simply called blogs, allow individuals or small organizations to easily create their web pages to publish opinions, disseminate updated information, or post materials. Blog users are often provided with user-friendly templates so that they can upload their contents without special technical expertise”.

Guardian (2011:96) informs about the Facebook thus: “Facebook has many features, including post messages, disseminate personal information, upload and share photos, chat, as well as invite friends to an event. Facebook users to take advantage of Smartphone-like applications on simpler phones”. Telegraph (2011:235) narrates the Twitter thus: “The Twitter is sometimes regarded as social news, among social media categories. Site visitors can quickly obtain other or updated information in a specific topic, using hash tags. Hash tags can be embedded in any Tweets. Twitter is sometimes regarded as social news, among social media categories. Site visitors can quickly obtain other or updated information in a specific topic, using hash tags”.

YouTube (2011) introduces the YouTube thus: “YouTube is a video-sharing site where people can discover, watch, and share originally-created videos. Although YouTube is relatively a new web service, founded in February 2005, it already became a hugely popular website. YouTube reached over 700 billion playbacks in 2010. More than 13 million hours of video were uploaded during 2010 and 48 hours of video are uploaded every minute. YouTube has been committed to the localization of the service”. Stein et al (2013:225) identified the five major characteristics of social media which include - user-based, interactive, Community-driven, relationships building means and emotional security for the users. The entire Internet itself is fast becoming a giant, interactive and powerful social network.
The prominent characteristics of social media include - free web space, free web address, building profiles, uploading contents, making conversations, chatting with clients and members, sending of e-mails and creating pages. Social media are interactive digital tools that feature content users may generate, manipulate, or influence. Social media are conducive to timely, interactive communication and foster dialogue and content exchange among message consumers and creators.

The online Social Networking enables people to maintain and to extend their personal and professional networks, as well as to facilitate the flow of information through these networks. The mobile communications and social media have gained a great deal of attention and research for their ability to raise awareness of issues, improve monitoring of environmental and social realities, and as social networking for better and governance and development. The role of social media in modern times is highly visible.

Social media is best understood as a group of new kinds of online media, which share most or all of the following characteristics. The web site provides free web space to the users to upload the contents. The web address enables the users to post and share all their content on this web address. The build profile helps the users to maintain personal details and connects individuals. The users are also provided the tools to post content in real time. This content can be text, images, audio, video or even symbolic likes and dislikes. The social media facilitate conversations between the likeminded persons. All posts are time stamped, making it easy to follow posts. Social media encourages contributions and feedback from everyone who is interested. It blurs the line between media and audience.

Most social media services are open to feedback and participation. They encourage voting, comments and the sharing of information. There are rarely any barriers to accessing and making use of content – password-protected content is frowned on. The social media facilitate two-way communication and allow communities to form quickly and communicate effectively. Most kinds of social media thrive on their connectedness, making use of links to other sites, resources and people. The social media ensure emotional bonding with a circle of friends provides a great deal of support in an otherwise unmanageable situation.
Advantages of Social Media

The social media provide several advantages to the mankind. The ability of the social media to increase the networking potential or work with others regardless of distance presents new ways for people. The social media enable the users to stay in contact with friends, family members, fellow citizens and other likeminded persons across the globe. The social media provide the benefit of world wide connectivity in the age of globalization. They have become highly useful tools for multi-faceted communication. They promote commonality of interest and enable the users to participate in a social network community.

The social media have leveled the playing field for businesses as it is accessible to anyone, regardless of company size, turnover and contacts. The social media channels are extremely simple to use, even for people with basic IT experience. Modern organizations can communicate information in a flash, regardless of geographical location. The social media channels offer unparalleled opportunities to interact with customers and build relationships. The social media’s adaptability makes content management generally more flexible. The social media services provide an outlet for the users to share their ideas and thoughts with other people in a comfortable environment. They enable the users to connect with entire groups of people who are interested in the same things. The social media could be easily utilized to create cost effective strategies and campaigns that can create viral results, writes Hollier (2009:109).

Carraher et. al (2009:46) identifies the advantages of social media in the business sector thus: “The social media will help in building a good reputation for a business organization. Through social media, the company can repeatedly reinforce the brand name. Brand awareness starts with the experiences of the employees of a company. Social media forum acts as a powerful way to communicate the brand value and brand attribute as they facilitate open forms of communication”.

