CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNSs)

The development of the Internet as a global network of communication has created a communication boom in the cyberage. The Internet is scale free in nature that every day the network is expanding itself by adding new persons as its node.  

The whole of the telecommunication infrastructure that has been developed so far is dedicated to support the Internet. Therefore, the addition is happening through legacy network like conventional wired telephone line, modern network like Cellular Telephone Network and Broadband wireless Network, Wi-Fi and others when compared to the rise of other electronic media, the Internet has expanded its reach at a maximum rate that it has not only integrated various modes of conventional communication channels, such as radio, television, telephone, SMS but also has also converted it into a vast interactive network.

“The use of Internet has already reshaped the conditional mode of various mediated communicational experience, of billions of individuals, billions of organizations around the world”.

In addressing cyberspace as the new virtual world, Ostwald explains that ‘the urban’ itself has become virtualized, simulating the social function of the place as a potential ‘site of cultural seepage’; a place to where user can escape to find comfort in a virtual environment.

The Internet has evolved as New Media through the development of Social Networking Sites (SNS) like Face book, Twitter, LinkedIn, Orkut, Big Adda and others SNSs gives new horizon of human communication in comparison with the conventional media. SNS gives a user to create his or her own ‘page’ or ‘group’ or community. These social networks have promoted Relation Communication rather than simple message communication. The feature of communication through SNS is the convergence of different forms of earlier communication and interaction that helps in blurring the lines between one- to – one and public communication. Shirky has pointed out that broadcast media is very effective in creating a large number or group of audience, whereas telephone or personal communication is very effective in
facilitating conversation as well as impact. For Shirky, convergent media is bringing this two together. Castells has characterized the communication feature of SNS as ‘mass self – communication’. Ellison & Boyd, the user’s profile serves multiple purposes and builds huge connections on SNS. “For users, these connections represent what sociologists refer to as a person’s social network—the collection of social relations of varying strengths and importance that a person maintains”. These ‘mass- self communication’ and ‘connections’ are creating a great impact in personal, social, political as well as in global relation. In a report of Pew Research Centre (February, 2012), it is found that:

85% of SNS-using adults say that their experience on the sites is that people are mostly kind, compared with 5% who say people they observe on the sites are mostly unkind and another 5% who say their answer depends on the situation. 68% of SNS users said they had an experience that made them feel good about themselves. 61% had experiences that made them feel closer to another person. (Many said they had both experiences) 39% of SNS-using adults say they frequently see acts of generosity by other SNS users and another 36% say they sometimes see others behaving generously and helpfully. By comparison, 18% of SNS-using adults say they see helpful behavior “only once in a while” and 5% say they never see generosity exhibited by others on social networking sites.

Communication in network-based community is much more based on individual rather than geographical community or any ethnical community. This characteristic of SNS is helpful to strengthen the social capital and participation of mass from different layers of the society. Chen and Ding (2009) argue that the mode of communication in social media can be defined as amalgamation of three layers: “interpersonal relations”, “social relations”, and “cultural relations”. However, they clearly say later that the relation that is made through social media is not an ‘interpersonal relation’ rather this relation may be called as ‘social relation’. “This is because online relations are established on social clues instead of those on an interpersonal basis.” SNS is an effective medium to facilitate a relation in the initial stage of relation formation, than family. In later stage, like a commitment to one to marry, the users of a certain SNS are involving family persons. But on the other hand, there is a serious allegation against SNS. “After drugs and alcohol addiction, if the world is facing any new type of addiction disorder, then that is Facebook addiction. This is a kind of Internet
addiction, but social networking site influences such that people goes mad behind it. It’s like people being immersed in virtual life and forgetting about the physical world around them” (Das & Sahoo, 2011, p. 225). Aishwarya S. Dahiwal, college goers committed suicide in Maharashtra in India. In her suicide note, she wrote:

I don’t want to live in a house where there are such restrictions. Using Facebook is not a crime. It is a normal thing. But my parents think it’s a big issue and that’s their problem. That’s why I am committing suicide.

The way of communication in SNS, among Indian youth, is most alerting. Most of Indian youth use SNS at night secretly, they interact with the opposite sex and are found frustrated in the absence of SNS. Even sometimes, they ignore their scheduled work due to excessive addiction of SNS. On 8 August 2014, another suicide was committed in Kerala, India. A 40 – year – old lawyer hanged himself, before that he announced on Facebook about this killer decision. However, unfortunately and ironically nobody took it seriously and this post was flooded with ‘like’s. Cyber frustration and addiction are not a hype but reality in India. Keeping this issue in mind, Uday Foundation that works for the welfare for children in Delhi, has opened ‘Centre for Children in Internet and Technology Distress (CCITD)’ for Internet distressed. In fact, the history of communication is the reflection of “changing relationship with time and space”.

Not only in respect of personal communication or in respect of relation, SNS has proved itself as a new tool of communication in large scale, in an immediate interactive as well as effective manner. If we discuss about some big international events, like, ‘Arab spring’, Shahbagh movement in Bangladesh and the issues in India such as, protest against Delhi gang rape, anti – corruption movement, emergence of a new political party (Aam Admi Party, that means a party comprised by general public) and the Loksabha Election 2014. In every issue, we could find a big role of SNS in creating public opinion.

The role of new media during the Egyptian revolution was especially important in three intertwined ways: enabling cyberactivism, a major trigger for street activism; encouraging civic engagement, by aiding the mobilization and organization of protests and other forms of political expression; and promoting a new form of citizen engagement.
journalism, which provided a platform for ordinary citizens to express themselves. (Khamis, 2011).

Regarding Shahbagh movement in Bangladesh, Shikha Bose, a female entrepreneur in Bangladesh, told, “Apparently non-partisan but highly politically conscious young social media users initiated Shahbagh movement”. In a gang rape case in Delhi, whole India came under one umbrella of social media to show their protest against Government. Ahmed and Jaidka (2013) have compared the nature of protest against Delhi gang rape, with the revolution in Arab World. In other two cases of India, such as, anti-corruption movement and emergence of a new political party, AAP (Aam Admi Party), SNS users were very active to spread the movement, to communicate about latest situation and many more. During the Loksabha Election in 2014, in India, Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), has conducted a study, which states that the political parties spent around Rs. 300-400 crore for their publicity and campaigns on social and digital media. The spending on SNS, by the political parties, during election, has reached to such a level that the Election Commission of India has announced an instruction (Ref. No. 491/ SM/ 2013/ Communication, Dated: 25th October, 2013) to disclose the advertising budgets on social media by the political parties. In an article in www.youthkiawaaz.com, Facebook has announced that,

From the day elections were announced to the day polling ended, 29 million people conducted 227 million interactions (posts, comments, shares, and likes) regarding the elections on Facebook. In addition, 13 million people conducted 75 million interactions regarding Narendra Modi.

