

Proliferation and Diminution of Social Media Usage for Civic Engagement by NGOs

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Abstract

The current study has analyzed the factors responsible for the proliferation and decrease of social media usage for civic engagement viz. volunteerism. Before determining the use of social media it is important to know what hinders Internet usage. So, effect of other media usage (print, television, telephone, radio and face to face communication) on frequency of Internet usage was determined on weekdays and weekends. Gamma test was used to determine the kind of relation between frequency of different media usage and Internet usage. Statistical analysis proved that spending time on any other media does not lower the frequency of Internet usage on both weekdays and weekends. Four factors were studied those may initiate people to volunteer such as learning volunteerism from parents, affiliation of religion/ community , learning volunteerism from friends and self-motivation. Friedman test proved that most of the respondents volunteer because they are 'self- motivated' to help others while 'learning volunteerism from friends' motivated them least to participate in offline civic engagement. Effect of various factors on online civic engagement is also measured such as previous offline civic engagement, lack of time, perception regarding the utility of social media for volunteerism, non- usage of social media by other members of the NGO and computer proficiency. Friedman test was used to determine the most dominant factor responsible for online civic engagement. Results revealed that among these five factors 'previous offline civic engagement' of the respondents motivated them most to use social media for civic

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engagement. On the other hand, online civic engagement has embraced the diminution because of 'non- usage of social media by other members of the NGO'. Friedman test was again used to determine the features of social media which deterred and promoted civic participation. Analysis revealed that 'Affordability' as a feature of social media has motivated NGOs most and 'anonymity of identity' discouraged the most to use this medium for civic engagement. Results of the current study are also linked with theories such as self- determination theory and theory of evolution.

Keywords: Civic engagement, social media, volunteerism and NGOs

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INTRODUCTION

The present study has determined the factors responsible for the proliferation and decrease of Internet usage, offline civic engagement and social media usage for civic engagement viz. volunteerism. These factors include the time spent on other media, pre-existing affiliations, different features of social media, computer proficiency, previous offline civic engagement, lack of time, perception regarding the utility of social media and non- usage of social media by other members of the NGO/ civic group.

Before focusing on social media usage for volunteerism, the current study has analyzed what hinders the Internet usage. So, effect of various media usage such as print media, television, telephone, radio and face to face communication on Internet usage was determined. Internet is divided into three categories such as web 1.0, web 2.0 and web 3.0. Web 1.0 allows its users to view the content only and most of the users are the 'consumers' of the content and not the 'participants'. Example of web 1.0 is static websites those allow users to read the content only. On the contrary, the term 'web 2.0' is formulated with the concept of 'user generated content' because user can generate and alter the content as they can be 'participants'. Social media comes under web 2.0 because it allows users to 'engage' in civic issues.

Online engagement has become possible only after the emergence of social media because its interactivity features allow users to generate the content. The term ‘engagement’ has come into being only after the invention of social media because one needs to put efforts to engage and it is not like television which does not require active participation of the user. This is the reason that the current study has analyzed the role of different features of social media in encouraging civic participation of NGOs.

FICCI- KMPG, Indian Media and Entertainment Industry report 2013 reveals that since 2013 there were 226 million Internet users in India and they are expected to reach over 496 million by 2017. On other hand, worldwide social media accounts were 3505 million since 2013 and expected to reach over 4870 million by 2016. So, when there is huge population of social media users in India as well as worldwide and it is expected to increase in future, it becomes pertinent to study the media usage trends by NGOs.

Ahmed and Jaidka (2013) analyzed 104059 tweets concerning Delhi gang rape case on Twitter; a micro blogging site. These researchers analyzed the tweets since the beginning of the news outbreak. Their research focused on inter and intra- group communication and information dissemination. They found that social media actually transformed ‘consumers’ into ‘producers’ as they used Twitter like citizen journalists.

Anwer and Shrinivasan (2012) also discussed one of the incidents in their news report that how a 19 year old girl used social media during protest. They said that it was the time of protest when police arrested agitators and among them a girl used Twitter on her mobile phone and asked for help. She continually tweeted every move that how she was being put into van then they reached at police station. It was noticed that within few hours more than thousand people retweeted her and very soon this message reached over 2 lakh people. The result was that media, lawyers and activists reached at police station to rescue protestors. So, considering social media importance for the promotion of civic engagement the current study has analyzed the factors what actually hinders its usage by NGOs.

