



Reviewing Usage of Social Networking Applications in India

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ABSTRACT

World is becoming small in terms of connectivity with the increasing usage of internet by the people. It is the internet which had gave a great speed and ease to communicate among the people. Internet users are using social networking application to increase their connectivity. Social networking applications are not only used for the purpose of private networking but also for the business and professional networking. People use networking applications to communicate with their friends, relatives, family members or with business partners. The paper is an attempt to exhibit scenario of social networking applications in India. For this increasing usage of internet in India is showcased followed by the discussion on selective most popular social networking applications and lists the features that had aid in increasing the popularity of social networking application in India.

KEYWORDS : Internet, Social Networking Application, Social Technology, Social Networking Sites

Introduction

People in the world are using internet for maintaining and increasing their community network (social network). Usage of the internet by the people for communication is due to the ease, speed and convenience that it gives to its users. With the increasing usage of internet by the people and the need for easy and effective connectivity with the other users, different social networking applications came into existence. These applications help in increasing the connectivity by connecting people at anytime and anywhere in the world. The first social networking application 'SixDegrees.com' helped in networking the people was launched in late 90s. Since then, different social networking applications with varied features were launch across the globe which fulfilled the diverse requirements of the people.

India is a country with stand second in terms of world's population. More over Indian are seen as people who are more social and would frequently like to be connected with their family, friends and other relatives. Hence, it is apparent that one will find more number of people using social networking applications in the country. People in the country are using social networking applications to maintain and expand their private as well as business networks. Some of the popular social networking applications in India include Face book, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc.

Social networking applications are the applications that provide web-based services which allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, communicate with other users; and view the pages and details provided by other users within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). Social networking applications provide personalized media experiences, as the content of the applications are user generated and circulated. Present paper shows the usage of social networking applications in India. For the purpose, paper is divided in six sections. The first section is of introduction followed by the second section of literature review. Third section of the paper focuses on the Internet usage in the country, forth section highlight selective popular social networking applications in the country. Fifth section discusses features of the applications which had aid in their growth, followed by the concluding sixth section.

Literature review

Boyd and Ellison (2008) in their paper gave an elaborated view of the history of the social networking applications. According to their research, the first ever recognized social networking application 'SixDegrees.com' was launched in 1997. The application preliminary allowed its users to create their profiles and list their Friends on it; later on, it upgraded itself and also provided surfing facility to its

users. SixDegrees.com became the first recognised social networking tool among the practitioner, which allow and increase the user's connectivity with the other users of the application. Feature of messaging in application help in increasing the connectivity of the users.

Human beings are social animal and hence, continuously are in need of connectivity with other individuals and groups. They entail to connect them self for the accomplishment of their personal as well as business goal. Jones (2007) narrated social technology, as collaborative efforts of people and a technology which provide community platforms and is used as sources of information by the users. Boase, Horrigan, Wellman and Rainie (2006) said emotional intimacy, contact, and the availability of social network capital; important for the usage of social networking applications. While convenience, easy access, low cost and enjoyment was found as the main drivers for using social networking application as a communications media by Dwyer (2007).

Advancement in technology has increase the potential usage of internet among the people. People are using internet and thus social networking application for the varied purpose. People are found using social networking application for recruiting the employees. Employer used to check the profile and connection of the candidate on the social networking applications before giving them appointment (Harrison, 2008). Business man use social networking application to know the review of product and services delivered in the market. Applications have also become the source of crowd sourcing and funding for the organisation. New entrepreneurs are launching their business and are using social networking applications to market their product. While individuals are using the social networking applications for the varied purpose like to increase emotional bondage, getting an opinion, advices, consultation, increasing friend circle etc. (Harris and Dennis, 2011; Harvey Stewart and Ewing, 2011; Lenhart and Madden, 2007; Liang and Scammon, 2011; Leibetseder, 2011). After having an idea about the social networking applications and its usage by the users, paper showcases the increasing usage of Internet in India in the following section.

Internet usage in India

India has third largest internet using population in the world. Its internet user base stands at 306 million as of December 2015, which include 219 million of urban and 87 million of rural users. According to Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMA) report, mobile internet users in the country is expected to grow by over 55 per cent to reach 371 million by June 2016 and more than 500 million by 2018. The high growth of the internet users is estimated to be driven

by the huge adoption of internet in rural India and its accessibility through mobile device. Below given is the graphical representation of internet using population in India from the year 2013 to the potential users for the year 2018.

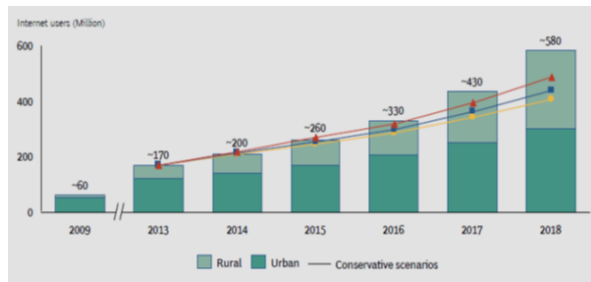


Exhibit:1 Internet using Population in India

Source:BCG analysis

India has a huge number of internet users who are using internet through their cell phones. The number of users from cell phones and tablets in India were found to be 90 million in June 2013 which increased to 185 million by June 2014. Drastic rise in the internet users from mobile devices depicts increase in consumption of social networking applications and the other applications through the mobile device. It seems that internet users had literally by pass the requirement of PC and does the web surfing through their smart phones. Looking to the varied requirement of the Indian population we find many mobile applications in the vernacular language which in turn has increase the adoptability of the device and increase in consumption of internet in India (Shah A., Jain N. and Bajpai S., 2015). With the increase in the internet we also find increase in the usage of social networking applications by the people. Section below discusses selective popular social networking applications in India.