A simple individual to serious politicians feels free and comfortable to this Social Networking Site to convey his message, to show his uncomfortable state of mind regarding any issue, to convey a strong protest, to appeal to others and even to propagate about self or about any community. To protect personal information and secrecy and to stop adverse effects of SNS, many want a reasonable restriction on the use of SNS. In India, the Ministry of Information and Technology, published draft rules under Section 43A named as ‘Reasonable Security Practices Rules 2011’ in order to define “sensitive personal information” and to prescribe “reasonable security practices” that must observe in relation to the information the users hold.”
SNS are now a major topic of discussion among media experts, sociologists and psychologists. Those discussions usually centre on transformation of self, transformation of relation and changing trends social and political movements with social networks.

The researcher has two States of India, West Bengal and Odisha, as the sampling area to represent East India. In the history of India, East India has played an important role. The centre of Emperor Ashoka’s rule was in the East. The English colonial rule over India started from Bengal and for a long time Kolkata (Calcutta) was colonial India’s capital. Before the English came to power in India, the eastern part of India was ruled by the Nawab based in Murshidabad and his territory of administration was Bengal, Bihar and Odisha. During the British rule, Bengal got special importance for the capital was in Kolkata. It was the centre of business, culture and politics as well. Kolkata had undergone a cultural movement called “Bengal Renaissance”. Most of the social, cultural and political movements were based in Kolkata or shook Kolkata somehow. ‘Bengal Gazette’, India’s first newspaper was published from Kolkata (Calcutta) in 1780 and the Bengal press contributed a lot and fueled the freedom movement of India. Therefore, the whole of east was in fact a single territory. In independent India, West Bengal continued with its development run and Odisha followed her in the track but Bihar fell far behind.

If we have a look at the present, statistics of urban population in these three states, Bihar has 10.5%, Odisha has 15% and West Bengal has 28%. In literacy rate Bihar is also far behind from the other two. In this aspect, West Bengal is in leading position with 77.8% and Odisha has followed by 73.45%. However, the literacy rate, in Bihar is only 63.82%. GDP per capita in Bihar is $ 343 whereas in Odisha GDP per capita is $ 816 and in West Bengal, it is $ 930. Apart from this, in the greater Indian power-sharing context, eastern people have a different mindset and position compared to northern people. For most of the time in post independence India, the central power was in the hold of the northern politicians and east shared the least. In this era of new media and mass use of it, there may emerge newer agenda for the east to cope in the power race with north through relation communication and virtual political community development and that will have profound influence on Indian politics and society.
An article was published in ‘Economic Times’ as ‘Impact of social media making politicians go online’ on March 21, 2014, stated that the politicians of West Bengal are more interested to interact through SNS as state committee of CPI(M) launched their official Facebook page, just one week before of publishing this report. It is significant, because after being defeated by Trinamul Congress Party, CPI(M) lost their regime of 34 years and want to use SNS as a communication tool to know more and be aware of the public demands, complaints, commotions and problems, whereas “Trinamul supremo Mamata Banerjee, the Chef Minister of West Bengal, already has more than 650,000 ‘likes’ on Facebook while the party’s national spokesperson Derek O’Brien has more than 200,000 followers on Twitter.” On the other hand, The Chief Minister of Odisha, Navin Patnaik has asked his party men to use SNS to woo the youth of the society. Patnaik has said:

The new generation is using social media, which is a powerful media for youth communication programmes. We need to be engaged in the social media to communicate with the youths.

In recent past, one democratic student’s movement of Jadavpur University that rose out for the basic demands of “security for women and the freedom of individuals inside the campus premises” after September 20, 2014, brought before the world the larger picture of the social scenario of West Bengal and political as well. The movement named as “Hok Kolorob” which means ‘let us shout aloud!’ The students launched a page on Facebook as “Hok Kolorob” to protest against police assault on students. Within one week “It has stretched out to millions” of SNS users, across the world from the starting day of the movement. On 'Global Protest Day', the cyber campaign in favor of the movement touched the optimal. Support from different parts of India as well as from abroad flooded by ‘like’ the “Hok Kolorob” page of Facebook. Therefore, a keen study of the behavior of eastern people in using social media is very much needed.

1.2. ORIGIN OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

The origin to enhance social networks via computer mediated communication technology was deeply rooted initiatives during the period of Cold War. The Advance
Research Projects Agency (ARPA) was set up within the United States Department of Defense in 1958. The main objective behind APRA was to develop a communication network that would help exchange and share information between various research centers. Later, in 1969 creation of ARPANET gave the birth to internet. Hence, other online services, like - Usenet, LISTSERV, and bulletin board service (BBS) had broaden the path of social networks. Here we can mention some names of earlier online networks based communities such as Theglobe.com (1995), Geocities (1994), and Tripod.com (1995). The participants of these communities were used to communicate with each other through chat rooms and share their information via personal web pages, which provided them easy to publish tool. Six Degrees.com (1997) and Make out club (2000) are the pioneers of newer generation Social Networking Sites (SNSs). Some other such as, Friendster, My Space, Linkedin, Bebo, Myspace had gained a rapid popularity among internet users. Orkut and Facebook were launched in 2004. Twitter was launched in 2006. Facebook became the most popular SNS in the world in early 2009 and still it is in leading position. The rise of the so-called Web 2.0 and User Generated Content (UGC) technology makes social networking site extremely popular among the internet users. After blogs, instant messaging platforms and forums, it can be seen that the SNSs are the latest internet-based interactive communication media as well as community.

1.3. FUNDAMENTALS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Social Networking Site (SNS) is a virtual community, which can be compared with personal webpage. These webpages are called as ‘profile’ or a ‘space’. Every user or profile holder has to register himself or herself and has to give some information including age, sex and others. This profile provides different interested areas like, professional status, living area, hobbies, email address and many more. A registered social networking user can create his or her contact list by adding someone through sending a friend request to other registered user site creates his profile containing some basic information with very little time and effort. Users can, “upload pictures and/or audio/videos, set status messages, post comments, join various groups of people that share common interests, join forums for discussion etc. There is a provision to make changes in ones’ profile as and when required. To protect user...
privacy, the users can configure their profile in such a way that they can allow only certain people to view their profile, post comment to their threads, add them to their contact list, commonly known as privacy settings.”

As depicted on Figure 1, a user (A) can benefit from the interactions with the contacts or ‘friends’ (B, C and D) from his or her consisting ‘friend list’. (Z) is another registered user of same SNS and has his or her own domain of interaction with (W), (X) and (Y). Both of (A) and (Z) can send friend request for their own interest or benefit.

Figure 1. Social interaction between two users in a Social Networking Site.

Concept taken from Joly, Maret and Daigremont (2009) and the researcher put more elements.

1.4. SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AS A NEW INTERACTION PARADIGM

SNS has brought a new interaction paradigm that is not yet adapted to the context of users that are increasingly in a connected mobility but definitely, the rapid proliferation of cell phone use, especially development of big screen Smart phones will help to overcome the mobility barrier of SNS. The reason behind the decreased mobility of SNS is as follows:
Firstly, most popular SNS user interfaces are designed such that an optimal experience could be achieved by using personal computers. So, users are required to sit in front of a personal computer or a laptop.

Secondly, the social network of users i.e. someone’s friend list is static and manually maintained like address books. Sometimes the maximum number of friends one can host is limited by the SNS administration as its service policy. So, the interaction space, if defined as varied personality is limited and possibility of facing unseen one is rare. On the contrary, people have opportunities to communicate with varied people in their daily real social life that are not part of their virtual web based social network.

