CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Thank you friends... we are now ONE MILLION strong communities ... lets keep spreading great ides, dreams and actions – Kalam
(http://www.facebook.com/OfficialKalam)

Everybody in the society lives as a community and man is a social animal says Aristotle. Social Networking Sites are integrated into everybody’s life (Beer, 2008). Man cannot live without society. Family is the first place for learning to be in the group. Groups also extend to school, college, work place, play ground etc. In recent years new relationship started with the arrival of manmade machines called computer and internet. People talk, share and exchange their joys, sorrows, day-to-day happenings, education, relationship etc, with the help of computer through online SNS.

Earlier we had day-to-day relationship with our family members, colleague, friends and neighbours. We shared many things with our neighbours through personal contacts. Our relationship was within the house and village and known people. But later when people were educated and culture started a new dimension. People moved from village to town and started to live in different places and localities for their sustenance and job. Their communication and contact with each other attained a paradigm shift from personal communication. People were forced to use letters, telephones, e-mails and SMS invention for communication. Due to all these inventions, the world has shrunk into a global village.

Just like our parents who grew up with the TV as a part of their childhood, grandparents with the radio, college youth develop skills and comfort with internet. The technological advancement had created a great and enormous impact in the society and especially on the younger generation. This scientific advancement is helping from simple task in making the work and job easier. Computer became an incredible tool in the
world of communication. The innovative advancement of the computer and internet in the generation allows the people to communicate even they are of million miles away from each other. Formerly we were well aware of pen-friends from various parts of the world. Without knowing each other, people had contact overseas. It is obvious that, once again the history repeats in the form of Social Networking Sites. Today our younger generation’s friendships are widened across the sea. There is no boundary of caste, colour, sex and creed for relationship.

Social Networking Sites have been instrumental in shrinking the world more than other technological developments. Social networking websites like Orkut, Facebook, MySpace and YouTube etc. are becoming more and more popular and has become part and parcel of everyday life for an increasing number of people. Because of their features, young people are attracted towards these Social Networking Sites. As Mcmillan and Morrison (2208), rightly said that Modem, broadband, wireless and satellite a synchronous email, instant messaging, and conveyance through multimedia, students have grown up socialized into a world shaped by the internet and brandish native and latent intuitions and understandings of internet technology unknown to previous generations.

1.1 Social Networking Sites

A social network is the network of people. People within these networks are connected when they have any certain relationship together (Haythornthwaite, 1996). In the past decade, SNS have become a main stream cultural phenomenon (Boyd and Ellions, 2007). They have proved useful for everything from keeping in touch with friends to dating; research collaboration, education and political activism. SNS have quickly diffused around the world. SNS is deemed an important revolution of the Internet after Google (IECD, 2007). Different from other online communities, SNS is the first application in which people can explicitly articulate their social networks (Rau et al., 2008). The number of SNS has dramatically increased in recent years (Kwon & Wen, 2010).
SNS are a type of virtual community which has gained enormous popularity. These sites have won over the hearts of all people regardless of age, colour and creed. Social Network Sites emerged as a form of online communities during the outbreak of Social Web. The Internet has brought different types of information sharing systems, including the Web. Recently, online social networks have gained significant popularity and are now among the most popular sites on the Web. Due to the growth of new social software applications such as instant messaging, blogs, wikis and a variety of social networking services, today people can connect and interact through SNS (Gennaro & Dutton, 2007). Online social networking is still very much in its infancy, yet it already forms the basis for certain enormously popular applications. As this paradigm matures, we expect more sophisticated applications to naturally emerge.

At present, a number of SNS proliferate across the globe, ranging from MySpace, Facebook, Orkut, and LinkedIn to Cyworld. Among the rapidly growing list of SNS, Facebook is the global leader, catering to about 250 million registered users from around the world (Schonfeld, 2009). A SNS refers to „an online place where a user can create a profile and build a personal network that connects him or her to other users“ (Lenhart et al., 2007). Another definition by Boyd and Ellison (2007) highlights three salient functions of SNS: „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“. As with the borderless nature of the Internet, the social networking phenomenon is not limited to any single country and appears universal in scale (Boyd & Ellison 2007).

According to Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, (2008), Social Networking Sites, are online virtual spaces where people of related interests gather together to share ideas, have discussions and further the pool of individuals from whom they have access to communicate with.

