Existence of Social Media in Pandemic: Boon or Bane

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to highlight the role and accountability of media and social networking sites in the pandemic situation. In the contemporary world, where everything is being advanced, the role and position of media and social networking sites have also been changed and become more strong. The year 2020 has marked its name in history due to the lockdown and closing of all the borders and states. This kind of lockdown has never ever been happened in the society and in the world. This is due to the virus namely Corona Virus, due to which this type of situation has occurred. Now, in such hard time, the role of media has also increased. Their role is just not to protect the life of people but also ensure that no wrong information be shared with the people which resulted in misleading the folk. Along with that, the role of media is to be the safeguard of the society and help the authorities to know the position of people living in countryside and urban areas. Hence, this article would try to analyze the role played by media and tries to find out whether social networking and media are boon for the society or bane in this alarming situation.

KEYWORDS: Media, alarming, lockdown, safeguard, countryside, boon, bane

INTRODUCTION

At present, everyone knows that world has turned upside down. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is running rampant across the globe, and there does not seem to be an end in sight. Well, it is all about history from where it started and how it has spread. In the face of COVID-19, social media is a great way for individuals and communities to stay connected even while physically separated. The main focus of it on how the social media help people to know all about it and how one is playing across the digital landscape.

Objective

This paper tries to
- analyze the role of media.
- find out the accountability of media and social networking sites
- reality check the situation of media and social networking sites in this contemporary world.
- How can different media industries and channels for mass communication promote adaptive responses to foster positive health attitudes and adherence to preventive measures?
- How media impact the dynamics in the private domain (e.g. strengthen family bonds versus domestic conflict and violence)?

Research Methodology

The method used to write this article is based on both type of method that is primary and secondary. Primary data is obtained by observing social networking sites and techniques whereas secondary data is obtained from books, articles and journals. The research is analytical based and is of descriptive type.

Review of Literature

- Michael Mandiberg in his book 'The Social Media Reader'[1], wrote how access to tools and invention of new media forms permit other media to make their own media. New creation has added new ways to opt new methods of sharing data from one place to another in no time. From sharing views to photos or from sharing your location to your picture all the things have been changed and transmitted now. However, the author also noticed that these things are useless without audience.
- 'Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture'[2] wonderful book by Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green. The authors try to examine the nature of audience envolved, the way one creates value and the flow of transtition of news rapidly. It also delineates the elements that make the content more separable and also highlights the emerging media business models in some circumstances. Hence, this book is about the manyfold ways that content circulates today, from top down to bottom up, from grassroot to commercial . This book also elaborate the message that spreading is essential to make the things alive.
- The Pandemic of Social Media Panic Travels Faster than the COVID-19 Outbreak[3] a well elaborated research

[1] Mandiberg Michael, 'The Social Media Reader' published by New York University Press,2012

[2] Jenkins Hnry, Ford , Green Joshua, 'Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture published by New York University Press,2013

[3] Depoux Anneliese, Martin Sam, Karafillakis Emilie , Preet Raman , Wilder Annelies and Larson Heidi write an article

paper to know that how with the spreading of virus, the information or rumours too are spreading quickly. Today, there is not only a need to control or combat the spreading of virus but also we need to combat the pandemic of social media panic. In addition to it, this book also tries to find the ways or methods to stop the spreading of this panic, perceptions, attitudes and behaviour around COVID-19 and also need to enhance public trust in public health measures.

Social Media
With the advent of social media in the 21st century, not only we get the latest updates, but we're also using platforms like Facebook and Twitter to provide personal and business updates. For businesses, this means leveraging social media to support employees and customers like never before. For the government, it means doing its best to efficiently share factual and up-to-date information.

Let's see how Government, companies and individuals are sharing information and interacting with each others on Social media since the lockdown has begun.

Digital world and COVID-19
In general, Social Media has plethora of benefits as it helps to rampant spreading of news which sometime prove beneficial or sometime drawback for the society. Firstly, the question which arise in the mind is that what impact social media has in the society. Is it bane or boon for the society?

