CHAPTER – 3
OVERVIEW ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Introduction

Less than a few decades ago, connecting to people meant communicating via snail mail, fax, phone calls and beepers. Since then communication evolved into email, IM (instant messaging) and SMS messaging through mobile phones. Today, these facilities are looked down upon as very simple communication tools which do not give additional personal experience. People want to share more and at the same time learn more about persons with whom they communicate everyday. Simple email exchanges provide necessary data about each group/person, but today, just two persons sharing data is considered insufficient. For that reason, social networking began to grow online.

In recent years, the online community has moved a stepped further in connecting people. Social networking was born, and through this online platform, people can share their thoughts, post pictures, videos and even invite people to events. Social networking websites have created virtual communities wherein communication is not just based on the information required but at a personal level as well.

The rapid growth and desirability of Social Networking Sites has been witnessed in almost every country. India considered a fast
developing country has not lagged behind. As such, the usage of social media is rampant among citizens and they hail from every class. Indian society has adopted the new age media, i.e., social networking along with maintaining its traditions. It’s an amalgamation of both modernity and tradition. Therefore, Social Networking Sites form part and parcel of everyday life of many Indians.

**Social Network and Social Networking Sites**

In the discipline of sociology the concept of ‘social network’ refers to a social structure made up of individuals who are connected to each other and have a complex set of relationships or ties between themselves. Hence in the study of social relationships the analysis of the role of social network assumes significance. Today social network analysis has become one of the major paradigms in contemporary sociology. Emile Durkheim, Ferdinand Tonnies, George Simmel, Jacob L. Mareno, Bronislaw Malinowski, Alfred Radcliffe – Brown, Claude Levi-Straus, John A. Bareen and many other sociologists have given the prime of place to social networks in their respective studies.

George Simmel, the German sociologist, has stressed upon the importance of studying social network by emphasizing the dynamics of triads and web of group affiliations. It is also noteworthy that eminent sociologist Jacob Mareno had developed the first sociograms in 1930s for the study of interpersonal relationships. The major theme of social network is to comprehend social interaction where social phenomena
should be primarily conceived and investigated through the proportion of relation between and within units.

A social network is a collection of individuals linked together by a set of relations (Downes; 2005). Online social networking sites ‘virtually’ link individuals, who may or may not ‘know’ each other. As a result, they enable rapid exchange of knowledge, high levels of dialogue and collaborative communication through text, audio and video (Siemens; 2006).

Hence, the inner base for the creation of SNS is nothing but the concept of social network. Social Networking Sites can be broadly defined as internet-based social spaces designed to facilitate communication, collaboration, and content sharing across networks of contacts. Social Networking Sites allow users to manage, build and represent their social networks online. People use Social Networking Sites for countless activities of which the most common uses include connecting with existing networks, making and developing friendships/contacts, creating an online presence for their users, viewing content/finding information, creating and customizing profiles and so on. Social Networking Sites are usually made up of other individuals; they might also include profiles of events, companies and even political parties. These Social Networking Sites have rapidly gained popularity. By 2013, globally active memberships on Social Networking Sites had reached 1.73 billion (Wikipedia.com).
Boyd and Ellison (2007) define Social Networking Sites as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or a semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”.

Wikipedia defines a Social Networking Site as an online platform that focuses on building and reflecting social networks or social relations among people who share interests and activities. Social Networking Sites, E-mail, instant messaging, view-and photo-sharing sites and comment posting are all tolls that help people to communicate and socialize with each other (Carla; 2009).

The online social networking revolution, seen in such sites as MySpace and Facebook, has focused attention on sharing information about one's personal life, but social networking also offers the potential to facilitate the exchange of thoughts and ideas and thus informal learning. Social networking sites allow people to easily forge connections with others where none previously existed, such as ties crossing physical, geographic, institutional, and organisational boundaries. Social networking sites have changed the notion of the World Wide Web from the page metaphor to a model predicated on micro content; content blocks that can be saved, summarized, addressed, copied, quoted, and built into new projects (Alexander; 2006).
However, addiction to Social Networking Sites is increasing day by day, especially among the younger generation. It is a trend that has diverged the way relationships are now perceived. Our society is now moving from face-to-face relationships to on-line relationships. A decade ago, not many in India, ever thought that SNS would capture our psyche in such a way as it is occurring now.