OBJECTIVES

- To determine whether other media usage (print, television, telephone, radio and face to face communication) deters or increases the frequency of Internet usage on both weekdays and weekends.
- To analyze whether pre-existing affiliations such as learning volunteerism from parents, friends, religion/ community and self-motivation promote/ discourage offline civic engagement.
- To investigate whether computer proficiency, previous offline civic engagement, lack of time, perception regarding the utility of social media for volunteerism and non - usage of social media by other members of the NGO/ civic group promote, initiate/ discourage NGOs to use social media for civic engagement.
- To examine which feature of social media deters and increases the online civic engagement of NGOs.

METHODOLOGY

Structured questionnaire was prepared to interview the heads of NGOs. A Sample of 60 NGOs was selected from Tricity of Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali. Snowball sampling method was used to select the sample for the study as the subject involved use of Internet based media by the NGOs.

Theoretical Perspective

The first theory Self- determination theory was used to know what actually motivates people to volunteer. Self- determination theory is a macro theory of human motivation, personality development and well being. This theory was initially developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in 1985. Theorists say that all human beings have fundamental needs and if basic needs are satisfied then people act with a sense of full endorsement and volition. 'Social contexts also effect the need satisfaction as well as type of motivation'. Social contexts are of two types; 'proximal interpersonal contexts' and 'distal contexts'. 'Proximal interpersonal contexts' includes the behavior of people's parents, teachers, friends, managers, physicians and coaches. So, on this basis the current study assumed that behavior of

parents actually affect the human motivation means respondents learnt altruistic behavior from their parents, friends and community.

Theory of evolution also discusses the same point. It is known as ‘theory of natural selection’ and proposed by Charles Darwin in his book ‘the Origin of Species’ in 1859. Darwin observed that offspring inherit most of the traits or habits from their parents than anyone else. Except Darwin, George Johann Mendel (1866) also discussed the concept of ‘inheritance’ though Darwin did not notice his concept. Darwin also asserted that ‘any variation which is not inherited is unimportant for us. Further criticizing Darwin theory, Newman, H. H. (*ibid*) says, “Our modern experimental studies have shown that somatic modifications due to environmental changes are not hereditary (p.386).” This theory is basically from science field and has been written many years ago. It clearly discusses the concept of altruism and claims that altruism can be inherited from parents. So, on the basis of the theory it is assumed that people learn and inherit altruism from their parents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results related to the four objectives. The contradictory and supporting review of literature and theoretical perspective are also discussed with the results.

Frequency of various media usage affecting Internet usage

This section starts with determining the effect of various media usage on frequency of Internet usage on both weekdays and weekends. Gamma test was used for statistical analysis. Data on weekdays proved that spending time on telephone, radio, television, print media and face to face communication does not lower the frequency of Internet usage. Results also revealed that time spent on telephone, radio, television, print media and face to face communication on a weekend does not deter the frequency of Internet usage. The results in detail are discussed in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Time spent on other media deters/ increases the frequency of Internet usage on a weekday

Print and Internet on a Weekday							
Print	<20 min	20-60 min	60-120 min	>120 min	Total	P value	Gamma value
<20 min	0	2	1	1	4		
20-60 min	0	7	6	7	20	.473	.121
60-120 min	1	9	4	4	18		
>120 min	0	3	3	7	13		
Television and Internet on a Weekday							
Television	<20 min	20-60 min	60-120 min	>120 min	Total	P value	Gamma value
<20 min	0	2	1	0	3		
20-60 min	0	7	6	10	23	.811	-.043
60-120 min	0	9	3	3	15		
>120 min	1	3	3	5	12		
Radio and Internet on a Weekday							
Radio	<20 min	20-60 min	60-120 min	>120 min	Total	P value	Gamma value
<20 min	0	1	0	0	1		
20-60 min	0	2	2	5	9	.651	.179
60-120 min	0	0	1	1	2		
>120 min	0	2	0	3	5		
Telephone and Internet on a Weekday							
Telephone	<20 min	20-60 min	60-120 min	>120 min	Total	P value	Gamma value
<20 min	0	0	0	0	0		
20-60 min	0	8	5	2	15	.493	.114
60-120 min	0	6	3	10	19		
>120 min	1	7	6	6	20		
Face to Face Communication and Internet on a Weekday							
Face to Face Communication	<20 min	20-60 min	60-120 min	>120 min	Total	P value	Gamma value
<20 min	0	2	0	2	4		
20-60 min	0	3	2	3	8	.789	-.072
>120 min	1	16	12	14	43		