Role played by Social Platforms during COVID-19
A source of information
It is unbelievable or sometimes seems like a dream that now we can get information as we never had in our past. Nowadays, we had more real time information available at our fingertips in the face of a worldwide event. Such information can help keep us safe, providing us with a better understanding of what is occurring and how it might impact us and those we love. Yet, social media can also spread falsehoods, including miracle preventative measures, false claims about the implementation of martial law, conspiracy theories, and more. However to find trusted sources of information regarding COVID-19 is extremely important.

Social media companies are working to combat misinformation on corona virus
At a time where many of us are grappling for as much information as we can get our hands on, the public is especially susceptible to false and sometimes hazardous claims, which are then passed on to others. According to a new PEW Research Center report, about half of Americans say they've seen made-up news about the corona virus.

What are trustworthy and untrustworthy sources ?
It is a fact that we came across many problems and numerous information due to the access of excess social networking sites. It is very hard to find which news is true and which is untrue. Hence, it is essential to identify the fact. For that the best way to ensure the news is accurate is to check original sources and make sure that

A. those sources are indeed trustworthy, and
B. the information was relayed accurately. Just because someone claims to have learned something from a reliable source doesn't mean they're relaying that information accurately.

If you're the one presenting information, whether on behalf of a business or your personal account, it's your responsibility to cite and fact-check your own sources. Be wary of using verbiage that is alarmist or absolute. There are still so many unknowns about the virus, and nobody is sure what the coming weeks and months hold. It's always best to be cognizant of this and avoid unnecessary bold statements.

An influence on public response to the outbreak
Billions of people are free to publicly share their opinions on COVID-19 across various social platforms. In the past few weeks, we've seen individuals, organizations, and businesses use social media to spread awareness of COVID-19, as well as the public actions that can be taken.

Distinct ways through which social media has influenced the public since the virus reached epidemic and pandemic levels:

Social distancing and home quarantine are trending
Until a few weeks ago, many of us hadn't even heard of "social distancing," which refers to staying at least 6 feet away from others to help prevent the spread of infection. Now, social media users, from friends and family to celebrities and governments, are regularly calling for social distancing.

Boasting and shaming panic buying
Many people have been excessively purchasing household goods, sanitization products, and food in fear that necessities will no longer be accessible — just like they do when there is a hurricane or some other natural disaster. This over-purchasing has become so commonplace that social media users have coined a phrase to describe it: panic buying.

On social, panic buying is being discussed in two distinct ways: 1) people are posting about their own panic buying, showing images of carts filled with toilet paper, water bottles, and frozen meals; and 2) people are posting pictures of empty shelves or other people's carts as a way to shame supposed panic buyers.

A marketing platform
The COVID-19 outbreak presents a defining moment for many brands in how they choose to market their product.

Unfortunately, we're going to see people who are selling snake oil-type products (think essential oils claiming to provide immunity). Some businesses will prey on mass hysteria, especially businesses putting extra dollars behind social media ads, selling products like hand sanitizer and facemasks (despite frequent claims from health organizations that facemasks are *not* effective if you don't have the disease).

Popular hashtags popping up related to social distancing and quarantining include #socialdistancing, #quarantineandchill, and #mypandemicsurvivalplan.

on" The Pandemic of Social Meddia panic travels faster than the COVID-19 outbreak published by centre Virchow, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine , London ,UK

Socially responsible product marketing

Despite the uptick in alarmist-focused media spend, there are many businesses providing powerful and empathetic responses to COVID-19. The main responsibility of brands right now is to provide for the safety and well being of their employees and customers. That said, there are certain business models that lend themselves particularly well to providing relief for many people during this time.

Streaming services, for instance, are providing entertainment for those bored at home. Markets and restaurants with delivery services are able to safely provide groceries and meals to those unable to venture out. Online courses are being offered for free and at reduced prices. All in all, we're seeing many businesses do the best they can to ease the fear and discomfort being experienced by so many.

A powerful way to bring positivity to a scary time

No platform is perfect. But where there has been misinformation and fear on social media, there's also been an abundance of vital, lifesaving information, connection with others, and global unity. The ability to share experiences with family and friends helps to combat both literal and emotional isolation while also reminding us that we're all in this together.