Society for Human Resource Management (2010) emphasizes the advantages of social media in the field of business promotion thus: “Social networking platforms may allow organizations to improve communication and productivity by disseminating information among different groups of employees in a more efficient
manner, resulting in increased productivity. Social media advantages include – open communication leading to enhanced information discovery and delivery, discussion of ideas, post news, ask questions and share links, enhancement of business contacts, useful and effective recruitment, improvement of business reputation and implementation of marketing campaigns.

Tretenhahn (2011:237) states: “The industry is in an excellent position to benefit from all concomitant advantages social media can offer by evaluating goals and objectives, conducting professional research and by using a systematic approach; social networking enables us to change the nature of events in the future”. Bank and Bank (2014:26) highlight the advantages of social media in tourism field thus: “The strategic importance of social media is high for tourism competitiveness. Slow progress is made by the industry in responding to business opportunities by social media. The online world is rapidly evolving and some companies may embrace new technologies due to the pressure to be digital but are not thinking about what it means to the business in a virtual environment. The phenomenon of social networking and the development of social media (web-based and mobile technologies that turn text communications into active dialog) has been the most dramatic development in the information age over recent years”.

The social media incorporate an instant messaging feature facilitates exchange information in real-time via a chat. Social networking can provide a tool for managers to utilize in team meetings, for conference organizers to use to update attendees and for business people to use as a means of interacting with clients or prospects. The social media also provide free advertising services to the mankind about the activities and contributions of government and non-government organizations. The social media have led to the development of a near instantaneous news cycle as millions of social networking updates rapidly spread news and information.

The social media have provided opportunities to the people to meet frequently and interact well for various purposes. The social media enable the users to constantly keep in contact with family through advanced means and methods. The social media facilitate the creation of networks of like-minded people. The users can always remain well connected to a larger pool of new information and opinion. The social media
platforms are completely free to use, the only cost to businesses being the time spent on updating profiles and interacting with contacts.

**Disadvantages of Social Media**

Scholars have noted that a huge advantage of these social communities has a reverse side effect that is also a big disadvantage of social networking. The social media association has considerably reduced inter-personal relations and social interaction. The children, adolescents and youth do not find adequate time for face-to-face interactions with their peers and lose opportunities for developing social skills for their success. The use of social networks has exposed individuals to harassment or inappropriate contact from others. The users also encounter the risks of fraud and theft of identity on account of social media abuse.

Sigman (2009:216) examined the biological implications of social media and identified certain severe disadvantages to the mankind. It reads: “Lack of social connection or loneliness is also associated with increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Several decades of research has found that greater social contact is related to reduction of morbidity while fewer contacts lead to increased morbidity. The Internet Paradox concluded that greater use of the internet was associated with declines in communication between family members in the house, declines in the size of their social circle, and increases in their levels of depression and loneliness. Another disadvantage of social networks is that it can help create something which does not exist or may not be as good as it is presented”.

Nielsen Report (2012:108) pointed out that social networks have accounted for the majority of time spent online since about 60 percent of people across the world have become active Internet users. The study revealed that social networking sites have wasted the time and energy of people. The social networking invites major corporations to invade their privacy and sell personal information. Cyber bullying, spreading of misinformation, locating the where about of the people, less real life interaction, risk of identity theft and fraud, drop out of users from schools and colleges, distraction from healthy habits and lifestyles, enabling the hackers to commit fraud, launch spam and virus attacks, victimization of people through online scams, inability to connect in-person, lack of privacy, open to security issues, lesser
productivity and health hazards are the major drawbacks of social media identified by the researchers across the globe.

The social media have also posed certain serious confidentiality issues in the workplace. The leakage of sensitive information has caused financial and credibility loss for modern institutions. The atmosphere of the organization can become unhealthy because of tensions between the employees. Inadequate human interaction has also caused health disorders among the workers and affected the productivity. The healthy social activities naturally take a back seat when social networking becomes the prime agenda of the people. Excessive time spent on social networks causes some individuals to experience withdrawal symptoms.

1.4 Impact of Social Media on Society

In the new millennium, the means of communication have dramatically increased because of revolutionary changes and developments in the field of communication science and technology. The social media has brought forth the infinite access to free speech in modern social environment. The social media have brought people closure to the mainstream of life. The social media have practically become media of the people, by the people and for the people and touched the lives of people remarkably. The social media have expanded circle of social connections of people and brought about several changes and modifications in the educational, social, economic, political and cultural orders. The impact of social media on society has been examined by the researchers extensively in modern times. The use of social networking sites has been the focus of a large number of research studies.