**Purposes of Social Networking Sites**

Social networking provides advancements especially in communication and self expression and the use of social networking is expanding. Social Networking Sites are used by diverse categories of users for a variety of purposes. The main goal or motive of the Social Networking Sites is to provide an interactive environment to communicate with peers and get useful information. Through the review of literature, the following aspects of Social Networking Sites have been identified:

- **To Find Useful Information:** Social Networking Sites are a new platform for information sharing and communication, where users can read, download and upload valuable as well as up-to-date information and share with others. For instance, read book reviews, join publishers/ journals/organizations/Institutional pages and so on.

- **To Get Opinions on Different Subjects:** Social Networking Sites users post their comments on a subject matter for open
discussion and get diverse views of peers. The users community give their feedback in the form of comments regarding the topics posted.

- **For Entertainment:** Many people admit that these sites are merely a form of entertainment. They use these sites as a creation network of users, share and post funny videos or photos, flirt with girls, comment on the profile of others, and establish fake relations through chatting. Some people use this media for eradicating loneliness and depression.

- **For Socializing:** The term “socializing” is widely used in the field of Sociology which means to create a society. In the context of Social Networking Sites, socializing means to meet people on a single platform, share common interests and communicate with each other.

- **Discussion Forum:** People on these sites join different groups or communities like academic, business, political and social welfare. Users of Social Networking Sites discuss common matters on related problems. They post common topics for discussion and take views and opinions of others.

- **To Share Experience and Expertise:** The users' community share their experiences, achievements, solve problems, give or take advice on it. They also share personal information with those people whom they do not even know.
For Academic Purpose: Academic bodies such as school/college/university and other institutions are making use of these type of media in order to provide information on what is happening in their respective institutes in the form of announcement and news. They also help in providing reference utility at admission time. The libraries also utilize this technology to provide need-based services to the users.

To Communicate with Family and Friends: A powerful mode of communication among friends, family, teachers, researchers and other business and academic community, which is proved by research studies, about Social Networking Sites is that it is the new innovative tool for communication between family and friends.

Playing Games: Most of the Social Networking Sites provide features of games. Sometimes members of a particular network get entertainment through playing games provided by these networking sites. This feature which is very popular among teenagers is used for playing online games.

Interactive Media of Communication as Compared to Phone/E-Mail: Social Networking Sites are free services provided by the Internet. Anyone can connect with them without any hindrance or special skill. These sites provide easier, cheaper,
faster and more interactive features for communication than the earlier communication tools such as mobile or email.

- **To Keep-Up with Up-to-Date Happenings:** This medium keeps up-to-date with the current happenings in society, profession, business and work place of the users. For instance, if an earthquake has occurred users have updated their status on the SNSs.

- **Helps in Study and Learning:** It is a virtuous network among students and teachers. This medium provides an interactive classroom environment among teachers and learners. Sharing of academic materials is more likely to be done between teachers and students as well as among students themselves.

- **Promote themselves and their Work:** Everyone can share their latest achievements in their respective fields. The users’ community post their journey photographs and personal videos.

- **Informed about New Products:** This media spread awareness about the recent launches of new products in the market.

- **Advertisements:** Through Social Networking Sites people can advertise a specific product on an idea to create awareness among their clients. On the other hand, these are also used to publicize different issues and to get feedbacks.
 **Business**: The idea of developing Social Networking Sites is basically a business strategy. It ensures involvement of users while introducing new products.

 **Professional Network**: People related to similar professions can share useful tips regarding current happenings and discuss professional as well as personal problems on Social Networking Sites. It can in turn build powerful networks and collaborations between professionals and help in their professional fields.

 **Online Interaction**: SNS merely facilitate with online interactions among people who are located at distant places across the globe.

 **Feedback**: The users give their appropriate feedback regarding use of particular products and services or about any issue.

 **Build Relationships**: Social Networking Sites connect those persons who have not yet met. It also strengthens existing relationships by keeping in touch and sharing personal information.

**What Can College Students Do With Social Networking Sites?**

Being involved with a Social Networking Site gives college students many benefits. The following are some of the activities in which they can be engaged:
- **Create Profile**: Social Networking Sites provide features to create new profiles which are filled by biographical details, photos or videos, and their areas of interest.

- **Upload Videos/Photos**: These sites facilitate uploading of photos, videos and sharing with others. The users can promote their own personal videos by using this medium.

- **Creating and Advertising Events**: The events creating or joining features of SNS permit the user to publicize parties, workshops, conferences or gatherings that will be hosted. For instance, numerous users create events on lislinks.com regarding attendance of a particular conference or seminar by the members.

- **Group Searching/Joining**: People can search various types of groups related to numerous fields and join these that are related to their fields of interest. There are various types of groups available on Social Networking Sites, such as, professional related, social based, fashion related, technology, news, library related, cultural associations, human rights, shopping, marketing, education, sports and tourism.