1.5. MEANING OF RELATIONSHIP: SOCIAL SEARCHING VS SOCIAL BROWSING

In social networking communication paradigm, there are two dominant approaches to mean relation among the users. These approaches are “social searching” and “social browsing”. Social searching is to look up already known people and connecting them. Social browsing is to connect online strangers through mutual consent. The most popular SNS Facebook promotes social searching and warns against risk of connecting unknown people. Another most popular Social Networking Site is Twitter, where the contacts are called ‘followers’. ‘Followers’ choose to be notified of one’s last social updates in real-time. In most SNSs, connection as “contact” or “friend” requires a mutual approval but twitter does not need it.

Despite the general category of relationship like Social Searching and Social Browsing the meaning of relationships in SNS differs from one SNS to another.

1.6. NEW SOCIAL INTERACTION MODALITIES ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITY

SNSs are powerful social communication platforms with several different communication modalities.
The typical interactions or user activities in SNSs are:

1. Personalize one’s own profile,

2. Writing a public message one’s own profile which is usually called ‘status’ in Facebook terminology.

3. Writing a public message, other contact’s profile that is usually called writing in other people’s wall in Facebook terminology.

4. Commenting publicly a contact’s posted material like photos, text status or text notes

5. Getting notified of the activities other contacts on the site

Personalizing one’s own profile doesn’t happen in a day, rather happens gradually and other friends are notified about someone’s profile update. Giving ‘self status message’ as text or posting pix is the most common activity a user does in SNS and these things are the most attractive things for other friends to comment on or at least to give ‘like’. It is possible for the user to comment on almost every piece of information on a SNS. Comments are a great way to communicate with someone in the context of his posting. Comments are also social interactions. Comments can provoke to pass comments by others, giving rise to a discussion. Someone can ‘tag’ other users in his posting, be it text or picture or video. The most interesting thing a user is interested about is getting ‘notifications’ ‘like’ or ‘comments’ on his/her postings. SNS provides many other opportunities to communicate like ‘sharing’ posting of other friends. The table below gives a list of some other user interactions in SNS. 

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10
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Recipient(s)</th>
<th>Visibility/notification</th>
<th>Intention(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profile message</td>
<td>Contact /own profile</td>
<td>Public (all contacts)</td>
<td>- Introduction of a newly added user  &lt;br&gt;- Public display of interest/affection, or recommendation of the recipient (e.g. business)  &lt;br&gt;- Let the recipient’s contacts know what’s going on between them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulletin/Posted item</td>
<td>Contact /own profile</td>
<td>Public (all contacts)</td>
<td>- Share interesting content with contacts  &lt;br&gt;- Announce an important event to all contacts  &lt;br&gt;- Request feedback from contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift</td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Public (all contacts)</td>
<td>- Public display of interest/affection, with more impact that a profile message, because gifts are usually not free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events (invitation)</td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Public or Private</td>
<td>- Invite (some) contacts to an event  &lt;br&gt;- Enable communication between attending people (e.g. for arranging a common gift, adding contacts)  &lt;br&gt;- Share content related to the event (e.g. photos, videos, links)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups (Invitation)</td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Public or Private</td>
<td>- Gather people around a same interest or (invitation) Private cause to enable communication about it  &lt;br&gt;- Opportunity to add contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poke</td>
<td>Any person</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>- Say “hello, check out my profile” to someone probably just met in real life (less formal than a connection request)  &lt;br&gt;- Temporary inclusion of the recipient in the sender’s contacts, allowing visibility of his/her profile and rich communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private message</td>
<td>Any person</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>- Have private interpersonal discussions (no particular interest for social networking)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Joly, Maret and Daigremont (2009)
1.7. SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE: ITS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

In an article, Anjali Abhaykar gave some idea about social networking sites including its advantages and disadvantages in 2011. According to her, the advantages are:

Get Instant Feedback: Companies, organizations and individuals can get unbiased feedback from the mass for their concepts and innovative ideas immediately that can improve the quality. This enables a lot of products to be featured, enriched based on valuable inputs from the prospective end users without any monetary losses. Innovative ideas can be given life in the form of a product or service that can be used by the communities for enriching their lives.

Virtual Worlds: A whole lot of people like to portray their different images on the net that they actually cannot in their real life. Virtual worlds (secondlife, twinity, smallworlds) can enable the people to realize their fantasies in constructive and controlled environments.

Personal Reasons: The very basic fact that one joins a social network is that he wants to stay connected with his friends irrespective of wherever he travels around the world. It is the most cost effective way to stay in touch with your people in spite of geographical or cultural barriers.

- Entertainment: These sites provide an entertainment aspect which has helped them to increase their database of users and gain popularity across the globe. E.g. online games (viz. Farmville, mafia wars on Facebook), quizzes, events and videos available on these sites make the users addicted to these sites thereby reducing the churning of users and increasing the retention period of users for these sites.

- Job Search: People can collaborate among their networks to find more challenging and fulfilling jobs based on their skills and experience.

- Polls: Consensus can be attained by having online polls for diverse topics where opinions and views can help make decisions.
• **Knowledge Pool:** Expertise can be sought by people for topics completely unknown or where their knowledge is lacking from voluntary experts willing to share their experiences.

**BUSINESS**

• **Marketing:** With internet marketing being a buzz word today, and social networking sites have become a major hub for selling products and services and also for branding product. This may be done through advertisements and/or banners. Companies may have teasers on a specific space before the launch of any new product on such social networking sites. The companies may invite comments for any product launched which after moderation (if required) is posted on the website.

• **Connecting with customers:** Companies can directly get in touch with their customers through social networking sites. It increases reputation of the company, gets them positive reviews and shows that they really care for their customer. Certain brands from various segments viz. technology, garments, fashion accessories, footwear, eyewear can create their own forums or even a designated web space and have users registered under their name. These websites would provide relevant content regarding various products for each brand, offers (if any), and information about new releases to these users (customers). This structure helps the companies to maintain periodic information about a huge customer base.

**Professional Networking:** A social networking site like Linkedin.com provides a platform for interconnection of professionals around the world. This could be used for many business purposes and may act as a job portal. Specialists on human resources can search for the desired profile in the pool of users on such websites. The professional people use this as a medium to raise their visibility, one noticed, tell about their company, service, and get more clients.

**Education:** The National School Boards Association reports that almost 60 percent of students who use social networking talk about education topics online and, surprisingly, more than 50 percent talk specifically about academics. Various
educational institutes may have their presence on social networking sites focusing on their academia, academic and other extra-curricular activities, achievements and rewards and campus images. This would help the aspirants in knowing more about the particular institute.

**Disadvantages of SNS are:**

**Security:** Security is one of the major concerns for social networking sites. Since the users display their personal information viz. name, location, age, gender and photographs, there is a probability that this information may be misused or may be used to commit online crimes or illegal activities. Hence, all such sites must be protected from hackers and must have right kind of access levels defined. Only right type of people can access the content.

**Online harassment and stalking:** Since personal information about users is easily available on social networking sites, there is a risk of malicious rumors being posted, pictures or photos may be downloaded and morphed.