The use of social media has become strongly imbedded in modern society. The social media have ensured connectivity through the constant use of the social technologies. It is impossible to make any all-inclusive claims about social media.

Social media have the potential to fundamentally change the character of our social lives, both on an interpersonal and a community level. On a community level, the organizing features of these sites lower the transaction costs for finding and connecting with others who may share one interest or concern but differ on other dimensions. Social network sites provide simple, inexpensive ways to organize
members, arrange meetings, spread information, and gauge opinion. Organizations, political figures, advocacy groups, regional associations, and other types of groups have various ways of using such sites: through their own profiles, site groups, or standalone networks. Beyond coordinating community organizations, social network sites can also play a role in more casual types of civil activity (Ellison et. al 2009:74).

The borders of countries and states have dissolved to the credit of the Internet and social media. The collective social networking sites offer companies an opportunity to fine-tune these personality characteristics. Two advantages being that it has given people the convenience of being able to connect with others all over the world without having to step a foot out of their homes and also the rare cases that crimes are sometimes solved through the help of a social media site (Pernisco 2010:187).

Social media also facilitates strong ties and bonding capital, and does so more effectively than earlier Internet applications. New social media helps these individuals maintain a sense of continuity with each other and identification with the group as a well, regardless of where the members of the group live (Komito 2011:136).

Social media sites allow teens to accomplish online many of the tasks that are important to them offline. They are enabled to stay connected with friends and family. They make new friends, sharing pictures, and exchanging ideas. Social media participation also can offer adolescents deeper benefits that extend into their view of self, community, and the world. They foster human relationship, better individual identity and unique social skills (O'Keeffe et. al 2011:175).

The communication that occurs in these online contexts promotes interactive dialogues that build understanding of different points of view. Intercultural dialogue is critical today in our globalized and blended world, where different cultures encounter each other daily, especially through social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and the iPhone. Social media provide a place where people across the world can stay in touch and feel closer and more connected regardless of the distance that separates them. New social media have provided ways in which people can communicate and interact with others across the world, without being restricted by the limitations of time and distance (Sawyer 2011:211).
There are people behind the social media tools that are used for social change. Social media can be used as a tool to raise awareness, raise money and join people together but to personify these tools is to under estimate the time, resources and risks that activists and citizens sacrifice. It is clear that the policies of many social media platforms may not be in the best interests of activists and there is a real danger of governments using social media to spy on, misinform, or incriminate activists (Sheedy 2011:214). Social media have also facilitated active political mobilization in the world. The Arab Spring was the outcome of extensive use of social media by the youth in particular. The Egyptian Revolution was brought about by the people who intelligently used social media to change the political equations in the country.

Social media allows civil society organizations to project their voice more effectively than through offline work alone, but using social media requires detailed planning to produce focused aims and clear messages that will reach the target audience without being lost in online ‘noise’. It is therefore essential to listen first to establish what is being said, where, how and by whom. Social media is most effective when it is treated as an interactive forum; not only does this allow supporters to become involved and heighten their commitment, but, whenever they comment, the campaign message gains visibility within their own networks. Replying to follower comments, posing and answering questions and re-tweeting/posting their input all help to extend the reach and amplify the voice of a campaign. Social media offers considerable new opportunities for third sector organizations and campaigners, but few are currently realizing this potential due to skepticism, nervousness, low skills bases or a simple lack of awareness (Taylor 2012:234). Social media have enabled the civil society organizations to voice their concern and protect public interest against tyranny, injustice and exploitation.

The ubiquity of smart phones, associated with the adoption of social media websites, enables unprecedented opportunities to study city dynamics and urban social behavior by analyzing the data generated by users. Social media systems allow the people to get connected to the administrative system. This class of work is focused in the identification of events through data shared in social media. This task is especially favorable due the real-time nature of certain types of social media, such as Twitter. Considering social media as a source of sensing, constructing then a participatory
sensor network imposes many challenges (Silva et. al 2012:218). Social media are widely used by the administrators in modern cities to facilitate good governance.