- **Friend Searching/Adding**: It also facilitates the search for particular types of friends and send friend requests to form part of friends list.

- **Message Post**: This is the most convenient way to communicate with friends through post anti send messages across.

- **Chatting**: Social Networking Sites offer the facility of messaging and video based chatting with their friends.
✓ **Games:** They provide multiple types of gaming facilities. Anyone can become a member and access facility on their respective page.

✓ **Appearance and Layout:** Users can create their choice based appearances of individual web pages on these sites. They can also customize their content on sites before presenting it to others.

✓ **Tagging:** It is the process of providing a keyword to specific content to describe it according to own abilities and share it with others. The users can tag specific information to their friends.

✓ **Download applications:** It is a small program which is created by the users for various purposes.

**History of Social Networking Sites**

The idea of connecting people through the usage of networked computers, in order to boost their knowledge and their ability to learn, dates back from the 1960s which was the vision of JCR Licklider. Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web, had foreseen the development of an active suite of tools that would allow users to create rather than just passively browse. Social networking began in 1978 with the Bulletin Board System (or BBS.) The BBS was hosted on personal computers, requiring that users dial in through the modem of the host computer and exchanging information over phone lines with other users. This was the very first system that allowed users to sign in and interact with each other, yet it was quite slow since only one user could be logged in at a time. Later in the same year, the very first copies
of web browsers were distributed using the bulletin board Usenet. Usenet was created by Jim Ellis and Tom Truscott, and it allowed users to post news, articles or posts, which were referred to as “news”. The difference between Usenet and other BBS and forums was that it didn’t have a dedicated administrator or central server. There are many modern forums that use the same idea as Usenet today which include Yahoo! Groups and Google Groups.

The first version of instant messaging was introduced in 1988 with Internet Relay Chat (IRC). IRC was Unix-based therefore limiting access to most people. It was used for link and file sharing, and generally keeping in touch with one another. During the 1990s the first “social” uses of the World Wide Web evolved when tools such as listservs and discussion software were used to link people around the world with common interests. Geocities was among the first social networking sites on the internet, launching its website in 1994. Its purpose was to allow users to create their own websites, dividing them into “cities” based on the website’s content. In 1995, TheGlobe.com was launched, offering users the ability to interact with people who held the same interests and publish their own content (Ahmed; 2011).

Moreover the first social networking site, SixDegrees.com, appeared in 1997. It allowed users to create profiles, list their friends and surf the friends list. Many features of social networking sites were available in diverse formats before this time, but SixDegrees.com was the first platform to combine all features. This was the year where
instant messaging became very popular and it was the first time internet users were able to create a profile and friend each other. The name was derived from six degrees of separation concept. It means if a person is one step away from a person they know, and two steps away from each person who is known by the persons they know then each person is at most six steps away from any other person on the earth. Users can post bulletins and send messages to the people in their first, second and third degrees and can also see the connection of other users on the site. Users can also invite non-users to join it. It attracted million of users but if failed to become a sustainable business. Finally it had to be closed in 2001. The founder believed the site was too ahead of the time. Internet was pretty new to people at that time. Many of the users were just interested to surf on the internet and not to get much involved in such sites. They were interested in maintaining contact with old friends but not interested to meet new strangers. The site lacked lot of activities other than making friends like games, etc. which is a prominent feature nowadays on SNSs like Facebook, Orkut.

Within the year of launch of SixDegrees.com to 2001, a number of communities developed tools to support combinations of profile along with the list of articulated friends. Some of the examples are AsianAvenue, BlackPlanet, MiGente. They allowed users to create personal, professional and dating profiles. It also facilitated users to identify the friends in their personal profiles without the approvals. Then came another major launch of LiveJournal in 1999. It is virtual
community where internet users can maintain a blog, journal or diary. Blog and diary, one to support blogging and another for social networking, is an unique feature of this site. This is very different from other sites where you can only blog or only social network. Of course, many of the sites do have dual feature now. LiveJournal was started by owner to keep updated his high school friends on his activities. In LiveJournal, users marks others as friends to follow their journals which is a way different from SNSs nowadays. The Korean virtual site called Cyworld was started in 1999 but was not having much features. It added the specific SNS features in 2001 which was totally independent of other sites existing at that time. Another simultaneous site at that time was LunarStorm, a Swedish community developed in 2000, it contained Friendlists, guestbooks and diary pages.