**Fake identity:** Also, many people pretend to be someone else and prepare their online profiles with false information, so as to dupe unsuspecting users. So, if you do not know the person face to face then it will be very hard for you to find the real identity.

**Addiction:** Actual social activities where people can interact one-on-one physically are taking a back seat as the virtual social networking takes over. People are getting addictive to the virtual world and the physical people interaction in the real world is passé.

1.8. **POPULARITY:**

These SNSs are becoming so popular, important and powerful tool of communication day by day. In 2009, Neilson made a study on the popularity and usage of SNS. It was reported that two out of three people who are online, visit SNSs. This activity is the fourth most popular activity after checking e–mail. Neilson calculated that the online users spent on social media about 10% of their all time spent on internet. The same year, Facebook statistics showed that its users had exceeded 400 million and this
number is more than the US population. In another report (July, 2012) Neilson estimated that US people were spending 121.1 billion minutes on social media in a year, while this number was 88.4 billion in 2011.\textsuperscript{41}

1.8.1. Top 10 most popular Social Network Sites- March 2012

Table 1.1 shows the most popular Social Network Sites as derived from eBizMBA which is constantly average of each website’s Alex Global Traffic Rank, and U.S. Traffic Rank from both Complete and Quantcast. ‘‘*NA*’’ Denotes an estimate of sites with limited Complete or Quantcast data.\textsuperscript{42}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name of SNS</th>
<th>Estimated Unique Month Visitors</th>
<th>eBizMBA Rank</th>
<th>Complete Rank</th>
<th>Quantcart Rank</th>
<th>Alexa Rank</th>
<th>Updated By eBIZMBA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>750,000,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3/5/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>250,000,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3/5/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Linked In</td>
<td>110,000,000</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3/5/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>My Space</td>
<td>70,500,000</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>3/5/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>GooglePlus</td>
<td>65,000,000</td>
<td>95</td>
<td><em>NA</em></td>
<td><em>NA</em></td>
<td><em>NA</em></td>
<td>3/5/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Deviant Art</td>
<td>25,500,000</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3/5/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Live Journal</td>
<td>20,500,000</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>3/5/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tagged</td>
<td>19,500,000</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>3/5/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Orkut</td>
<td>17,500,000</td>
<td>350</td>
<td><em>NA</em></td>
<td><em>NA</em></td>
<td><em>NA</em></td>
<td>3/5/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Cofe Mom</td>
<td>12,500,000</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>1,144</td>
<td>3/5/2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: eBizMBA

1.8.2. Social Networking and its worldwide users

Social networking is a worldwide phenomenon that eMarketer predicts encompasses nearly 1.5 billion internets by the end of 2012. As of December 2011, eMarketer estimates, just over 1.2 billion people around the world used social networking sites at least once per month. This represented 23.1% growth over 2010, and the double-digit growth will continue throughout eMarketer’s forecast period, though the rate of change will decrease as the market matures.
Table 1.2. shows the prediction made by eMarketers related to worldwide users of social networking during 2011 – 2014.  

**Table 1.2. Prediction of Social Networking Users World Wide, 2011-2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>USERS IN MILLION</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF CHANGE (+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,202.2</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,433.5</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1,662.4</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,854.7</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: eMarketers

1.8.3. Region wise Social Network users in the world

The region with the highest number of social network users is Asia-Pacific, where 615.9 million internet users logged on to social sites by the end of 2012. About half of those users are in China, where social network users will outnumber their counterparts in the US by nearly two to one. Chart 1.1. shows the prediction of regional distribution users of SNS during the period of 2011-2014.

**Figure 2. Predicted Regional Distribution of Social Networking User World Wide for the period of 2011-2014**

Source: eMarketers
1.8.4. Country wise Social Network users

China and the US are the top two countries in terms of overall users, but ranking of key social network countries around the world change when examined based on penetration rates vs growth rates. In 2012, the US will have the greatest share of social networks users as percentage of total population (49.9%) followed by Canada (49.3%), South Korea (46.6%), Australia (44.4%), and Russia (41.9%). As a share of internet users in 2012, however, Brazil will come out top (87.6%) of web users in the country will use of social network sites) followed closely by Indonesia at 87.5%. In developing markets like these, fewer people overall are online, but among those who are on the web, social networks are often a key driver of internet usage.\(^{45}\)

**Figure 3. Predicted numbers of country-wise users of Social Networking for the period of 2011-2014**

1.8.5. Empirical evidences of Social Media in India

Social media in India is growing by leaps and bounds but till date there was no definite research that tracked this growth. Now the Nielsen Company conducted a survey in collaboration with Absolute Data and produced a report on Social Media in India in 2011\(^{46}\). The finding of the report is as follows:
• 30 million Indians who are online consumers are member of Social Networking Sites.

• 20 million of these spend time on Social Networking Sites daily.

• Indians spend more time on social media than they do checking personal email.

• Over the next six months, 45,000 online Indians intend to join social networking sites each day.

• ¼ of online Indians were able to recall brands, using Social Media by multiplies in the days.

• Having Social Media presence offens “innovation”, customer friendliness and a sense of ‘cool’.

• Nearly 40 million Indians are using online reviews to inform purchase decisions.

• 67 percent of Indians who are on the web use online reviews to help them make purchase.

• 60 percent Indians who are social media users are open to being approached by brands.

1.8.6. Activities performed on Social Networking Sites by Indians

In the same year (2011), the Neilsen company made a survey on the activities carried out by the Indians. It shows that 86% of users like to check their updates, 82% of users like send messages or mail to others and 81% users like to share or view photographs of self or of others. Entertainment through social networking sites by watching video/ movie/ listening song and playing games by using different aaps consequently 73% and 63%. Around 73% users opine that SNS helps in keeping touch with family and 52% of users want to find more prospective spouse/girl friend/boy friend through SNS, while 46% of users keep track on ex- girlfriend or ex-boy friend or ex –partner. Near about 52% of total users like to discuss on different socio-political issues or on any product or services. Interestingly, 43% of users search their future employee or employer through SNS.47
1.9. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

SNSs are becoming an integral part of daily spending for the Internet users of India. In 2012, the Neilsen Company conducted a study in collaboration with AbsolutData regarding the usage of SNS by Indians. The Neilsen Company found that:

- Nearly 30 million Indians who are online are members of social networking sites and about two-thirds of them spend time on these social networking sites daily. More importantly, Indians spend more time on social media than they do using personal email.48

Any advancement in this world is followed by its criticism. The criticism is more critical when such advancement is any social advancement backed by new scientific invention. Among the scientific inventions that helped profound transformation of society and change in human behavior are the communication technologies. So, with the advent of any new communication technology there is always a huge criticism before it is commissioned for public use and continues to remain under criticism till a new communication era is opened up by another new technology. Such criticism is not any back pull to turn it down, rather vital to determine the mode of use of the media that this new technology proposes. That means an ethical use of the emerging or running media is ensured. In a report, ‘Mass media in society; The need of research’, in 1970, UNESCO made a point clear that developing countries needed
much research on mass media. Many researches were undertaken by the developed countries on mass media and on the related issues and by the developing countries as well. Focusing on this, UNESCO stated:

It is, of course, appreciated that research has been carried out in many developing countries and that there is no need to rely for information solely on research from developed countries. The relationships and interaction between economic development, social change and mass communication have been studied and special attention has been given to the different functions of mass communication, the limitations of the mass media, the problems of transition, the possibilities of culture clash, tension and conflict and to such questions as innovation, opinion leadership, power élites, communication networks, the influence of group relationships, information flow and diffusion and so on. Quite a number of studies have been carried out, but lack of refinement in conceptualization and the paucity of theory must make us question whether enough is known about innovation, diffusion and adoption to enable theoretical specifications to be made with regard to these processes either for the individual or for society 49 (p. 12).