Social media, comparing to traditional media, allows people to actively engage in a communication process not only as information receivers but also as message creators. Greater application of social media tools has brought dramatic changes in the business environment. The online applications are designed to facilitate information sharing, knowledge distribution, and opinion exchanges. It is important to note that technological changes have created an increasing convergence of functionality and features in many social mediating services (Chan-Olmsted et. al 2013:50). The proliferation of social media and widespread adoption of social media tools have also brought about dramatic changes in the modern business environment.

Social media equally provide the opportunity to tap into personal networks and present information in multiple formats, spaces, and sources which helps to make messages more credible and effective. Additionally, many social media channels facilitate social engagement, viral sharing of information and trust. It is obvious then that integrating social media into different communication campaigns and development activities will allow the government, civil society and other professionals to leverage social dynamics and networks to encourage participation, conversation and community all of which can help spread key messages and influence informed and positive decision making (Dunu et. al 2015:67). Social media have expedited the process of social mobilization for worthy causes all over the world. In India, Anna Hazare’s movement against political corruption was boosted with the active social media application. Social media have also enabled the women and youth to fight against the system and seek justice.

The social media have increased the rate and quality of collaboration for students. They are better able to communicate meeting times or share information quickly, which can increase productivity and help them learn how to work well in groups. The social networking teaches students skills they need to survive in the business world. The students gain familiarity with computers and other electronic devices and increase their academic competence, (Agosto and Abbas 2010:05). Social media applications have also promoted business management all over the world. The
ease and speed with which users can upload pictures, videos or stories has resulted in a greater amount of sharing of creative works in all walks of life.

The social media also help in integrating all the parts of the world including subcultures and minority groups who otherwise never get the physical means and space to practice their views and beliefs. Through social networking sites individuals can communicate with others irrespective of meeting face to face or present at a specified time, (Bassem and Maamari 2013:29). Social media have considerably enhanced learning opportunities of the students by connecting with one another on homework and group projects. The social media programs allow students to gather outside of class to collaborate and exchange ideas about assignments. Some schools successfully use blogs as teaching tools which has the benefit of reinforcing skills in English, written expression, and creativity.

Social media and other emerging communication technologies are quite useful tools for social development and mobilization since they connect millions of people and personalize and reinforce development messages on several issues that can be more easily tailored or targeted to particular audiences. They also facilitate interactive communication, connection and public engagement and empower people to make better informed decisions, (Behnke 2010:31).

Social networks offer the opportunity for people to re-connect with their old friends and acquaintances, make new friends, trade ideas, share content and pictures, and many other activities. Users can stay abreast of the latest global and local developments, and participate in campaigns and activities of their choice. Professionals use social media sites like LinkedIn to enhance their career and business prospects. Students can collaborate with their peers to improve their academic proficiency and communication skills.

Students can learn about different cultures and societies by connecting with people in other countries. The social media have made it possible for like-minded individuals to discuss important topics, widen their personal knowledge and discover things they never knew before. The young people are actively involved in public affairs since social media have provided new opportunities for active participation of people (Barker 2009:27).
The users have not fully understood the other side of social media. Privacy has been harder to keep, and productivity in the workplace has slipped to alarming lows in many situations. The cyber bullying is a form of bullying that is only done through the web and other technologies. Social networks make it worse for the victims since bullying is difficult in person and even harsher over the internet.

Instances about cyber bullying and risks to children have led to increased fears about the impact of online social networking, particularly on children and young adults. Social networking sites have led to a different way of communicating with others, both with those previously known to the person as well as newly formed friendships. Concerns about reduced face-to-face interactions and the loss of social skills have emerged”. The anonymity afforded online can bring out dark impulses that might otherwise be suppressed. Cyber-bullying has spread widely among youth, with 42% reporting that they have been victims, according to a 2010 CBS News report (The Australian Psychological Society 2010:21).

The social networking sites make young people more self-centered, social networking websites are causing alarming changes in the brains of young users. They create a culture in which a single mistake such as a racy picture or poorly thought-out comment can cause irreparable harm to your reputation, decreasing productivity as workers habitually check social networking sites while they should be working and providing information that increases the risk of identity theft (Jain 2010:118). Social media have adversely affected the youth in modern society. Scholars have raised concern about the ill-effects of social media on children, adolescents and youth.

Social networking users face severe health risk because they reduce face-to-face contact and become addicted in a virtual world of relationships. People spent hours chatting with their friends and browsing profiles on social networking sites. It becomes a compulsive habit to visit own profile several times in a day for checking friends’ updates, changing status, and commenting on others photos and videos.