The next major launch was of the site called Ryze. It was developed to leverage the professional networks of the users particularly new entrepreneurs. It was started in 2001 by Adrian Scott. The site contains more than 500,000 members in over 200 countries. There are paid and unpaid memberships. The owner of the site initially introduced the site to his friends who were primarily members of the San Francisco business and technological community, including the investors and entrepreneurs who had found different SNSs later on. Ryze was a big influencing factor on Friendster. The people who are behind the sites like LinkedIn, Friendster, Tribe.net were personally
and professionally related. In the end, Ryze never got a mass popularity.

Friendster was launched in 2002. The main goal was to compete with a dating site called Match.com. While most of the dating sites target people on introducing to strangers with similar interests, Friendster was designed to help friends-of-friends meet. It was assumed the friends-of-friends would make more romantic dates rather than just totally random person. Users can contact other members, sustain those contacts, share videos, photos and messages.

In its first three months itself, the social networking website acquired 3 million users, amounting to 1 in 126 internet users being members at that time. As the popularity of Friendster’s gained heights, the site started to face technical difficulties along with social difficulties. Friendster’s databases and servers were not well sufficient to handle its rapid growth and hence it started to hinder the site. This started to frustrate users who started to use the Friendster to replace email. This had a kind of negative effects on the users who were planning to join it. The media had negative news for Friendster due to its inability to handle so many users. So new users were reluctant to join because of the media coverage. Also the existing users started to face social problems. At one time Friendster had many members, users had to face their bosses and some persons along with their close friends. So Friendster had to restrict the activities of their passionate users, which got bad impression on the users. In initial design of the Friendster, it
restricted the users from viewing profiles of the people who were for degrees away (Friends-Friends-Friends-Friends). As a result in order to make more contacts or view profiles, users started to check any profiles they came across. As a result people started to make fake profiles resembling various characters: Fictional, celebrities, concepts, etc. As a result, company started to remove fake profiles as a result users were restricted to within that four degrees level. The active deletion of fakesters (along with genuine users who preferred to choose non-realistic pictures) felt that the company did not share the users interests. As a result many of them started to leave Friendster. Already many of them had started not to use anymore because of the technical and social problems, reduced the popularity of the Friendster. Its popularity was fading in USA but it was reaching great height in Asian countries. One of the biggest bad luck was written in Friendster’s destiny when they turned down the offer of 30 million dollars offered by the Google. Fortune may have changed if Friendster would have accepted that offer. Friendster stumbled more when MySpace was launched around that time. MySpace got more features at a quick speed than Friendster and it was able to handle the traffic very well.

From 2003 onward there have been ample of SNSs sites developed. Many of the sites took the profile centric approaches, developing social network even among the strangers, few sites focused on building up the professional network such as LinkedIn. The major revolution came with the launch of MySpace in 2003. It had different
applications where users can even customize their own profile by adding different themes. It was build to compete sites like Friendster. Their major approach was to attract the users who had quit Friendster. After rumours spread that Friendster may take paid approach, users of Friendster posted messages encouraging people to join alternate SNSs like MySpace, Tribe.net. As a result MySpace was able to capture market rapidly. One particular band that helped to the promotion of the MySpace were indie-rock bands who were removed from the Friendster because they failed to follow the rules and the regulations of Friendster. MySpace welcomed them even though it was not designed specifically for them. As a result, the fan followers of the indie-bands became members of the MySpace. Local promoters started to use MySpace to advertise the passes for those bands. The popularity of the MySpace started to reach heights. MySpace also contacted to local musicians to show them how they can support them. Well this was not the only reason for the success of MySpace, it was their user friendly approach with their users. There were a lot of teenagers who were attracted to MySpace. Instead of rejecting users, MySpace developed policies for the minors. This was a great welcome approach. Along with them, college students were always a part of the fan following of MySpace to make social network. So MySpace created three main categories of users: Local bands or musicians, teenagers and college or post college graduates. In July 2005, MySpace was purchased by News Corporation. It attracted a great media attention. Though there were some issues in
MySpace such as sexual interactions between minors and the adults, prompting legal actions still the popularity did not fall.

In the following years, other social networking websites like Classmates.com, LinkedIn and Tribe.net started to pop up, including what was to be the most popular social networking website in internet history - FACEBOOK.

Facebook.com was launched in 2004 with the intent to connect U.S. college students, starting with Harvard College. This was probably another great revolution in the social networking world. In its first month, over half of the 19,500 students signed up. After gaining immense popularity, Facebook opened its registration to non-college students, and in 2008, Facebook surpassed MySpace as the leading social networking website. It caught the attention of almost every user. The best feature of Facebook is they develop new applications for the users from time to time according to the users. They have great technical team to support the millions of users requirements.