Popular Social Networking Applications in India

Social networking application usage stands to 181.7 million users in 2015 which increase to 216.5 million users in 2016. Among several social networking application functioning in the country, paper focuses on the selective applications which are most popular among Indian users. To start with, one of the most popular application among the Indian users is *Facebook application*. Facebook recorded the usage by 162.3 million in 2015 with increased to 195.2 million in 2016 (Statista, n.d.,a & b). The networking site was founded in the year 2004 in California by Mark Zuckerberg with the mission to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them (Facebook,about,n.d).

Another popular networking application found among Indian users is *Twitter*. It had approximate 19.7 million users in 2015 and 23.12 million users in 2016 (Statista,n.d.,c). The application was launched on 21 March 2006 by Biz Stone, Evan Williams, Noah Glass, Jack Dorsey with a mission to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers (Twitter, n.d.). It allows users to share small messages (limiting to 140 characters) among the other users of the application. Other than messaging Twitter is used by users to read messages, follow friends, experts, celebrities.

The two application discussed above are usually used by the people for personal networking and not business or professional networking. *LinkedIn* is the third most popular application with more than 30 million professional and business users in Indian (Statista, n.d.,d). It was founded by Reid Hoffman, Konstantin Guericke, Jean-Luc Vaillant, Allen Blue, Eric Ly in December 2002 and have its headquarters at Mountain View, California (LinkedIn, n.d.). It

is primarily a business oriented social media website which provides job opportunities and aid in increasing business connection of its users.

YouTube which is one of the Google company is the fourth most popular social networking application with 41.2 million users in the year 2016 (Statista, n.d., e). The application was launched on May 2005 to discover, watch and share originally-created videos. It provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers. It allows users to upload the videos and receive likes and comment on them (YouTube,about,n.d.).

The application discussed till now were primarily designed with support the Personal Computer system and thus, were operated through computer. But with the passage of time and advancement in technology the applications were modified to be used through smart phones as well. The applications discussed further in the paper are mobile based application. Fifth most popular social networking application to discuss is WhatsApp. The application was launched in the year 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum and was acquired by Facebook in February 2014 (Watsapp, n.d.). It had approximately 700 million active users in India in the year 2015 which increased to more than 1000 million in the year 2016 (Statista, n.d., f). The statistic shows the huge number of people using the application. The frequent and more usage of the application is mainly because of the simplicity, easy access and the features like: voice calls, video calls, send text messages, documents, PDF files, images, GIF, videos, user location, audio files, phone contacts and voice notes to the other users of the application (Watsapp, n.d.).

The sixth most popular application is Instagram. It provides a photo sharing social platform to its users. Instagram was founded by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in October 2010 and was bought by Facebook in April 2012. It is an application specially designed to share photo and video by the smart phone users (Instagram, n.d.). The application have same common features of Facebook and Twitter which allow users to like, link, comment and follow apart from photo and video sharing.

Above mention are some to the popular social networking applications in India. There are some common features in the application which had assisted the growth of applications in the country. Such common features of the social networking applications are discussed in detail in the following section of the paper.

Features: That Lead the Growth of Social Networking Applications.

Taking view of the selective popular social networking applications among the users in the prior section of the paper, research paper discusses on the unique features of the applications which had made them popular among the users. The unique features of the applications are discussed below:

- **Information Access:** Social networking applications use to provide access to unprecedented amounts of information which help in fulfilling the varied requirement of diverse customers of the applications. Information access by the social networking application users provides in-depth and wider review of the content. This helps in satisfying the personal and business requirement of the users of the applications.
- **Global View:** Social networking applications are operating at a global platform and hence has a user's all over the world. Users from different country with varied culture use to give diverse view on the same issue. Hence, users of the social networking applications get wider view by comment, likes and dislike of other users of the application.
- **Networking:** Social networking applications are operated throughout the world and hence have users from the different

country. When any new user is connected to the applications it can have access to any of the other user of the applications. This means that he can be a friend or follower or commenter to any user of the applications. This feature of the applications aid in building a vast network for the users.

- Experimentation: Social networking applications allow users to upload their own content or original work. Thus it provide a platform where creator can experiment and test their product or services on the other users of application. Through like, dislike and comments about the product and services on social networking application, creator of the content come to know about the nice market and the modification if any required for greater acceptability of the content. Thus social networking applications encourage experimentation of the content among the users of application.
- Activism: Social networking applications provide unsolicited feedback to users. This feature of application helps customers in discriminating and making choices for the product and services they are using or want to use in future. Reviewing the dialogues among the users of social networking applications help the reviewer to get the neutral, subjective and diverse view about the product and services consumed by the people. This feature not only helps user to take decision or make an opinion about product and services but also help companies to know the unsolicited views of customers.
- Integration: Networking applications allow uploading and modification of different types of contents by users. Users can upload video, photos, text and combination of the same. Social networking application in turn can be used to integrate various sources of information provided by the users. Integration or intermixing of sources increases the value of information provided through the applications, resulting into the increase in popularity of applications.

Conclusion

There is a constant increase in the people using internet for various purposes in the country. The increase is primary due to the availability of smart phones which are less costly; are easy to learn and operate; and require small place to be kept in house and other places. Growth in usage of internet depicts addition of people using smart phone and rise in frequency of usage of applications supported through internet. People are largely found using different type of social networking applications through their smart phones. Simplicity in operation of application; increase in accessibility, networking, experimentation of the users; access to the large amount of information, getting broader view of the content from any corner of the world and able to upload diverse form of information using different sources had made the social networking application more popular among the users and potential users of the applications.

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