Social networking site that once was thought to be helping people across the world to unite and making new relationship can also damage the relationship and make life miserable (Das and Sahoo 2011:60).
The users of social media make a good number of friends even though they are not friends in need in the real life situations. The users have also ruined their other friendships since social media normally form shallow friendships. The constant use of social media has caused damage to the humanity in several ways.

Social media have led to addiction and lowered the motivational level of the people, especially of the teenagers and students. They mainly rely on technology and the internet instead of learning the practical knowledge and expertise of the everyday life. The children also become victims of circumstances due to over exposure to objectionable contents. Many introverts and socially reclusive users place too much emphasis on virtual interaction, and ignore the real world outside, according to empirical evidence (Ahn 2011:10). Social networking sites encourage people to be more public about their personal lives since the users’ intimate details of their lives which can be posted so easily. It affects the privacy of the individuals in a society.

Our analysis provides empirical evidence of information processing limits for social media users and the prevalence of. The most active and popular social media users are often the ones that are overloaded. Moreover, we find that the rate at which users receive information impacts their processing behavior, including how they prioritize information from different sources, how much information they process, and how quickly they process information. Finally, the susceptibility of a social media user to social contagions depends crucially on the rate at which she receives in formation. An exposure to a piece of information, be it an idea, a convention or a product, is much less effective for users that receive information at higher rates, meaning they need more exposures to adopt a particular contagion (Gomez-Rodriguez et. al 2014:90). The social media application has brought about information overloading and the users have found it difficult to make use of the information resources.

The potential harmful effects surrounding social media use have profound consequences for young adults. Similarly, the body image of young people, particularly girls and young women, seems to be affected through consumption of online media. These social networks have damaged many things, but they cannot be
allowed to harm the humanity (Strickland 2014:231). Studies have reported certain negative implications of social media on society and people.

Social media have become a constant source of alternative news for Internet users. They have enabled the users to direct the focus of national news media. The activists make use of social media to educate, organize and enlist the participation of people in social movements. The social media have great impact on culture, society, business, politics and all spheres of human life. They have revolutionized the way people communicate and socialize on the Web. The social websites have played an important role in many elections around the world. They have enhanced brand image and popularity in the business field. The professionals use social media to enhance their career and business prospects.

Students can collaborate with their peers to improve their academic proficiency and communication skills. Social media have negative implications on society. The young generation of users should be sensitized about the harmful effects of social media. Modern organizations have lost billions of dollars per year in productivity because of social media addiction among employees. Revealing personal information on social sites can make users vulnerable to crimes like identity theft, stalking, etc. The social media have both advantages and drawbacks which are revealed in the past scientific investigations. The users should use social networking sites with utmost care and responsibility in order to enhance their educational, professional and social life and prevent possible threats and constraints.

1.5 Application of Social Media for Educational Development

Social networking sites have become an integral part of the lives of people. The study of social networks has received significant interest from researchers in various domains such as psychology, philosophy, education, and lately communication science. The power of new digital technologies in the expansion of academic scholarship is seldom questioned by the scholars. The educational institutions have realized that social networking sites are highly accessible to the young generation of students. The students make use of social networking sites for academic purposes. The various networks and social structure established within social networking sites have facilitated better interaction between the educators and
students. The social networking sites have facilitated formation of study groups, promoted research projects and extended academic support for distance and campus based education in modern times.

The social media access has reduced the social exclusion of the students in modern times. They have also increased the self-efficacy of the learners. The authenticity and trust must be facilitated to enable confidence in personal security and the learning environment and social network (Liccardi et. al 2007:155). The online social networking (OSN) activities have become more prevalent in higher education around the world. Some universities embedded the use of computers, tablets and other technology channels in their educational setup. Students are spending much time on social media and are considered the largest category that uses such application (Griffith and Liyanage 2008:93).

The lines between the virtual and real world has increasingly blurred for contemporary youth. The media technologies are an important social variable and physical and virtual worlds are psychologically connected. The virtual world serves as a playing ground for developmental issues from the physical world use of technology which can influence educational performance of students positively or adversely. The students who used Internet based social media scored higher on reading skills test and had higher grades as well (Subrahmanyam and Greenfield 2008:232). It may be considered that integrating the use of open Web 2.0 social networking sites into the formal education setting brings with it a need to explore this further. It highlights the need for subject designers and lecturers to put considerable time into planning the use of the Web 2.0 technologies prior to the start of the academic session. It also suggests that lecturers may have to play a considerable technical support role in helping students who are new to such technologies (Lockyer and Patterson 2008:156).