Another site which was launched almost as the same time as Facebook, though little bit early was Orkut by Google. Orkut was a big success in Brazil, India but not USA. Orkut was unique in his features but Facebook was quicker in developing applications than Orkut. LinkedIn was launched in 2003 but it reached profitability in 2006. It was not that famous in earlier stages. The site was launched with focus on building professional network. In 2006, another SNS was launched,
Twitter. It enables users to read and send messages known as Tweets. It is often called as the SMS of the internet.

**Timeline of the Launch Dates of the Major Social Networking Sites**

- **1997** • SixDegrees.com
- **2002** • Friendster
- **2003** • Myspace • Hi5
- **2004** • Facebook • Orkut • Flickr
- **2005** • Classmates
- **2006** • Twitter
- **2007** • Ibibo
- **2008** • Bharatstudent
- **2013** • Google plus

(Source: The Researcher)
Social networking has come a long way since 1978, and we will all witness its evolution for years to come, forever changing the way people connect with one another (Boyd & Ellison; 2007).

In 2013 the number of people who use social networking sites has reached to 1.73 billion and this number seems to be mounting day-by-day (Wikipedia.com). People join SNS because it gives them an opportunity to express their views, a feel of independence and self esteem. It’s just a quick way to create a virtual profile and connect with millions of users across the world. Social Networking Sites, therefore, facilitate communication, sharing between family and friends irrespective of any barriers.

**Types of Social Networking Sites**

There is an innumerable number of social networking sites empowered with various technological affordances. Besides, the cultures that emerge around these sites are varied. In this study ten major Social Networking Sites have been identified for a brief explanation. These include: Facebook, Orkut, Google plus, Myspace, Bharatstudent, Hi5, Twitter, Ibibo, Classmates.com and Friendster.

1. **Facebook**

Facebook is the most popular and frequently used social networking site. It is basically an online social networking site which derives its name from the colloquial name for the book given to students at the
start of the academic year by some American university administrations to help them to get to know each other. Facebook was founded in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates and fellow Harvard University students, Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes.

However, the founders had initially limited the website's membership to students of the University of Harvard only, but later they expanded it to colleges in the Boston area, the Ivy League, and Stanford University. It gradually added support for students at various other universities before it opened to high school students, and eventually to anyone by the age of 13 and above. Facebook now allows anyone who claims to be at least 13 years old to become a registered user of the website. The members of Facebook throughout the world have increased to 1.15 billion in 2013. As such, in January 2013, the countries with the most Facebook users were: United States with 168.8 million members, Brazil with 64.6 million members, India with 62.6 million members, Indonesia with 51.4 million members, and Mexico with 40.2 million members. That is why, a January 2009 Compete.com study ranked Facebook the most used social networking service by worldwide monthly active users.

2. Orkut

Orkut is a social networking site which is owned and operated by Google. The service is designed to help users meet new and old friends and maintain existing relationships. Orkut is available in 48
languages throughout the world enabling increased usage. The website is named after its creator, Google employee Orkut Büyükkökten. It is noteworthy that Orkut is one of the most visited websites in India and Brazil. As of October 2011, 59.1% of Orkut’s users were from Brazil, followed by India with 27.1% and Japan with 6.7%. As of October 2012, Alexa traffic ranked Orkut.com 746th and Orkut.com.br 738th in the world; the web site currently has over 33 million active users worldwide.

Orkut was launched on January 22, 2004 by Google. Yet it was Orkut Büyükkökten, a Turkish software engineer, who developed it as an independent project while working at Google. Prior to the 60th Independence Day of India, Orkut’s main page was revamped. The section which usually displayed a collage of photos of various people, showed a stylized Orkut logo. The word Orkut was written in Devanagiri script and was coloured in Indian national colours. However, the actual members of Orkut have decreased to 33 millions in the year of 2013.

3. Google Plus

Google Plus is another social networking and identity service that is owned and operated by Google Inc. It is the second-largest social networking site in the world, having surpassed Twitter in January 2013. It has approximately 359 million active users. As of May 2013, it had a total of 500 million registered users, of whom 235 million are active in a given month. Google has described Google+ as a "social
layer" that enhances many of its online properties, unlike conventional social networks generally accessed through a single website.