A social network service essentially consists of a representation of each user, social links and a variety of additional services. Most social network services are web
based and provide means for users to interact over the internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging. Although online community services are sometimes considered as a social network service in a broader sense, social network service usually means an individual-centered service whereas online community services are group-centered. SNS allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks. SNS have become deeply embedded in the daily lives of college youth and college students.

According to Beer (2008) social network sites like Facebook, Orkut, Twitter, MySpace, Bebo or Cyworld have attracted millions and millions of users in world at large. These sites help the users to present themselves about profile page. The users exchange ideas, views, news and other important messages with in the groups. These interactions on social network sites are often deeply entwined with people's offline experiences.

Facebook is now the most popular social network with 123.8 million visitors everyday worldwide (Eldon, 2008). A study made by Hargittai (2008) indicated that the college students those who are SNS users, are more specifically the Facebook users. The sample from the University of Illinois showed that 88 percent of them were SNS users, with 78.8 percent of that percentage being Facebook users.

Raacke and Bonds-Raacke's (2008) showed similar results from a study of 116 students of an East Coast university and found that 87.1 percent of the sample had an SNS account and 90.1 percent of those accounts were with Facebook. Ellison et al. (2007) found that 94 percent of their 800 undergraduate student sample had a Facebook account. Stern and Taylor (2007) found that their sample of 532 students contained 70 percent Facebook users. This data makes clear that students are using other Social Networking Sites no doubt, but dominant populations of students are using Facebook.com as their SNS.

With 8.5 million users per month, about 60 percent of its registered users visit the site daily (Rosen & Sherman, 2006). Facebook and other SNS sites offer advantageous benefits, including the ability to meet new people, interact efficiently and without paying
any money with friends and family when circumstances make face-to-face contact difficult. (Ellison et al., 2006).

1.2 Theoretical framework

1.2.1 Uses and gratification

Utility Theory, often known as the “Uses and Gratifications Approach”, offers another way of explaining why young people expose themselves to Social Networking Sites; why they flock to these sites, what are they learn from it?

Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratification Theory suggest that media users play an active role in choosing and using media. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal-oriented in their media usage. Theorists say that media users seek out source that best fulfills their needs. Uses and Gratifications Theory assumes that users have alternate choices to satisfy their needs (Griffin, 2000). Focus of this theory is that viewers attend, perceive and remember information that is pleasurable or that will in some way help satisfy their needs. Therefore, this research will probe into which SNS and usages are preferred by the targeted audience and which of their needs are satisfied by viewing them. The idea of this study was to look for reasons for the evident appeal of SNS and various types of usage by asking the college youth what they think, feel and share on the basis of their gaining new knowledge.

Swanson (1992), rightly points out that, “The uses and gratifications approach takes audience members” motivations for attending to mass media as its vantage point for understanding media exposure and effects”.

Katz (1959) the conceptualization and expansion of the uses and gratification theory in later researchers to explore what people do with media rather than what media do to people.

The theory proposes that audiences have numerous media options to choose from and suggests that the reasons for selecting a specific media will vary from user to user (Blumer & Katz, 1974).
McLeod and Becker (1981) and Haridakis and Whitmore (2006), classify Uses and Gratification theory like

- Be active and have goal-driven media usage
- The media must possess the ability to fulfil a wide array of the users
- Audience must be cognizant and capable of communicating the specific motives for media selection and usage.

Falling in line with the above calcification McQuail (1984) presents the idea of “user taste” when examining the selection of media. The users select the media based on their personal taste and preferences.

Contemporary researches of McQuail also introduced the idea of “media utility”. This idea suggests that people are not only intentional when selecting which media to consume but they develop particular criteria and place subjective value judgments regarding the usefulness on each media as well.

The idea of “media utility” was further developed and expanded into two subcategories: social utility and personal utility (Barton, 2009).

Barton (2009) proposed that media users seek to find Medias that have personal utility and thus seek to “obtain gratifications on an individual or specialized level”.

However, Social Networking Sites like Facebook, Orkut, Twitter MySpace etc., can perhaps posses both social and personal utility. These Sites make available to the users with social capital and information that is useful for engaging in society as well as help gratify personalized needs.

In this explorative and descriptive research the researcher attempts to find out the individual gratifications on different areas.