However, most of the studies regarding SNSs are made by the developed countries. The findings of developed countries may not be applicable in respect of Indian culture, values and social structure. Those studies can be used as background work to explore nature, impact and future of SNSs from Indian perspective and undoubtedly those studies will be of help in providing methodology and some fundamental research idea. But every reported issue on SNS must go under scrutiny, reconsideration and recheck in the Indian context, even in regional context in a diversified country like India. Indian media researchers, media professionals are concentrating on different issues like impact of SNS on society, youth, personal relation and they have emphasized also on the SNS as a tool of political communication. However, it should be kept in mind that India is a diversified country by nature. Till date, it has twenty nine States and seven Union territories and each State and Union territory has different social structure, culture, value, literacy rate and GDP. Each has its own distinct development challenge.

In East India, West Bengal and Odisha play a significant role in adding cultural richness, educational intelligence and political drama to the overall socio-political environment of India. Therefore, the present study is significant to shed light on the impact and popularity of SNS among different sections of the society of East India.
So far, the available literature supports, in East India, this type of study is undertaken for the first time. Two remarkable studies were undertaken regarding SNS in Odisha; one is on political communication through SNS and another is on ethical issues concerning SNS. In West Bengal, there is no such study except one, which is regarding the role of SNS in searching jobs for the youth of Kolkata. Unfortunately, in a report by FICCI and Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India Pvt. Ltd (2012) on ‘Media & Entertainment in East India – Bengal’, there was no room for SNS.\textsuperscript{50} The present study will help to examine the popularity and impact of SNS in East India from various angles, like the changing mode of communication in personal relations, average duration of time spent, changing feature of habits and mass response to socio-political events through SNS.

1.10. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The adoption of the Internet and use of SNS for social communication has opened a new dimension in communication and new questions too. There will be many such over the whole of India who are addicted to SNS and so it needs a careful study on influence of New Media on one’s personal life and on the society as a whole. Manjunatha (2013) observes in a study, ‘The Usage of Social Networking sites Among the College Students in India’, that youth are much more addicted to SNS, but they are also aware about the adverse effect of SNS consequently. Manjunatha has stated:

\begin{quote}
As with many technologies, adoption of the Internet especially for its social uses has seen its highest levels of usage among young college students in India. The majority of current college students have had access to the Internet and computers for a large percentage of their lives. These digital natives see these technologies as a logical extension of traditional communication methods, and perceive social networking sites as often a much quicker and more convenient way to interact\textsuperscript{51} (p. 21).
\end{quote}

The growing popularity of SNSs prompts the question of demassification. According to Toffler (1980),

\begin{quote}
The more uniform we are, the less we need to know about each other in order to predict one another’s behavior. As the people around us grow more individualized or demassified, we need more information – signals and cues – to predict, even roughly,
\end{quote}
how they are going to behave towards us. And unless we can make such forecasts we cannot work or even live together\textsuperscript{52} (p. 167).

As stated earlier, young generations are more addicted to these Social Networking Sites and are gradually getting detached from their original environment or context. They are more engaged in their virtual world spending time with such friends having very thin chance of meeting personally. They do not even desire so. Often they follow big personalities update and become members of different online communities to organize opinion in favor of some agenda that they have become accustomed to think as political or social activism. Their comfort feeling about doing something political or social through online gets its justification when there comes really some change in policy level due to online opinion or activism. But essentially such activities online push one into ‘isolation’ and reduce his actual ‘social community’ participation. In this backdrop, the researcher has undertaken the study on the basis of primary as well as secondary data to examine the extent of popularity of SNS across different cross-sections of population, taking full account of age-wise, sex-wise, occupation group-wise as well as of income wise distribution of the users. The popularity is further estimated in terms of the time span distribution of users for the purpose. This study also proposes to investigate the major areas of interest across the users. Further, it is to estimate with the help of primary investigation, how the use of SNS has influenced formation of public opinion, particularly in the context socially sensible issues. This study proposes to take full account of the extent of the influence. In addition, the study has examined how existing traditional interpersonal relations are being changed with the growing popularity of SNS. Finally the research has encompassed observations over the behavioral change as well as change in the mode of communication across the users of SNS.

1.11. SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As SNS is comparatively a new phenomenon in comparison to other contemporary communication channels, more and more research work is needed to examine the pros and cons of this new channel. Already SNSs are alleged of over addiction by the youth. We have found one mental rehabilitation center is established for cyber-distressed people in India. Politicians and social-workers are concentrating more on
SNSs to communicate tech savvy Indians. Even SNS have opened a market of new consumer as the Neilsen Report said:

60 percent Indians who are social media users are open to being approached by brands indicating that social media has the ability to change the dynamics between brands and consumers who are typically time-starved and may consider traditional forms of advertising obtrusive and undesirable.53

Due to different campaigns on SNS and active use of SNS even by the politicians apart from the common mass, Government of India is trying to frame certain guidelines related to the use of SNS. The Department of Electronics and Information Technology under the Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, Government of India has made a draft, titled as ‘Framework & Guidelines for Use of Social Media for Government Organisations’ in 2012. 54 Therefore, it is clear that SNS is an important area of communication to explore. The present study will help to know that how much popular is SNS and which activities in SNS are most preferable among which section of the society and its impact on inter personal relations among the people of East India. Moreover, response to the socio-political issues through SNS among different sections of the society is also accounted in the study. This study will be of great use to the central government of India and to the state government as an input framing policy instrument in their pursuit for media governance.

The study is also important for media teachers, media professionals and media students as well to understand the utility and worthiness of SNS. From this study, a new theory may be built up. This study will also be of much help to the researchers of Social Sciences and Behavioral Sciences to be informed about the changes in habit and changes in the mode of personal relations among different sections of the people of East India and that may prompt them to do research in this field. They may feel morally driven to campaign on the safe use of SNS for a cohesive society and rational use for a good mental health. As stated before, apart from advocating creation of a new policy by the government and by any other public authority, the study will also be helpful to different corporate houses to adjust their product promotion policy that conforms to mass mind. This will be possible because the study will give a clear picture of the attitude of users of East India that will say what type of people, of what age usually spend how much time in doing what.
So, this study will help academicians, sociologists, psychologists, government and public authorities and corporate business houses as well. Besides, if the research result is publicised in conventional media like newspapers and television, it will help create public awareness of SNS in the society.