Thus Google+ aims to make sharing on the web more like sharing in real life. Google+ integrates social services such as Google Profiles, and initially introduced new services identified as Circles, Hangouts and Sparks. Two main strengths of Google+'s social site are photography and its "Hangout" feature. Moreover, Google+ is available as a website as well as on mobile devices. On May 14, 2013 a new version of Google+ was introduced. It is noteworthy that the New York Times has declared it as Google's biggest attempt to rival the social network Facebook.

4. Myspace

Myspace is a social networking site with a strong music emphasis which is owned by Specific Media LLC and pop music singer and actor Justin Timberlake. Myspace was launched in August 2003 and is headquartered in Beverly Hills, California. In June 2012, Myspace had 25 million unique U.S. visitors. In 2013 there are 50 million users of this site. Myspace was founded in 2003 and was acquired by News Corporation in July 2005 for $580 million. From 2005 until early 2008, Myspace was the most visited social networking site in the world, and in June 2006 it surpassed Google as the most visited website in the United States. In April 2008, Myspace was overtaken by Facebook in the number of unique worldwide visitors, and outshone the number of unique U.S. visitors in May 2009. Myspace generated $800 million in
revenue during the 2008 fiscal year. Since then, the number of Myspace users has declined steadily in spite of several redesigns.

As of June 2013, Myspace was ranked 303 by total web traffic and 223 in the United States. On September 24, 2012, Justin Timberlake, who has an ownership stake in the company, tweeted a link to a video showing a redesigned Myspace, which is dubbed the "new Myspace". During the months following Timberlake's tweet Myspace began its closed beta testing phase for new.myspace.com. A new feature is the streaming music player where users can queue songs, create mixes or playlists, or start a radio station from a song much like Pandora Radio. Around midnight on Sunday January 13, 2013, new Myspace entered its open beta phase. On 12 June 2013, Myspace announced the launch of a mobile app to accompany the new Myspace. The app allows users to listen to personal radio stations, as well as those created by artists. It also allows users to create animated GIF files, which is originally only available for the iPhone and the app is slated for future release on the Android mobile operating system.

5. Bharatstudent.com

Bharatstudent.com is a social utility that brings together all the young Indians living across the globe. It is India’s Largest Free Social Community Networking Site for Indian friends and Indian students. It is for every Young Indian who is a student or a non-student, fresh graduate, a working professional or an Entrepreneur, and is focused on
providing comprehensive solutions for any personal and professional issues. According to the Alexa Traffic ranks, Bharatstudent.com holds the ranking position of 553 worldwide for total internet traffic. It was started by Vishnu Vardhan Induri, Business Director funded by northgate ventures in the year 2007. It is basically a social networking site for Indian students living in India or abroad.

6. **Hi5**

Hi5 is a social networking site based in San Francisco, California. The company was founded in 2003 by Ramu Yalamanchi. In Hi5, users create an online profile in order to show information such as interests, age and hometown and upload user pictures where users can post comments. Hi5 also allows the user to create personal photo albums and set up a music player in the profile. In addition Users can send friend requests via e-mail to other users. When a person receives a friend request, he or she may accept or decline it, or block the user altogether. If the user accepts another user as a friend, the two will be connected directly or in the 1st degree. As of December 2007, Hi5 had over 98 million members. By 2008, comScore reported that Hi5 had become the third most popular social networking site in terms of monthly unique visitors. Bill Gossmann was appointed as CEO in April 2009, and since that time, Hi5 has refocused itself as a social gaming platform and opened itself to new game developers. Gaming industry veteran Alex St. John joined the company as President and CEO in November 2009, and in early 2010, Hi5 acquired social gaming
company Big Six. The company raised $20 million in series. A venture capital was also gained from Mohr Davidow Ventures, as well as $15 million in venture debt, in 2007, and announced it had raised $3 million convertible note from existing investor Mohr Davidow, bringing the funding up to $38 million. Quantcast reports shows that Hi5 has 2.7 million monthly US visitors and 46.1 million global visitors. Software-industry veteran Karen Richardson has served as chairwoman of the company’s board since 2008.

The social networking site, Tagged, purchased Hi5 for an undisclosed amount. Due to Hi5’s shift in focus to social gaming, comScore reclassified Hi5 as an online gaming site in early 2011. According to comScore, Hi5 ranked as the 6th most trafficked online gaming site. Although it was created and headquartered in the United States, it is more popular in other countries, particularly in Latin America, being ranked 37th in the world only among people who have the Alexa toolbar installed on their browser but only 84th in the US. In 2013 the total number of members has increased to 80 millions on this site.