To determine the kind of relationship between frequency of different media usage and frequency of Internet usage, gamma test was used. Analysis proved that in case of print, television, radio, telephone and face to face communication p value is greater than .05 which led to the rejection of alternate hypothesis and acceptance of null hypothesis. Results revealed that there is a weak positive relationship between frequency of Internet usage and print, radio and telephone usage on a weekday. So, weak relationship is considered as 'no relationship'. On the other hand, face to face communication and television share the negative weak relationship with Internet because gamma value is negative. Here, also weak relation is equal to 'no relation'. Even p value is greater than .05 which proved that both the variables are equal. Results in detail are discussed in Table 1.

Many researchers have also conducted the research to determine the effect of time spent of different media on Internet usage. These researchers have not done the analysis on basis of weekend and weekday. For instance Shah et al. (2002) have found that 'time spent with other media' does not decrease the Internet usage. While Shah, Kwak and Holbert (2001) said that people who spend more time on television eventually use very less Internet for civic engagement.

Gamma test was used to determine the effect of other media usage on frequency of Internet usage on a weekday. In case of telephone, analysis has shown the positive relationship between two variables because gamma value is .197 (19.7 %). So, there is a positive weak relationship between frequency of telephone and Internet usage. Weak relationship means that time spent on telephone increases the frequency of Internet usage but weak relationship is equivalent to no relationship. In such cases results may vary if sample size is increased. Though the relationship is weak data has proved that time spent on telephone does not deter the frequency of Internet usage. In case of radio, again analysis has shown the 0.40% positive relationship between two variables which is equivalent to 'no' relationship.

Table 2 Time spent on other media deters/ increases the frequency of Internet usage on a weekend

Telephone and Internet on a Weekend							
Telephone	<20 min	20-60 min	60-120 min	>120 min	Total	P value	Gamma value
<20 min	0	0	0	0	0		
20-60 min	1	10	3	5	19	.239	.197
60-120 min	0	6	4	7	17		
>120 min	1	3	10	4	18		
Radio and Internet on a Weekend							
Radio	<20 min	20-60 min	60-120 min	>120 min	Total	P value	Gamma value
<20 min	0	1	0	0	1		
20-60 min	0	3	0	4	7	0.915	.040
60-120 min	0	1	2	0	3		
>120 min	0	2	0	2	4		
Print and Internet on a Weekend							
Print	<20 min	20-60 min	60-120 min	>120 min	Total	P value	Gamma value
<20 min	0	1	1	1	3	.073	.302
20-60 min	1	8	3	3	15		
60-120 min	1	6	9	5	21		
>120 min	0	4	4	7	15		
Television and Internet on a Weekend							
Television	<20 min	20-60 min	60-120 min	>120 min	Total	P value	Gamma value
<20 min	0	3	1	0	4		
20-60 min	0	7	4	8	19	.544	.111
60-120 min	0	6	7	2	15		
>120 min	2	2	4	6	14		
Face to Face Communication and Internet on a Weekend							
Face to Face Communication	<20 min	20-60 min	60-120 min	>120 min	Total	P value	Gamma value
<20 min	1	0	0	0	1		
20-60 min	0	0	1	2	3	.374	-.242
60-120 min	0	2	2	3	7		
>120 min	1	17	14	11	43		

Further in case of radio and television again the relationship is weak positive. On the contrary, face to face communication and Internet shares a negative relationship because gamma value is $-.242$ (24.2 %) and p value = $.374$. Again this relationship is weak negative and equivalent to no relationship. P value is also accepting the null hypothesis. Thus it proved that spending time on any other media does not lower the frequency of Internet usage. Results in detail with p and gamma value of every variable are discussed in Table 2.