1.12. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main of the study is to do an analysis of the socio-political and psychological response to SNS in the cyber age. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the extent of popularity of SNS across different sections of population.
2. To estimate the time spent by different sections of population in SNS.
3. To investigate the major interest areas in SNS across different sections of users.
4. To examine the impact of the SNS on inter-personal relationship.
5. To study the role of SNS in the formation of public opinion on socio-political issues.

1.13. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION:

Aam Admi Party (AAP): Birth of Aam Admi Party (AAP) is a significant dimension of anti-corruption movement, led by Anna Hazare, in India. The difference in opinion between Anna Hazare and his follower cum social activist Arvind Kejriwal, during anti-corruption movement for Jan Lokpal Bill in 2011-2012, gave birth of a new political party AAP.

Amazon.com: It is a United States based international commerce company which is basically known for its online bookstore. But now, has started to offer DVDs to MP3 downloads or sharing, food, toys, furniture, jewelry to the Internet users. The users do not have been registered to use Amazon.com. It was launched in 1995 and the owner is Capital Group Companies.
Anti-corruption movement by Anna Hazare: During the last few years, India has faced the worst kind of corruption. Irregularity in distribution of telecommunication spectrum was estimated around $40 billion; the revenue loss due to Commonwealth Games was nearly to be $38 million and the loss of $3 billion due to illegal distribution of coal mines in country. This huge amount of loot of public money India had never seen before. These recent corruption cases have caused a revolutionary movement, led by Anna Hazare. Anna took ‘Gandhian fast unto death method’ to show his protest. Soon this movement spread to whole of India through social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter.

Apps and games: “Apps” is the plural form of the noun “App” which means a self-contained program or a piece of software or an application that is made to fulfill any particular purpose. Anyone can run it on the Internet or on the Computer or in mobile. Using different “Apps”, a user can play any online game on Facebook or in their mobile phone. The popular “Apps and games” on Facebook are “Firmville”, “Angry Birds” and others.

Arab revolution: The Arab revolution is also known as the “Arab Spring” which was a big revolutionary wave of non-violence as well as violent protest, demonstration, riot and civil war throughout the Arab World, started on December 18, 2010. This movement targeted the rulers of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen by December 2013. The activists used social media like, blog, Facebook, Twitter to communicate the information about the technique, demonstration and updates of the movement to other activists across the World as well.

Blogging: “Blogging” is the verb form of the noun “Blog” which is the truncated form of ‘Weblog’. The term “Blog” was coined by Peter Marholz and became popular in 90s. “Blog” provides its users the freedom of generating their own online content and produce them on the Internet with the help of Web 2.0. In different socio-political movements like “Arab revolution” and “Shahbagh movement” in Bangladesh, blogs played an important role to inform the world about the real situation of the country by the citizens. “Blogging” has democratized the citizens’ participation for disseminating the information.
Chatting: “Chatting” is the verb form of the noun “Chat”. One of the popular features of Facebook, chatting is nothing but text messaging. However, out of Facebook this feature is also available on Gmail and on other Websites. Using “Chat” any user of Facebook can message any other user of Facebook. It is not necessary the other user should be in the friend list but users can manipulate the chat options from which profile they can receive message or keep him or her as “off line”. The Facebook also offers group messaging or “Group Chatting” to the users. With the use of “emoticons”, users can express their feelings in an attractive manner.

Comment: On Facebook, a registered user can give his or her opinion or share feelings by clicking the ‘comment’ button against any content that is created or shared by other users.

Cyberage: the word “Cyberage” is the amalgamation of two different words, “Cyber” and “Age”. It means computer or technology driven Information Age.

East India: The eastern part of India is indicated as the East India which consists of four States, such as, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odhisha. Before November 15, 2000, Jharkhand was part of Bihar. The union territory Andaman and Nicobar Island comes under East India.

Facebook: Facebook is an online Social Networking Site founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. After registering of self on Facebook, a user can add other users as his or her ‘friend’ and can interact with friends through writing message as ‘Chatting’, can make video call, can upload or share image or links. The user also can ‘like’ and/or ‘comment’ other’s uploads or sharing. Users can make own ‘page’ or ‘group’ or may ‘like’ other’s ‘page’ or may ‘join’ other’s group according to one’s own choice. Users usually get notifications of the friend’s update. Users also get news feed from the system. There are several options of online games which can be played by the users.

Followers: Users of Twitter may subscribe (which is free of cost) other user’s tweet or content. These subscribed users are called as ‘follower’ of provider’s account.

Friend: On Facebook, “Friend” does not the mean by its literal meaning. Making someone ‘Friend’ means, sending a request to a known user or to an unknown user to
be acquainted with his or her profile, according to the sender’s choice or accepting any request from other users. In Facebook, a big politician or film star or even parents may become friend as Facebook provides the feature.

**Group:** A registered Facebook user can create any group according to his or her area of interest and may request other users to join the ‘Group’. The member of any ‘Group’ is allowed to post contents, like, writings and links and it allows discussing and criticizing or commenting on any update. According to the privacy system ‘Group’ may be three types, such as, ‘Open Group’, ‘Closed Group’, ‘Secret Group’.

**Like:** ‘Like’ button or option is a feature of Facebook (a social networking site), through which a registered user can react positively to any status update by other registered user or it may show that the user cares about other’s updated information or contents. The button also display that how many likes are gathered by that particular update. ‘Like’ button is also available outside Facebook.

**LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is a kind of social networking site that provides its users a professional network. The users are given the space to narrate their qualifications and skills in a certain area. To create ‘connection’ a registered user can invite any person whom he or she knows in real life professionally or not. However, the invitee can discard the request by choosing the option “I don’t know” or “spam”. If the inviter gets so many refusals, the account or profile may be restricted by the system. LinkedIn was founded by Mountain View in 2003.

**Loksabha Election 2014:** The General Election of India was conducted in nine phases from April 7 to May 12, 2014 to constitute the sixteenth Loksabha by electing the members of parliament for all 543 parliamentary constituencies in India. The increase of 100 million voters since the last General Election of India of 2009, made the election the largest-ever election of the world.

**Nirbhaya case:** December 16, 2012, a 23-year-old female physiotherapy intern was beaten and a horrific gang rape occurred in a bus in which she was travelling with her male friend, in Delhi. The girl was admitted at Safdarjung hospital and was kept on mechanical ventilation. On December 26, she was moved to Singapore for better treatment. However, she died on December 29 due to her critical condition. Mass
protest had taken place against the Government of India as well as Government of Delhi throughout the country for women protection and the mass feel that there is a need for a change in law and order.

**Page:** Any community with special interests created by the user(s) of Facebook is called as ‘Page’. The operator(s) of that ‘Page’ is (are) known as ‘Admin’. The updates are shown on the ‘Timeline’ of that ‘Page’. Other users may ‘Follow’ the page and may also get the notifications of updates.

**Profile:** Users of social networking sites can create their own identifiable account by providing photo, self information, like, date of birth, area of interest, profession, name of the educational institutions and memorable events. These identifiable online accounts on social networking sites are called “Profile”.

**Scrap:** “Scrap” is nothing but a post to a friend’s scrap book (same as time line on Facebook) in Orkut which is another social networking site.