7. Twitter

Twitter is an online Social Networking Site with micro blogging service that enables users to send and read "tweets", which are text messages limited to 140 characters. Registered users can read and post tweets while unregistered users can only read them. Users access Twitter through the website interface, SMS, or mobile device app. Twitter Inc. is
based in San Francisco and has offices in New York City, Boston, San Antonio and Detroit. As such Twitter was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass and by July 2006, the site was launched. The service rapidly gained worldwide popularity, with 500 million registered users in 2012, who posted 340 million tweets per day. The service also handled 1.6 billion search queries per day. Twitter is now one of the ten most visited websites, and has been described as "the SMS of the Internet."

Therefore the company experienced rapid growth. It had 400,000 tweets posted per quarter in 2007 but this grew to 100 million tweets posted per quarter in 2008. In February 2010, Twitter users were sending 50 million tweets per day. By March 2010, the company recorded over 70,000 registered applications. As of June 2010, about 65 million tweets were posted each day, equalling about 750 tweets sent each second, according to Twitter. As of March 2011, that was about 140 million tweets posted daily. As noted on Compete.com, Twitter moved up to the third-highest-ranking social networking site in January 2009 from its previous rank of twenty-second. As of September 2013, the company’s data showed that 200 million users send over 400 million tweets daily, with nearly 60% of tweets sent from mobile devices. There are 200 million active members on twitter in 2013. Overall it shows that Twitter is a very famous and frequently used social networking site in a number of countries.
8. Ibibo

Ibibo stands for iBuild, iBond and it is an Indian social networking site. It is an umbrella site that offers a variety of applications under its social network. The services offered by this networking site include games, blogs, photo unlimited storage, mail, messenger, videos, free SMS service, mail, polls and surveys. Ibibo Group is an E-commerce and online transactions organization in India. The group owns a) Online travel businesses such as "Goibibo.com"; redBus.in b) Payment platform: payu.in c) Marketplace platform: Tradus.com and d) Auto classifieds platform: Gaadi.com. Ibibo which stands for iBuild, iBond, started as an Indian social networking site in 2007 and in 2009 pivoted to a full scale e-Commerce organization. Ibibo was founded in January 2007 by Ashish Kashyap, a former Head of Indian Sales and Operations for Google. Mr Kashyap currently serves as the company's Group CEO.

9. Classmates.com

Classmates.com is a social networking service created in 2005 by Randy Conrads who founded Classmates Online, Inc. The social media website was originally designed to assist members in finding friends and classmates from kindergarten, primary school, high school, college, work and the United States military. According to the Online Publishers Association Paid Content U.S, Market Spending Report, Classmates.com was Number 4 among the Top 25 Web Destinations Ranked by Consumer Content Revenue in both 2002 and 2003. In 2006, television program The View mentioned Classmates.com
as having more than 40 million members in United States and Canada. In 2010, CEO Mark Goldston described the transition of the website "to increasingly focus on nostalgic content" such as "high school yearbooks, movie trailers, music tracks, and photographic images."

In order to appeal more to older users, the name of the website was changed to Memory Lane, which included a website redesign. However, in November 2010, Classmates was not among the top 10 social networking websites and forums, as measured by Hitwise. Alexa.com shows Classmates.com to be the 4,211 most visited website on March 12, 2011, falling from the top 1,000 as recently as January 2010. Classmates.com was one of the first social networks yet its habit of continuously dunning customers for small fees prevented it from reaching the scale and popularity of later social sites.

**10. Friendster**

Friendster was founded in 2002 and is based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Before the site was redesigned, the service allowed users to contact other members, maintain those contacts, and share online content and media with those contacts. The website was also used for dating and discovering new events, bands, and hobbies. Users could share videos, photos, messages and comments with other members via their profile and their network. It was considered one of the original and even the "granddaddy" of social networks. The service became popular in Southeast Asia and is a major site in that region of the world. Since the re launch of Friendster as a social gaming platform
in June 2011, the number of registered users has reached over 115 million. The company now operates mainly from three Asian countries; the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore, and over 90% of the site’s traffic comes from Asia. As of 2008, Friendster had more monthly unique visitors than any other social network in Asia. The top 5 countries accessing Friendster, according to Alexa, as of May 7, 2009 were the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and India.

Today Friendster is still notably popular in Indonesia and the Philippines. Friendster is the first social network to support both the Open Social and the Facebook Platform. In December 2009, Friendster relaunched its website with a new interface. In 2010 the total number of members using Friendster was 8.2 million.