The social media are perceived as the logical extension of traditional communication methods. The social media have attracted the attention of students and youth in India also. The studies have revealed highest levels of usage among younger users in educational institutions and society. The social media have facilitated much quicker and more convenient way to interact in educational and social settings (Neelamalar and Chitra 2009:171). Studies have reported that students learn in new ways using social media and that educators should embrace these new platforms.
The use of social networks as a tool supporting activities deemed important for the purpose of educational institutions, instructors, and students. The social media provide the users with a way of maintaining and strengthening social ties, which can be beneficial in both social and academic settings. The higher educational institutions have begun to incorporate a diverse array of digital technologies across their teaching, research and public relations activities. This incorporation of digital technologies has begun to attract discussion in a range of forums. More specifically, calls for academics to use social media tools and platforms have emerged in the past few years.

The students have primarily depended on the web based tools for studying since the resources are freely accessible to them. The social media tools also play a complimentary role in the process of learning. The higher educational institutions are challenged to provide modern systems and methods for supporting studying in social levels if multilevel interaction with students (Al-Rahmi and Othman 2009:14). The Facebook has gained popularity in the college student population since its inception. Significant differences were found between Facebook users and non-users for GPA and study time, with these differences persisting in the undergraduate and graduate student samples. University administrators may consider using Facebook as a learning tool to enhance academic performance, or find ways to deter recreational Facebook use and promote better time-management skills (Karpinski 2009:130).

The students are also in a better position to publish and present their work to a wide audience through blogs, wikis, or podcasts. The learners benefit from the opportunity to appropriate new ideas, and transform their own understanding through reflection (Dale and Pymm 2009:63). The students are able to publish their work and ideas in a public space for others to view and download. The multimedia files can be shared on file sharing websites such as Flickr, YouTube or Slideshare, and social bookmarking sites which allow users to bookmark certain websites or tag keywords for users with similar interests to peruse (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010:189).

The use of Twitter as enhanced academic engagement of the students and improved their grade point. Twitter can be used as an educational tool to help engage students and to mobilize faculty into a more active and participatory role (Junco and Loken 2010:122). The students have paid greater more attention towards the social networking activities rather than utilizing the time for their studies and this might
affect their academic performance adversely. An interesting conclusion has been drawn on the basis of the findings of current study that students are managing their time efficiently and hence, use of SNSs does not harm their academic performance (Ahmed and Qazi 2011:07).

The use of supporting technologies in addition to the primary tools provides evidence of how social technologies have become arguably prevalent in today’s classrooms. The social technologies are used to complement the traditional face-to-face teaching delivery. This also indicates that conventional teaching and learning is still relevant but made more relevant by introducing newer technologies to provide an enriched learning experience for students (Hamid et. al 2011:102).

The study of social networks within a learning domain encompasses the processes of social learning that occurs when a self-selecting group of people who have a common interest in a subject collaborate to share ideas or find solutions (Khan 2012:132). The use of Facebook has resulted in a significant improvement in students’ performance in educational institutions. The role of multitasking as a moderator of such relationships, where multitasking and students interest in university would help enhance performance based on Facebook use.

The Nigerian Youths had effectively keyed into the capabilities and potentials of social media, especially, Facebook. It is imperative to recommend and sensitize Nigerian youths to the benefits of using Facebook to access, gather and distribute academic articles, summaries, texts, journals, research findings, etc., that can augment their knowledge level as well as currency in terms of new developments in the different discipline (Adaja and Ayodele 2013:03). The students have improved their grades after using Facebook as a social media. The improvements and value of social network sites was not related to the academic performance but also to the adaptation to the social environment of school (Tuan and Tu 2013:238).

The social media are affordable to the users and they are available to the students for academic use in the class room also. The social media cannot be used judiciously in a large class room. An advantage of increased awareness or appreciation of the complexity of typical observed behaviors in a social learning environment may enhance the academic’s ability to manage the tools. The social
media are widely used by the students across the globe for personal and academic purposes.