**Shahbagh movement:** “Shahbagh Square” is a place in Dhaka, the capital city of the Bangladesh where a protest movement began to take shape from February 5, 2013 by the youth of Bangladesh and later it spread to other parts of Bangladesh. Demanding the capital punishment of “Razakars” who were accused of genocide, rape and crimes during the 1971 Liberation war, the youth were also calling for a ban on the fundamentalist parties like “Jamaat-e-Islami” in Bangladesh. This movement initially sparked by blogs or social media and continued by updating the everyday incidents. The world started to compare the place “Shahbagh Square” as “Taherir Square” of “Arab Spring”. During the movement, a pro-Shahbagh blogger was brutally killed. As the outcome of the movement, the Bangladesh Government executed the war criminals on December 12, 2013.

**Social Networking Site (SNS):** SNSs are some kind of web based ‘personal web page’ or ‘nodes’ or ‘sites’ or ‘platforms’ or ‘services’ that provide, individuals or users or participants the space to create own identifiable profile where the individuals or users or participants provide their personal information; upload or share content, photo, video; and/or are provided content, data, information by other users or participants and/or by the system. The users or participants can articulate a list of
others users or participants with whom they want to communicate or share their own content. The communication or interaction can be consumed or produce by the help of User Generated Content (UGC) provided by the system.

**Timeline:** Replacing ‘Wall’, since December, 2011; Facebook provides its users a new virtual place, i.e. ‘Timeline’ where the produced contents by the users are shown and organized according to the period of time when they were uploaded or created. Its user can control the privacy set up.

**Tweet:** The created content containing 140-characters by the users of ‘Twitter’ (a social networking site) is called as ‘Tweet’. ‘Tweet’ is visible to any one by default; however, the user within the boundary of followers only can restrict it.

**Twitter:** Twitter in a web based Social Networking Site that provides its registered users to create a text within 140 characters, which is also known as micro blogging. Twitter was created by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass and was launched in 2006.

**User Generated Content (UGC):** UGC is the key characteristic of participatory communication technology that is mainly provided by Web 2.0 in information and communication technology. Online users can generate and publish their own online content and can access the contents of other users. There are several types of Internet forum, where users generate their own contents. Blogs provide the users to publish their own thoughts and creations (e.g. Blogger, WorldPress). Some Internet forums give the opportunity to their users to edit and change the content (e.g. Wikipedia). Different social networking sites provide the freedom to interaction through chatting, posting comment or images or links (e.g Facebook.Twitter).

**Voice Chat:** Facebook launched the “Video Chatting” option from 2011. In the Chat Box there is a button of “Video Call”. Before using “Video Call” option users have to install the software. Skype gives the technology support to Facebook for “Voice Chat” which provides the users the opportunity to see and talk with any person whom they want.

**Wall:** ‘Wall’ is a provided space to the registered users of Facebook where users can share their writings, image and preferred links. Users can also write or share
something on other friends’ ‘Wall’. Users can control the privacy of wall. Now ‘Timeline Profile’ replaces this feature.

**Web 2.0**: Web 2.0 is connected to the development of newer technological infrastructure, incorporated with World Wide Web that further democratizes the publishing or broadcasting of any content in a participatory mode. Users or participating have both of the opportunity to publish or consume their own online content. Tim O’Reilly popularized the term ‘Web 2.0’ in 2005.

**Wi-Fi**: “Wi-Fi” is an arrangement of local area wireless connectivity that allows any electronic device, such as, Laptop, smart phone, to exchange data with the help of the Internet.

**Zorpia**: Zorpia is an online social networking site, which is among few of the social networking sites, having permission in China. The users of Zorpia can interact through creating profiles, photo sharing and messaging. This Social Networking Site has the false identity prevention technology and can check the compatibility between strangers. Jeffrey Ng is the company's founder of Zorpia. Zorpia was launched in 2003. The users of Zorpia are called as ‘Zorpians’ who are also able to use Zorpia by their Facebook Id.

### 1.14 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 1.14.1 The Network Society Theory


Every society is a network society. There are multiple networks in a society and there comes out a dominant network that runs a program to achieve some particular objectives and to reach goal. The actors of the dominant network set of the code of program and reconfigure the network to achieve their specific goal. They dominate over other networks through creation of values, exercising power and sometimes
conforming to the counter power. Digital networks are global. It is not only a technological statement due to global proliferation of the digital communication technology but also due to social infrastructure this digital network offers. The social infrastructure that these technological networks offer is also global.

Digital networks are global, as they know no boundaries in their capacity to reconfigure themselves. Therefore, a social structure whose infrastructure is based on digital networks is by definition global. Thus, the network society is a global society (p. 22).

This technology supported social network has become dominant among other social networks. Though everyone on this earth is not connected with this network, however everybody is affected to some extent by the processes that take place in this global network which is a dominant structure too.

The reason behind this is that the core activities that shape and control human life in every corner on the earth are organized through these global networks. These are financial markets, the distribution of goods and services, labor market, dissemination of knowledge and transfer of technology. To extend the list, we should include communication media, culture, art and sports. Further to add, international institutions that are involved in managing world economy, and intergovernmental relations and the transnational NGOs with varied activities. Apart from this, a global civil society plays to assert human rights, world peace and cross cultural communication. To characterize a network society the following traits could be cited:

- The network society diffuses selectively throughout the planet, working on the pre-existing sites, organizations, and institutions that still make up most of the material environment of people’s lives.

- The network society works on the basis of a binary logic of inclusion/exclusion, whose boundaries change over time, both with the changes in the network’s programs and with the conditions of performance of these programs.

- The global network society is a dynamic structure; it is highly malleable to social forces, to culture, to politics, to economic strategies.
• But what remains in all instances is its dominance over activities and people who are external to the networks.  

The juxtaposition or intertwining of the network society, as a global structure, with industrial, rural, communal or any other forms of society is the reality of all countries. But the effect to network society on the traditional society is notable. Societies that are defined by national boundaries, by cultural boundaries due to their historical or ethnic identities are deeply fragmented by the digitalism of inclusion and exclusion in the global networks which influence, shape and structure the production, consumption, communication and power.

This fragmentation is not simply the expression of the time lag required by the gradual incorporation of previous social forms into the new dominant logic. It is, in fact, a structural feature of the network society. This is because the reconfiguring capacity inscribed in the process of networking allows the programs governing every network to search for valuable additions everywhere and to incorporate them, while bypassing and excluding those territories, activities, and people that have little or no value for the performance of the tasks assigned to the network (p. 23).  

In the realm of communication, the network society is characterized by a pattern of networking, flexibility, the recombination of codes, and ephemeral symbolic communication. This is a culture primarily organized around and integrated by a diversified system of electronic media, including the Internet (pp. 29-30)  

Network society is further characterized by Space of Flows and Timeless Time while existing with other prior forms. The emergence of this new social structure network society has claimed this redefinition of the material foundations of our existence, space and time. They are the space of flows and timeless time. Space and time are intertwined in nature and similarly in society. In social science, space is usually defined as the material support of time-sharing social practices. The space of flows means practicing simultaneity technologically without geographical contiguity. The driving functions in the network society like managing financial markets, supervising transnational production networks, media networks and global social movements are organized as the space of flows. Similarly in the case of time, the relationship to time is defined by sequencing is continuously being negated by the use of information and communication technologies.
It is very much essential to define value and power and relation between powers and counter power to define an emerging form society. There is also a strict requirement for defining the culture that this new form of society promotes. Although, everything that comes in play in a society, could be grossly branded as culture.