Impetus and deterrent factors for online and offline civic engagement

The initial study has considered it important to determine factors encouraging people to volunteer as well as factors initiating volunteers to use social media for civic engagement. Four factors were studied those may initiate people to volunteer such as learning volunteerism from parents, friends, religion/ community and self-motivation. Effect of various factors on online civic engagement is also measured. These factors are previous offline civic engagement, lack of time, perception regarding the utility of social media for volunteerism, non- usage of social media by other members of the NGO and computer proficiency. So, this section determines the factors responsible for both offline and online civic engagement.

Figure 1 Mean ranks of ‘Pre-existing affiliations’ responsible for offline civic engagement

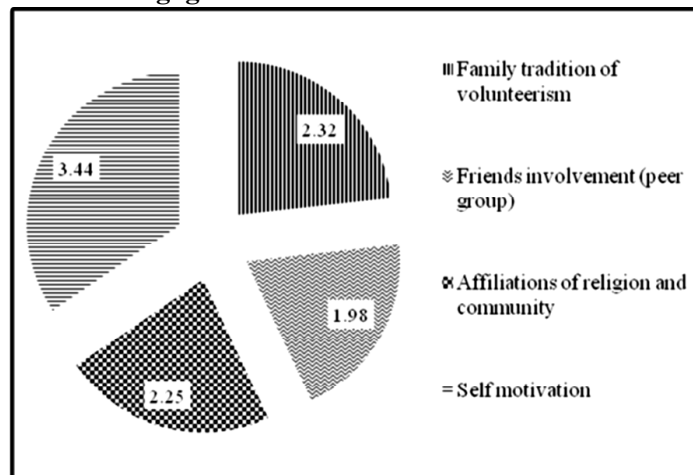


Figure1 explains the pre-existing affiliations responsible for offline civic engagement. Friedman test was used to determine the major impetus and deterrent factor. Friedman test gave the p value= .000 which means that there is difference between variables. Friedman proved that most of the respondents volunteer because they are self- motivated to help others. After self- motivation, ‘learning volunteerism from parents’ have high mean rank and the lowest mean rank is of learning volunteerism from friends.

Barber, Mueller, & Ogata (2013) also determined the level of civic participation of students aged between 12 to 18. Researchers have found that Parents’ civic engagement also encouraged students to participate in civic issues. Their study also revealed that self- determination plays a major role in encouraging students to participate in civic issues.

Figure 2 Means ranks of factors promoting online civic engagement

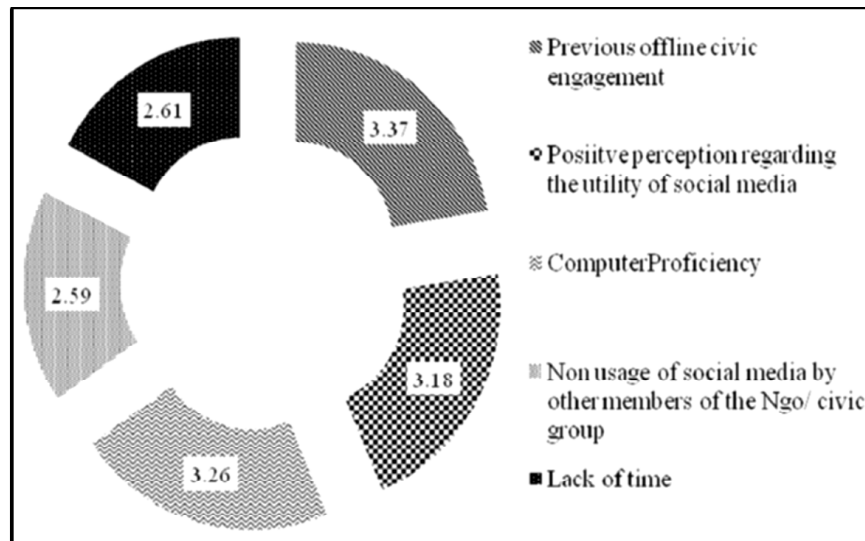


Figure 2 demonstrates the full analysis of variables initiating and deterring online civic engagement. Friedman test is used to determine the most initiating as well as discouraging factor in online civic engagement. Friedman gave p value= .000 which means that there is difference between variables. Friedman proved that ‘previous offline civic engagement’

encourage NGOs most to use social media for civic engagement because it has highest mean rank (3.37). On the other hand, ‘non usage of social media by other members of the NGO’ has the lowest means rank which signifies this factor as ‘most discouraging’. Even Mano (2013) found that respondents having low Internet proficiency participate very less in online civic activities.