1.3 Reason for choosing the Study Area

Coimbatore and Namakkal are very important places of India, because of its industrial and poultry developments. Apart from this, comparing to the other places, educational institutions are more in these two places in Tamilnadu. Coimbatore is the second major city in Tamilnadu, in view of its industrial developments. It has more
number of colleges than any other cities, Likewise compared with other minor cities Namakkal possesses more number of colleges. Namakkal is known as „Education District” (kalvimavattam). Students from all over India flock for their education to these districts. Since these two districts are considered as knowledge centre and knowledge hub. Use of internet also would be more among the college youth.

1.4 Significance of the Study

SNS play a vital role among the life of the college youth. They use these sites for their education, enjoyment and trusting of new relationships. These sites are more used by them than any other group of people in the society as we get it from the different inferences of the study conducted at various places.

In this age of globalization, the world has shrunk due to the electronic media and internet. Communication has become effective as never before, thanks to the advent of Internet. The SNS have played a crucial role in bridging boundaries and crossing the seas and bringing all people at a common platform where they can meet people or find old friends and communicate with them. It has become a potential mean to relation building and staying in touch with friends.

Studies on Social Networking Site are a new phenomenon in the media research, with a new area of research and exploration has been done on this topic on different issues. SNS have created a major impact on college youth’s life style in way of communicating via internet either through their personal computer (PC) or mobile phone. Aside from the larger population, the researcher seeks to discover how college youth use social networking site in their education and personal life.

Hence the study focuses on the following

a) Impact, importance, meaning, value and risks of SNS among today’s college youth.

b) Aims at finding knowledge sharing among college youth.

c) A exploratory study on 940 respondents with random ages from 19 to 25 years old.
1.5 Broad Research area

Internet being the New Media and has almost converges all technology the question arises on the control aspect with regard to use of Social Networking Sites. Today college youth flock to these sites for various reasons but the research problem was aimed to check the usage pattern and adoption of SNS among the users especially the college youth.

1.6 Research Questions

Finding out how Internet technologies especially SNS help college youth in the usage pattern, rapid adoption and knowledge sharing among college youth is the aim of this research. In this connection, survey method is adopted to collect primary research data for investigation. The possible research questions are:

☐ College youth with what kind of educational qualifications have gained more knowledge?

☐ How does the Social Networking Sites help the college youth in improving their self esteem, self efficacy and knowledge?

☐ How do SNS play the role of a mass medium in giving information, education and entertainment among college youth?

☐ How SNS and Internet individually and in combination helps to share knowledge among college youth?

1.7 Statement of the Problem

*Usage Pattern, Adoption and Influence of Social Networking Sites (SNS) among college youth in Coimbatore and Namakkal districts* is the title of this research. Studying the Social Networking Sites which is both a new medium as well as mass medium, in the context of helping the college youth in adoption and knowledge sharing is the focal area of this particular research.
1.8 Objectives of the Study

The objective and aim of the study is, to analyse the influence, rapid adoption and knowledge sharing among college youth.

a) To explore the rapid usage of social network sites by teenagers
b) To identify the knowledge sharing among college youth
c) To analyze online and offline relationship
d) To learn the educational impact of Social Networking Sites among the college youth.
e) To comprehend the cyber issues of Social Networking Sites among the college youth

1.9 Hypothesis

Social Networking Sites, a dominant and dynamic mass media plays an important role in attracting the younger generations in the form of chatting, sharing photos, creating new friendships and gaining new knowledge.

\[ H_1 \] - Social Networking Sites may be used by male and female.

\[ H_2 \] - Social Networking Sites may be beneficial and educational for the college youth.

\[ H_3 \] - Social Networking Sites may be major threats and risks in terms of privacy, security, and safety of today’s college youth.

\[ H_4 \] - SNS can be a used for knowledge sharing among college youth

1.10 Duration of the Research

Two academic years are taken by the researcher to complete this research.

1.11 Methodology

In order to realize the set of objectives, Coimbatore and Namakkal districts in the State of Tamilnadu are chosen. The two study areas are widely known among the thirty two districts in the State. Coimbatore is known for its industrial developments and Namakkal for Poultry. Coimbatore has got more number of colleges among the
10 corporations. The next district which has more number of colleges is Namakkal. The study was done as an explorative and descriptive method.

1.11.1 Sample Selection

The present study has used multistage sampling method namely systematic proportionate, stratified random sampling methods to select the samples. To identify the study area, lot of inputs has been used.

1.11.2 Sample Area

For this survey, Coimbatore and Namakkal districts are chosen as a sample area.

