What Topics Social Networkers' Discuss Upon Social Network Sites

Rahul Sharma

Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India.
Email: rahul.12234@lpu.co.in

ABSTRACT: *In the past few years, social networking platforms have been established as a mode of communication using which a huge number of people are getting connected online. Online social networking platforms act as mediums of supportive communication, thus enabling information sharing between users. People are using online social platforms to discuss multiple type of topics online. The need of the hour is to identify the topics which are most talked about over social network platforms. This will help marketers in matching their advertising content with the most preferred topics by social network users. Topics related to school/college stuff and personal issues are found to be most discussed ones on social networking platforms.*
Keywords: social networking, online platforms, Social Networkers, Online topics, India

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, social networking platforms have been established as a mode of communication using which a huge number of people are getting connected online. Social interaction and communiqué has transformed considerably since the advent of platforms like Facebook and MySpace etc. (Lee & Conroy, 2005). The social networks are allowing and enabling people with even basic computer function understanding to become an originator (Gupta, S., & Bashir, L. 2018). Waves of new social networking tools are made available to interested users who can now stay connected to share as much or as little as they want without accessing their emails. This has led to the augmented dependence of companies on Internet as a customer service and marketing instrument. The reason behind the same can be attributed to the fact that most people can be found spending their time online these days (Bhanodia et al., 2020). Every latest update is up there on the social web even before it spreads on the traditional media and therefore, it is almost intolerable to frame a inclusive marketing plan in the nonexistence of social networks (Khamparia et al., 2020) The need of the hour is to identify the topics which are most talked about over social network platforms. This will help marketers in matching their advertising content with the most preferred topics by social network users (Pandey, et al., 2019)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Online social networks are acting as crucial components to maintain existing social connection (Ellison, et al., 2007) and to create new ones. Social networks being the part of social media are available to masses at free or almost negligible financial costs. This property of online social network websites act as a big catalyst in their wide spread usage (Rathakrishnan et al., 2019). Numerous researches had been conducted regarding usage pattern of social networking sites worldwide including India, but particularly in Punjab, there has been negligible research on the topics discussed on social network sites (Beri, N. 2018). Facebook is amongst the most popular online network service with four out of five students using it (Hargittai, 2008). College students spend approximately half an hour on Facebook in their daily schedule in order to connect with offline friends in the online world (Pempek, et

al., 2009). The study also registered activities like reading other persons profile, surfing through photos and reading friends news feed were most common activities performed by college students as users of social networking sites (Saha et al., 2015). Extracting the information of other social networkers has been found as a more keenly done activity by users than just any other activity like doing browsing over social network sites (Wise, et al., 2010). To understand the activities performed by the users on social networking site (Shambare, et al., 2012) undertook a study in which activities like chat/messaging, meeting new friends, downloading or sharing music/videos, playing games, doing homework, viewing other people profiles have been studied. (Ophus & Abbit, 2009) in a study with the intention to trace usage patterns for online networks among education institute participants selected 110 undergraduates, among whom 107 females and 3 male were selected. Out of the total 110 social networking site users, approximately 96 percent of users logged into their online network profile at least once a day. Majority of users were using their social networking site as a tool to communicate with existing known people. In order to get insights about activities performed by the social networking users over social networks, (Cohen, 2012) studied user participation in different politically motivated activities. The results depicted that topics related to society are among the major discussion topics in online networks. 35 % users encourage friends to vote using social networking sites. Users were also found posting links to political stories, liking or follow elected officials and encouraging friends to talk related to political issues. To maintain a social profile on a social network site is part of daily life for continuously growing number of Internet users, social networking sites explicitly aim at supporting people in maintaining existing and establish new relationships (Sharma, R., & Verma, R. 2015). Based on the above reviews, one can gain an understanding that there are different types of topics of user interest, which are associated with online social networking websites.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the present study, descriptive research design was used.

3.1 The study population: In the present study, three online social networks from India were considered i.e. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Punjab (state) from India being one of the most promising populations with present and future internet usage has been considered for present research. The scope of this research was narrowed to Punjab state of India, so that the objectives under study come into sharp focus. The population of the study consisted of all internet users having an account with any of the three online social networking sites.