**Value in the Networked Society**

What is value in the Network Society? “Value” is what the dominant institutions of society decide. It is not beyond the influence of power and objective in nature, rather very much subjective and prone to change with the changing goal of actors of the dominant networks. The most important political or social game in today’s world is transforming people’s minds. The media are the key networks to this. Media are the primary source that provides people with information, messages and images to help changing their mind and media is organized globally with their distributive networks.

The network society is a multidimensional social structure in which networks of different kinds have different logics of value making. The definition of what constitutes value depends on the specificity of the network, and of its program. Any attempt to reduce all value to a common standard comes up against insurmountable methodological and practical difficulties (pp. 24-25).

**Power in the Networks**

Power is the structural capacity to impose ones will over another’s will. When power is exercised, regardless of the will of someone that actor must submit to the will of the power-holder. The actor may be a person, a social group, ethnic or religious group, an organization or even a country. In the case of non conformity or non compliance with power the actor would be exposed to violence of different forms. The very simple answer is that each network defines its own power system depending on its programmed goals.

Processes of power-making do have two dialectical perspectives. One is the seizing of and/or enforcing power and the other is resisting the power to realize interests and values that are excluded or under-represented in the programs of the networks. But no doubt, both processes ultimately enrich power through their interactions.
Perhaps the question of power, as traditionally formulated, does not make sense in the network society. But other forms of domination and determination are critical in shaping people’s lives against their will.  

In a world of networks, exercise of control over others is done by two basic mechanisms:

- Programming /reprogramming the network(s) to conform to the goals assigned to the network.
- Connecting different networks and thus ensuring their cooperation by sharing common goals and increasing resources.

The holders of the first power position are called the “programmers,” and the holders of the second power position the “switchers.” These programmers and switchers are certainly social actors.

...I suggest that the power-holders are networks themselves. Not abstract, unconscious networks, not automata: they are humans organized around their projects and interests. But they are not single actors (individuals, groups, classes, religious leaders, political leaders) since the exercise of power in the network society requires a complex set of joint action that goes beyond alliances to become a new form of subject...  

_Culture in the Network Society_

Interestingly, society itself is a cultural construct. And that cultural construct is based upon cultural similarity of a large group of people. Usually culture is referred to as the set of values and beliefs that inform and motivate people’s behavior compliant to his social group or community. So, in a network society, social scientists are able to identify the culture of the network society as its historical marker. However, the complexity lies there that the network society is global, and it comprises with a varied cultures, particular to the history and geography of each area of the world. The network society develops in a multiplicity of cultural settings.

There is a common core to the network society like any other forms of society. But there is an additional layer of unity in the network society that it exists globally in real time. It is global in its structure. Therefore, it deploys its logic over the whole world
and it keeps its networked organization at the global level at the same time. It maintains commonality and singularity and thus has profound consequences at the cultural level. On the one hand, specific cultural identities become the trenches of autonomy, and sometimes of resistance, for collectives and individuals who refuse to fade away in the logic of dominant networks.

There are senses of resistance and cosmopolitanism among the global members of network society. Resistance is all about cultural indigenousity and cosmopolitanism is all about merging in melting pot leaving all cultural back pull. Despite widespread cultural gap and difference in cultural content due to geographical and historical variation people are still communicating despite risk of miscommunication, misunderstanding and spread of hatred.

The new culture is not made of content but of process. It is a culture of communication for the sake of communication. It is an open-ended network of cultural meanings that can not only coexist, but also interact and modify each other on the basis of this exchange \(^6^2\) (pp. 39-40).

**Media in a Network Society**

Media in the network society offers a manifold of channels of communication, with increasing technological interactivity through development of multimedia technology and cultural interactivity through inclusion wide range of cultures and social groups. At the same time, there is a node or audience is behaving autonomously being equipped with the Internet. However, everything that they experience mentally is virtual, but this virtuality has become a fundamental dimension of everybody’s reality. Media has taken over the role the public space. The socialization of society happens through the media in a network society. The shared cultural practice that helps individuals and social groups to stay in cohesion takes place in the networked, interactive and obviously digitized space of communication and mass media and the Internet is the main space provider. Similarly, the relationship between the represented and the representative, especially between the politicians and the common mass depends on the happenings in this media-centered communication space. Therefore, media plays the role of political space or more generally public sphere. Before global network society, it was the constitution and democratic political
institutions played that role as identified Habermay. Besides according to Chicago school it was the city to play that role. Media in a network society has made its role to fade away.

1.14.2 Media Richness Theory

The idea of Media Richness Theory came from contingency theory and later, Daft, Lengel and Trevino (Daft & Lengel, 1984; Daft, Lengel & Trevino, 1987; Rice, 1992) developed it. According to Daft and Lengel (1986), “rich” media provides power to its users to communicate more quickly and to understand ambiguous or equivocal messages. So the uncertainty can be minimized regarding the information among the users. Generally richer media works in a more complex environment and do more complex task by providing enormous flow of information.

Four factors influence the richer media:

- The immediate feedback;
- Transmitting of multiple cues;
- Language variety;
- The capability of the media to have a personal focus.

Therefore, this study adopts media richness theory as social networking sites have the four said features as a communication medium. The media richness theory is helpful to evaluate its importance of users’ perception and to predict the users’ behavior.

1.14.3. The Social Presence theory

The Social Presence Theory is an important theory to understand the online interaction, communication and understanding among users. Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) developed the theory of social presence and defined social presence as the degree of quality or feature between two users of a communication medium. They opined that depending on the degree of social presence, communication media differs from each other and for these differences, communication interaction or interest to a certain medium varies (p. 65). More importantly, they believed that a medium with
a high degree of social presence is seen as being sociable, warm, and personal, whereas a medium with a low degree of social presence is seen as less personal.

Table 1.3. Classification of Social Media by Social presence/ media richness and self presentation/ self disclosure.65

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL PRESENCE/MEDIA RICHNESS</th>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>MEDIUM</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self presentation</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>Social Networking Sites (e.g. Facebook)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self discloser</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Collaborative Projects (e.g. Wikipedia)</td>
<td>Content communities (e.g. YouTube)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: M. Kaplan, Michael Haenlein (2010)

1.15. CHAPTER’S STRUCTURE

The thesis is structured into five successive chapters. The first chapter introduces the overview of the Social Networking Site (SNS) India. It discusses the origin of SNS, fundamentals of SNS, new interaction paradigm, relationship, and popularity of SNS as well. It also deals with the rationale of the study, statement of the problem, social significance of the study, objective of the study and operational definitions. It discusses the theoretical framework of this study also.

Chapter Two provides a brief literature review.

Chapter Three discusses the research methods applied in this study. It pointed out data collection method, sample size, limitation of the research method, rationale of the adopted method, research questions and list of variables.

Chapter Four is based on the data presentation and analysis of the study.

Chapter Five is the concluding chapter of the thesis. It presents summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.
Reference


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