The e-mail was by far the most dominant form of contact, followed by chat and instant-messaging. Users can manage their interactions within their own schedule by choosing when they want to read and respond. Younger students tended to use Facebook more frequently than older students to keep in touch with friends from high school or from their hometown. Social media fulfills different communication needs for different users (Megan and Priscilla 2013:162). The social media have expanded the knowledge of the youth and students have gained the freedom to vent what they like to do on social media. The social media should be expanded and new pages should be created to enhance academic activities to avoid setbacks in the students’ academic performance. The environment including parents, teachers and friends should be a good example in order to improve their academic achievement (Kamuh 2014:127).

The social media offer great potential for sharing and disseminating academic scholarship far more widely and rapidly than ever before. They also allow scope for greater transformation of the knowledge. The social media connections also provide academic and emotional support to the students (Lupton 2014:157). There is increasing use of social media by the members of the academic community. They have also facilitated better rapport between the teachers and students. The Ming for teachers, learn central, teacher-street and other sites have fostered academic relationships. There are specific educational sites which have content sharing and rating features. The social networking services can facilitate learning and skill development outside formal learning environments by supporting peer-to-peer learning of knowledge and skills, collaboration, diverse cultural expression; the development of skills valued in the modern workplace and a more empowered conception of citizenship (Omekwu et. al 2014:177).

The social media technologies such as Facebook, twitter, orkut, YouTube, Educational Blog and other web-based social sites makes learning a fun based activity. SNT platform enables all community education such as teachers, parents, and other colleagues, saving on their time by providing them with many tools that include sending learning materials and assessments, setting homework and creating calendars.
The advancement of SNT positively impacted on students to use it for betterment of education and enabled e-learning globally. It is imperative to concentrate on how to stop and avoid smartly the misuse of SNT rather trying to stop or avoid use technologies (Kabbur and Savitri 2015:125).

The role of social media in educational development of students has yielded both positive and negative results. The social media sites continue to grow in leaps and bounds in modern society. Many researchers have examined the impact of social media on the lives of students and young generation. The social media are also known for their negative academic implications on the students. The amount of information shared between users of SNS can vary greatly. This information can be collated and data mined for illicit use. Many young people can be victims of sexual predators as well as cyber bullying. At times the appeal of a global stage can lead people into revealing details about themselves which may seem harmless for friends to view, however each user of SNS must be aware of the permissions they set on these sites for public viewing.

In Facebook, most of the permissions set as default enable friends of a user to view everything in a person’s profile (Griffith and Liyanage 2008:93). The Facebook has become the most preferred and accessible social network to the young generation of users including the students. The use of Facebook by the academic community has been examined by the scholars. The Facebook has no impact on the grades of the students (Pasek and Hargittai 2009:185). The social media have the capacity to facilitate collaborative learning in modern times. The misuse or overuse of social media by the students has negative impact (Wang and Liang 2011 and Sponcil and Gitimu 2012:224).

The social networks have also affected the academic performance of the students since their attention; time and energy are diverted to other activities. The virtual life of student destructs the concentration of students from education towards other non-academic activities. The government and international cyber jurisdiction should take part and ban these types of websites (Tariq et. al 2012:233). The teachers, parents and other stakeholders have expressed grave concern for the well being of the students who spend lot of time on social media including Facebook. The students, teachers, parents and others are required to do serious introspection on the use and
abuse of social media by the students in modern times. Scientific and humanitarian approaches are required to better balance the relationship between social media and students. It is imperative to formulate a new education policy on social media applications in educational institutions in order to facilitate healthy personality development and academic excellence among the students.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Social media application in higher education has become a subject of importance since the promotion of social media marked the shift of producer-generated content towards user-generated content. In the context of technology enhanced learning, this paradigm change marks the shift from class e-learning, based on courses and the sequential presentation of learning material, towards a more active participation of the learners and the support of the learners as a community of interest. The social media are predestinated to support traditional learning, as well as e-learning approaches. This is achieved by fostering informal learning in addition to formal learning, which typically occurs in university curricula. The recognition of informal learning parallels the shift in pedagogical paradigms from behaviorism to cognitivism and to constructivism. The continued growth of social media presents a set of clear challenges to the future nature of higher education provision and practice. There is an emerging literature of small-scale, ‘empirical’ studies that confidently reports all manner of specific learning gains and benefits from social media. The scholars have noted the positive and negative implications of social media on the students from primary to university levels in India and abroad. The impact of social media on students is not best understood in a developing country like India. Adequate scientific investigations are required to contribute new knowledge about the uses and gratifications of social media with special reference to foreign students who are pursuing higher education in India. The review of literature clearly indicates that adequate scientific investigations are not carried out on the impact of social media on Iranian students in Indian universities. Hence, the study assumes profound academic and social significance.
1.7 Statement of the Problem