3.2 Sample size and selection: Sample survey was conducted for the purpose of present study to collect first hand data from respondents. Considering the vast size of universe under purview for this study and having focus on the quantitative character of data, sample survey method was chosen. A total of 388 social networkers from Punjab were the respondents for the study. This sample size was calculated considering the study population of 14,95,800 internet users i.e. 5.4% of total population of 2.77 crore (Government of Punjab, 2014) of Punjab at 95% confidence interval. In order to select the sample from population under study, non-probabilistic sampling technique of purposive sampling was used.

3.3 The research instrument: The instrument used for this study was prepared after a thorough review of literature. Questions included in this section related to the topics discussed by users over social networks. The items for this part of the instrument were adapted from the (Sensis, 2011) and (Chu, 2009).

3.4 Administration of the instrument: The questionnaire was administered online using the online data collection system of surveymonkey. A survey link was generated after putting the questions in the form of surveymonkey. This survey link was shared on online social networking sites using the network of researcher. Every three days, the survey link was re-shared by researcher. Other than online networks, e-mail services were also used to administer the questionnaire.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Users of social networking sites most frequently discuss about their college or school stuff. Nearly 60 percent of the users of social networking discuss college related issues with others using social networking platforms. After topics related to college/school stuff next most commonly topic is of personal issues on social networking sites (Bhargav, M., & Bhargav, A. 2014). It has been observed that out of 1000 respondents approximately 45 percent of the social networkers most frequently discuss about personal issues on social networking sites. These personal issues includes from state of emotional being to visit to places to personal achievements.

Table 1: Topics discussed on social networking sites

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Music	2.8310	1.21899
Fashion	2.7150	1.22527
Gossip	2.9830	1.22320
News	3.1430	1.14973
Brands	2.9400	1.21403
Political issues	2.6950	1.22943
Personal Issues	3.1840	1.20980
Professional Issues	3.0260	1.15960
School/college stuff	3.5760	1.12761
Social events like parties	3.0690	1.20735
Home décor	2.1650	1.07281
Computer games	2.2930	1.21681
Sports	2.7150	1.28508
Social Issues	2.8770	1.27181

Table 2: Frequency of topics discussed on social networking sites

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
Music	175	216	312	197	100
Fashion	186	276	274	165	99
Gossip	145	214	261	273	107
News	81	219	313	250	137
Brands	147	222	280	246	105

Political issues	195	279	252	184	90
Personal Issues	111	185	251	315	138
Professional Issues	120	204	301	280	95
School/College Stuff	61	106	253	356	224
Social events	130	184	295	269	122
Home Decor	332	317	233	90	28
Computer Games	340	270	200	137	53
Sports	222	241	238	198	101
Social Issues	177	227	257	220	119

In the order of descending frequency the next topics discussed on social networking sites include news and social events like parties. 38 percent of social networkers discuss news related topics where as just a bit less percent of nearly 37.5 share about social events like parties. After these comes the professional issues and brand related topics. The least discussed topic on social networking sites by users is related to home décor which is followed by computer games. Approximately 12 percent of the social networkers frequently discussed about home décor related things and 19 percent of the people discuss about computer games related issues. So basically it can be said that two most discussed topics over social networking sites by social networkers are school/college stuff and personal issues (Kumar, P. 2019). On the other hand least discussed topic is of home décor.

No significant difference between males and females has been observed in discussion of topics related to news, brands, personal and professional issues and social events like parties on online social networks (Sharma et al., 2020). But there exists a significant difference in case of topics related to music, fashion, gossip, political issues, home décor, computer games, sports and social issues (Chandel et al., 2017). Females have been observed to be more inclined to discuss more of music, fashion, and home décor related items and tend to do more gossip also in online social networks. On the other hand males have been observed to be more interested in talking about political issues, computer games, sports and social issues like corruption.

There is a significant difference between topics discussed on online social networks across people of different marital status. In all the stated social network discussion topics, users who are unmarried tend to participate more as compared to user who are married.

5. CONCLUSION

Home décor related things are least discussed by social networkers. This indicates home décor companies/brands need to excite users to start talking about such topics. This can happen by paid advertisements on social networking sites by the home décor brands. In India for home décor mostly elderly females are responsible in families and such category of people is not using social networking sites. Mostly discussed topics over social networking sites are school/college stuff and personal issues.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Like most other studies, this study also does not offer limitation less explanation of the issues under study. Present research study has been carried out under restraints of time and other resources. Through broad review of literature an effort to assimilate all obtainable literature was made, yet understanding may have been reserved by the visualization of researcher.