**Growth and Development of Social Networking Sites in India**

With the arrival of the liberalization era, India embraced the innovations occurring around the world. With increasing numbers of educated people and access of Internet, the usage of Social Networking Sites has been significantly fostered in India. Will Hodgman rightly says that “Social Networking continued strongly in India, with several of the top global brands carving out a more prominent position”. Further he continues to add that “the Social Networking phenomenon continues to gain steam worldwide, and India represents one of the fastest growing markets at this moment”; “while there is certainly room for several
players in this social networking space in India, the Social Networking Sites that have the right blend of both a strong brand and cultural relevance will be best positioned for future growth”.

Today India ranks as the third largest users of Social Networking Sites, after U. S. and China. Currently (2013) there are 127.5 millions of Social Networking Site users in India. It is projected that the total number of users will double in just four years (282.9 million in 2017). “The social web appears to have gone beyond supplementing communication. Online Indians today are using social media to facilitate activities that range from leisure like entertainment, improving their livelihood through job searches and researching prospective partners,” said Suhale Kapoor, EVP, Absolute Data.

However, the comparison of Indian usage of Social Networking Sites with the usage of world level is rather disappointing. The number of users of Social Networking Sites around the world in 2013 was 1.73 billion. Further, the growth rate of Social Networking Sites in India is always slow compared to other developing countries due to several factors, which are; lack of internet access, conservative mindsets of many Indian families, illiteracy, poverty, lack of flexibility among the Social Networking Websites and so on.

Moreover, research shows that about 80% of all internet users visit one social networking site or another with Facebook and Twitter being top in their list. The same research also shows that less than 5% of the Indian population have access to the internet and hence are not
privy to the interactions on these sites. One of the reasons for this segregation is that most of the Social Networking Sites are not offered in languages other than English. Therefore, researchers expect the next boom in social networking to happen when this facility is made available in regional languages. It maybe this aspect which hinders the usage of these sites by many who are not conversant with English.

It is also true that in India the maximum numbers of internet users do not hail from the corporate class but come from the middle-income group or youngsters excited to share their life experiences with friends. Hence, at present pace of growth of Social Networking Sites in India is on the increase, particularly among college students. Students are more prone to social media; as a result the latter has a major role to play in the overall development and relationship patterns. Therefore, the future of the country is in the hands of youth who in turn are influenced by the social media.

**Conclusion**

Social networking sites have become a mainstream medium for thousands of teens and adults from all around the world including India. These sites encourage and enable people to exchange information about themselves, share pictures or videos, and use blogs and private messaging to communicate with friends, others who share interests and at times even the world at large. Networking websites function like an online community of internet users. Depending on the website in
question, many of these online community members share a common interest such as hobbies, religion, or politics.

Overall, Social Networking Sites are important tools of communication, entertainment and sharing in this era. As such there has been considerable rise in its usage especially in the Indian Society. As a matter of fact, the youngsters are more prone to be involved in Social Networking sites than any other group. Social Networking Sites facilitate sharing of information, increasing contacts and so on. Yet a drastic change has been noticed pertaining to the usage of Social Networking Sites in relation to interpersonal relationships among this age group.

Human beings are intrinsically curious by nature and have the propensity to be always forward looking; dwelling in the past is not acceptable to him. Hence, humans have the characteristic of evolving in various aspects among which technological development forms part. Internet is the most recent and unique invention in the history of humankind. Certainly Internet has facilitated the lives of humans enormously through the plethora of advantages it provides. Internet has enabled social interaction through Social Networking Sites. The most popular Social Networking Sites are Facebook, Orkut, Twitter, Google plus and many others. Through these networking sites a person can engage in innumerable activities such as sharing videos and pictures, having access to national as well as international contacts, and so on.
India, as a developing country, has also incorporated the technological developments along with maintaining its core traditions. Social Media or SNS are symbols of the New Age revolution bringing lot more than such a mere medium of communication. It can be said that SNS has turned to be a social phenomenon affecting every superstructure of society along with its members. Hence, it is primordial to study the interpersonal relationships in Indian Society pertaining to Social Networking Sites in order to understand the phenomenon in a social context.

This chapter provides a brief description of Social Networking Sites and Social Network along with some theoretical perspectives. Also this section illustrates the purposes as well as uses of Social Networking Sites. From this aspect the rapid propagation of Social Media can be better understood. The history and types of Social Networking Sites have been extensively described in this third chapter. This, as a result, presents a clear view about the most popular networking sites and the reason/s for being so. As the present study on networking sites is located in Indian Society it is necessary to investigate its growth and development in India. Interpersonal relationships in Indian social sections are being affected by this phenomenon and hence this study attempts to understand the way SNS function in India.
References