1.11.3 Method of Data Collection

To collect the primary data for the research, the researcher used printed questionnaire of 940 questions as data collection tool. The questionnaire was prepared for the clear understanding of the respondents. The questionnaire contained both open ended and closed ended questions.

Most of the questions are objective in nature but they are prepared to draw some descriptive answers. For example, the questions 1, 2, 4 and 5 are designed to judge whether the respondent is a heavy user or not and to give a basic knowledge regarding their memberships in SNS, frequency of accessing the sites and time spent on these sites. The questions are designed to answer the research questions. The questionnaire includes questions regarding their preference of Social Networking Sites, mobile social networking, and privacy concerns and also seeks their opinion about social networking. Care was taken to avoid ambiguous, incorrect and biased questions while preparing the questions. The questionnaires were distributed among the students after giving a brief explanation about the study and the questions.

1.11.4 Method of Sampling

The researcher discussed with a number of experts in the fields of communication, new media and statistics regarding the selection of number of colleges for studying the college youth Internet users as well as the sampling method. On the basis of the suggestions drawn from them as well as the methods followed in the previous
studies, and the analysis of the prevailing scenario, it is decided to use stratified, proportionate multi stage sampling technique.

1.11.5 Period of Data Collection

The primary data was collected from Coimbatore and Namakkal Districts college youth. A detailed primary survey was conducted during February to June 2012 across the selected colleges. The responses from the college youth were satisfactory. As mentioned in the Methodology four Engineering colleges and four Arts and Science each respectively from Coimbatore and Namakkal Districts were chosen. The primary survey conducted for four months in the study area aimed to address a host of issues regarding the use of Social Networking Sites.

1.11.6 Variable used

The variables are used in this questionnaire are usage pattern, rapid adoption and influence by Social Networking Sites among the college youth. These are the major variables included in the study. There are other variables also which is used to measure the demography of the respondents and their parent’s status.
1.11.7 Sample Design  Picture 1.1

SAMPLE DESIGN

Coimbatore Total – 508: 54%

Total -940 – 5%

Namakkal Total – 432: 46%

ARTS & SCIENCE -193

Engineering - 315

Arts & science - 199

Engineering -233

SNR Total - 100

Bp. Appasamy Total -93

Nehru Total - 101

Kumaraguru Total - 214

PGP Total-98

Selvam Total -101

Pavai Total -121

KSR Total -112

Total - 940
1.11.8 Statistical tools used

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16 for Windows was used for analyzing the data collected during the questionnaire survey. The respondents were given numbers for identification purposes. The region and the place of living for each respondent were coded with numbers so that the situation in each region or place under the different question in the questionnaire can be analyzed. Each question in the questionnaires was identified by a variable name and within variables there were values and value labels for identification of responses from the respondents. After coding the informations obtained from the questionnaires, template for entering data into the computer program was created. Simple statistical tools such as t’ test, regression model and ANOVA, Chi-Square, Factor Analysis for testing of hypotheses, mean, standard deviation model is used to analyze sources of information. In the preliminary analysis, a large number of variables are included.

The correlation matrices are used to drop less important variables and there by avoid multi-colligiality problems. For the final regression analysis, number of different combinations are tried to arrive at a final list of variables with a good fit in terms of explanatory power. In sum, the actual data analysis of both secondary and primary information has been carried out at different levels which presented in fifth chapter of this research.

1.12 Limitations of the study

To make a research work among college youth was a herculean task. Finding them and getting answers for the stipulated questionnaire was difficult one. Getting permission with the authority of the institution was another factor which implied an enormous energy and vigor. I have translated the questionnaire into vernacular language so that it can be easily understood by the respondent”s make appropriate responses to the questions.

1.13 Chapterisation

The thesis has been divided into six chapters. The first chapter “Introduction”, in the present study deals with the background, overview of the topics and objectives, hypothesis, methodology and chapterisation.
The second chapter is “Concepts and Review of literature”, on Social Networking Sites, New Media, the rise of Social Networking Sites, influences, uses of Social Networking Sites, and popularity among the college youth.

The third chapter “Social Networking Sites” describes the various aspects of Social Networking Sites and Facebook in particular in detail.

The fourth chapter “Profile of Study districts” explains in detail of the study area districts.

The Fifth chapter “Analysis and Discussion” provides the results of the Evaluation and description of inferences on uses of Social Networking Sites among the college youth who gain knowledge and development.

The Sixth chapter “Findings and Conclusion” provides the summary and concluding remarks of the research and the suggestions for policy implications for future initiatives.