REFERENCES

Lee, C. K. & Conroy, D. M., 2005. Socialisation through consumption: teenagers and the internet. *Australasian Marketing Journal,* vol.13, no.1, pp. 8-19.

Boyd, D. M. & Ellison, N. B., 2007. Social network sites: definition, history and scholarship.. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication,* vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 210–230.

Hargittai, E., 2008. Whose Space? differences among users and non-users of social network sites. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication,* pp. 276–297.

Pempek, T. A., Yermolayeva, Y. A. & Calvert, S. L., 2009. College students' social networking experiences on Facebook. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology,* pp. 227-238.

Wise, K., Alhabash, S. & Park, H., 2010. Emotional responses during social information seeking on Facebook. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking,* pp. 55-62.

Shambare, R., Rugimbana, R. & Sithole, N., 2012. Social networking habits among students. *African Journal of Business Management,* pp. 578-786.

Ophus, J. D., & Abbitt, J. T. (2009). Exploring the potential perceptions of social networking systems in university courses. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, *5*(4), 639-648.

Cohen, D., 2012. *http://allfacebook.com.* [Online] Available at: http://allfacebook.com/pew-research-eight-political-activities_b102661 [Accessed 30 July 2019].

Government of Punjab, 2014. *Know Punjab.* [Online] Available at: http://punjab.gov.in/know-punjab

Nielsen, 2012. *Australian online consumer report,* s.l.: Sensis.

Cheung, M. C., Chui, P. Y. & Lee, M. K., 2011. Online social networks: why do students use facebook?. *Computers in Human Behavior, vol. 27, p*p. 1337–1343.

Bhanodia, P. K., Khamparia, A., & Pandey, B. (2020). An Approach to Predict Potential Edges in Online Social Networks. In *Data Science and Security* (pp. 1-6). Springer, Singapore.

Khamparia, A., Pande, S., Gupta, D., Khanna, A., & Sangaiah, A. K. (2020). Multi-level framework for anomaly detection in social networking. *Library Hi Tech*.

Pandey, B., Bhanodia, P. K., Khamparia, A., & Pandey, D. K. (2019). A comprehensive survey of edge prediction in social networks: Techniques, parameters and challenges. *Expert Systems with Applications*, *124*, 164-181.

Rathakrishnan, B., Wani, M. A., Yahaya, S. A. B. A., Singh, S., Manish, B. S. M. R. K., & Verma, K. (2019). Factors of Social Networking Towards the Development of Self-Esteem, Social Skills and Learning Behavior Among Adolescents. *people*, *15*(41), 32-70.

Beri, N. (2018). Academic performance, social adjustment and emotional intelligence of students involved in social networking sites. *Indian Journal of Public Health Research & Development*, *9*(11), 1971-1976.

Gupta, S., & Bashir, L. (2018). Social Networking Usage Questionnaire: Development and Validation in an Indian Higher Education Context. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, *19*(4), 214-227.

Saha, R., Geetha, G., & Kumar, G. (2015). Probabilistic relation between triadic closure and the balance of social networks in presence of influence. *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning (IJCBPL)*, *5*(4), 53-61.

Sharma, R., & Verma, R. (2015). Social networkers' motivation to use online social networking sites: Implications for leveraging digital marketing. *International journal of applied business and economic research*, *13*(5), 1159-1171.

Bhargav, M., & Bhargav, A. (2014, July). Mining relationships from text in social networking sites. In *2014 International Conference on Control, Instrumentation, Communication and Computational Technologies (ICCICCT)* (pp. 31-35). IEEE.

Kumar, P. (2019). Purchasing Criteria for Apparels among Indian Consumers. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, *49*(1), 48-60.

Sharma, P., Gupta, S., & Kapoor, D. (2020). Digital Marketing and Consumer Millennials: A Comparative Study of Men, Women, and Transgender Consumers' Buying Behaviour in Punjab. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, *50*(3), 47-57.

Chandel, A., Sethi, A., & Mishra, P. (2017). A comparative study of Facebook marketing practices of selected theme based restaurants in India. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, *47*(12), 51-63.