Shah et al. (2002) also examined the effect of time pressures on online civic participation. Their research revealed that lack of time discourages social media usage which further hampers online civic participation. Waters (2010) also carried out the research to know that why NGOs use social media tools. Researcher found that lack of time and lack of skills deters the social media usage for civic engagement by NGOs.

Features of social media deters/ encourages civic engagement

The current study has analyzed which feature of social media has encouraged as well as discouraged NGOs to use it for civic engagement. NGOs were asked about the 16 different features of social media. Results regarding every feature of social media are given below in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Features of social media promoting/ deterring civic participation



Friedman test was used to determine the features of social media which has deterred and promoted civic participation. Analysis revealed that 'Affordability' as a feature of social media has encouraged NGOs the most to use this medium for civic engagement. The p value given by Friedman test is .000. It means that there is a difference between variables. Mean ranks given by Friedman test proved that the second strongest factor is '*no geographical boundaries*', third '*speed of the medium*' fourth '*promote group activism*', fifth '*multimedia options*', sixth '*Multiple Resources*' means lots of ways/ resources to cross check the things, seventh '*Creation of Community*', eighth '*Able to express emotions in a concise message*', ninth '*Immediate Feedback*', tenth '*Transparency of message*', eleventh '*Ease of Use*', twelfth '*Private to Public*', thirteenth '*Sense of existence of the person with whom you are communicating*', and fourteenth '*Emoticons as a helpful feature to express your emotions*'. While '*Credible people in the virtual world*' which was considered the major deterrent factor actually proved to be the second deterrent factor. The major deterrent factor is '*Anonymity of Identity*'.

Waters (2010) also found that social media is a 'cost effective tool' which NGOs use to demonstrate the accountability and transparency. Wasserman, H. (2007) also carried out the research to know that how ICTs has proved beneficial for social movements. Researcher says that it was observed that e-mail and Internet promoted citizen activism because new technology allows the communication without beyond geographical boundaries and of course at low cost. So, NGOs were also asked whether they use social media for civic engagement because it is 'Affordable'. Results of the current study proved that it is true because 41 respondents felt that 'to a large extent' affordability of technology have initiated them to engage in online civic engagement. While 11 said 'to some extent' and not even a single respondent mentioned that affordability does not encourage their online civic engagement.

Further, Self-determination theory developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (1985) mentioned that if basic needs of human beings are satisfied then people act with a sense of full endorsement and volition.

Autonomy is one of the needs which means that people want the freedom/ right of self- government. From decades people have struggled a lot to protect or gain autonomy. Linking the right of self- government with the current study, NGOs were asked whether ‘Multimedia options’ such as video conferencing with stakeholders and volunteers, sharing images, audio, etc. to execute their plans have initiated them to use social media. Results proved that more than 80% respondents find multimedia options useful for their NGO.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the current study is to determine the factors those hinder as well as promote the usage of social media for civic engagement. History of Internet says that social media comes under web 2.0. Features of this platform allow users to generate the content and to act according to their wishes while web 1.0 allows its users to read the content only. So, the present study has analyzed the effect of various media usage on frequency of Internet usage. Results revealed that time spent on telephone, radio, television, print media and face to face communication on a weekday and weekend does not deter the frequency of Internet usage. The main focus of the research is on social media. So, the current study has determined which feature of social media has actually motivated NGOs to use it for civic engagement. Results revealed that ‘Affordability’ as a feature of social media has encouraged NGOs the most to use this medium for civic engagement. On the other hand, ‘Anonymity of Identity’ as a feature of social media discouraged NGOs most. Apart from social media usage, the current study has also determined the factors those have motivated people to volunteer. Statistical analysis proved that due to self - motivation most of the respondents volunteer. When it comes to online civic engagement, it was found that ‘previous offline civic engagement’ encouraged NGOs most to use social media for civic engagement. Thus research has shown that factors related to volunteers (pre-existing affiliations, lack of time, computer proficiency, etc.) and social media (features of social media) affect the online civic engagement of NGOs.

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