Social media have become prominent tools of education, organization, participation and development. Social media have created virtual social spaces encouraging interaction, thereby broadening the appeal of the technology and promoting transitions back and forth from the platform to face-to-face engagement. The use of social media interfaces through computer and mobile devices has become quite widespread, and currently, the two most prominent interfaces are Facebook and Twitter. The social media allow the users to build and maintain connections and invite others to join a community. The social media are also widely used in educational institutions in India and abroad. A majority of the students in India make use of social media for various purposes including enhancement of knowledge. Studies have revealed that interactions between students were most often primarily between existing friends rather than new connections and users were most often observing content rather than producing it. Similar to our knowledge about the types of social media used, knowledge about the extent of use within educational institutions is quite limited. The present study was carried out by the researcher on the basis of following considerations. They include:

a. India has achieved commendable progress in the fields of higher education management and social media applications for higher education.

b. Karnataka state has gained prominence as the software capital of India and attracted large number of students from abroad for academic credentials and achievements.

c. Social media applications in higher educational institutions has changed the profile of the students and contributed significantly towards academic success.

d. Iranian students are pursuing higher education in Karnataka state since it has established institutions in good number to manage higher education efficiently.

e. Constant scientific evaluation of social media application in higher education would boost the academic performance of the users and minimize the harmful effects in modern times.
1.8 Objectives of the Study

The present investigation was carried out on the basis of following specific objectives. They include:

1. To assess the social media habits of Iranian students in Karnataka state.
2. To analyze the social media association of Iranian students in Karnataka state.
3. To examine the social media use pattern of Iranian students in Karnataka state.
4. To evaluate the uses of social media among Iranian students in Karnataka state.
5. To study the gratifications of social media among Iranian students in Karnataka state.

1.9 Presentation of the Study

The first chapter namely introduction presents the salient features of the study such as history of social media, contemporary relevance of social media, impact of social media on society, application of social media for educational development, significance of the study, statement of the problem and objectives of the study.

The second chapter namely review of literature furnishes a brief account of the past studies carried out by the researchers in India and abroad on the subject of social media. The past studies are presented under different headings such as social media and youth, social media and education, social media and society, social media and politics, social media and business, social media and development, social media and crisis/disaster management and inferences of review of literature.

The third chapter namely research methodology contains the salient aspects of research such as social media research, conceptual framework of the study, hypotheses of the study, study variables, research design, field of study and sample, pilot study, primary data collection, secondary data collection, computation of data, statistical analysis and operational definitions.

The fourth chapter namely empirical analysis amplifies the salient aspects of the study such as demographic features of the respondents, social media habits of
respondents, social media association of respondents, social media use pattern of respondents, uses of social media and gratifications of social media.

The fifth chapter namely conclusion delineates the findings of the study, testing of hypotheses, limitations of the study, implications of the study and suggestions for future research. The last part of the thesis indicates the bibliography, questionnaires and other annexure.

1.10 Summary

The world has witnessed a shift in the focus of Web applications towards social interaction, collaboration and networking. By the year 2000, around 100 million people had access to the internet, and it became quite common for people to be engaged socially online. Facebook is the number one social media website today and it currently boasts over a billion users. The social media platforms serve multi-purposes and they continue to play a vital role in future. The social network sites (SNSs) are increasingly attracting the attention of academic and industry researchers intrigued by their affordances and reach. Indeed, social media is simply a system, a communication channel; it is not a location that you visit. In contrast, social networking is a two-way communication, where conversations are at the core, and through which relationships are developed. The social media also help in integrating all the parts of the world including subcultures and minority groups who otherwise never get the physical means and space to practice their views and beliefs. The educational institutions have realized that social networking sites are highly accessible to the young generation of students. Some universities embedded the use of computers, tablets and other technology channels in their educational setup. The use of social networking sites has been the focus of a large number of research studies. The review of literature clearly indicates that adequate scientific investigations are not carried out on the impact of social media on Iranian students in Indian universities. Hence, the study assumes profound academic and social significance.