Social Media: Boon

Social Media is considered one of the best way to share news in the present scenario. It proof blissful when one want to share news which is serious and need to spread as soon as possible. Let's take an example of Covid-19. The news of this virus spread quickly not only on state level but also on national and inter-national level. Social media gives platform and it is certain that news reach at the place where it needs to reach. To elaborate, from number of people infected to how many people die and which country is the most infected and which state has been the most infected or has become hot spot of spreading the virus.

Educate the people: Social media help in educating the folk regarding this deadly and the most dangerous virus. It educates the people about the symptoms of COVID-19. It can be said that by educating it helps to save the life of people and working for the sake and safety of the society.

Provide Safety tips: Safety tips are the another enormous thing which are now easily spreading through social media. Social distancing is the key factor which is the basic and prominent concept to safe the society from coronavirus . This message rapidly spread among people through digital world.

Share messages: Digital landscape not only help in spreading awareness but also share numerous messages which assist people how to live healthy, psychologically free from the stress by staying at home. The best thing that has happened across a variety of social media platforms is the number of professional athletes, celebrities, and influencers that have spoken up urging people to take everything they see about COVID-19 seriously and follow suit. Whether it's Tom Hanks who suffered from the illness himself or other high-profile figures quarantining themselves, people are more inclined to listen when one of these figures speaks out or shares a message through social media. Moreover, many celebrities' also try to entertain the public through social media so that public can keep themselves busy and do not feel bored.

According to John Hopkins Medicine[4], the act of social distancing involves "deliberately increasing the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness."

Enhance Creativity

For individuals, the same axe translates into using social media to self-present – that can turn into the very narcissistic self-exposure that we sometimes see on social media versus using social media to connect with friends, family and likeminded others for socialization and emotional support.

Fundraisers organized and distributed on social help raise money for those in need

COVID-19 has put many people, especially the elderly, those with disabilities, working parents who are losing childcare, and those who are losing their jobs, in challenging situations. Communities are rallying together to support organizations and individuals by sharing fundraisers with large audiences on social media.

People are also taking to social media to offer support in any way they can, such as picking up groceries for individuals who are unable to leave home or sharing information on how to support local businesses who are struggling to pay their employees.

People are posting pictures and videos to share their experiences

Posts from people quarantined at home have ranged from videos of living room yoga to pictures of snugly pets who are thrilled their owners are with them 24/7. There have also been posts acknowledging how difficult and frightening this time is. Posts have ranged from commiseration to overwhelming support — neighbourhood rainbow hunt to this "mental health check-in" on a Facebook[5] neighbours group:

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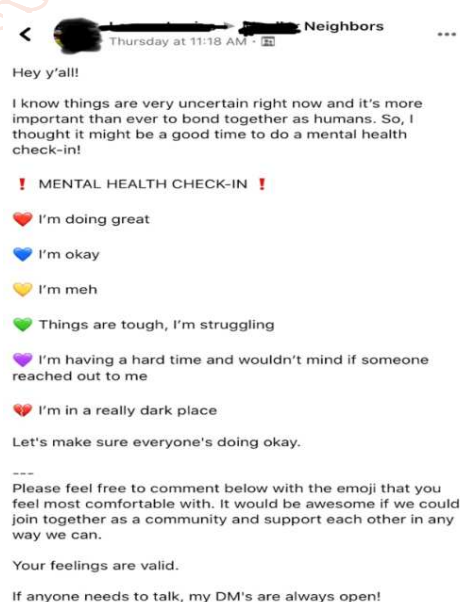
[4] John Hopkins University, Maryland, Health Conditions, and diseases, Coronavirus ,social distancing and self-quarantine

[5] post on a facebook

These are just a couple of the millions of examples where people have shown their support and empathy on social media. And while tone and delivery vary, the message from one user to another remains constant: you are not alone in this, there are silver linings to be enjoyed, and it's okay to experience this in any number of ways.

Social Media: Bane

No doubt, social media has influenced people the most. Somehow, it also spread wrong doers and information to the people which consequently have harmful effect. The biggest example of it was of Kitty Bakery[6], in which rumour was spread that a worker of kitty bakery was examined positive with corona virus. However, this news spread rampant and people stop buying product of kitty bakery. The news was just rumour and now the company has filed a defamation case against a person who has posted this news on social media. Let's see how the social networking sites sometime become curse and create chaos in the society.

Misinformation during outbreaks

We are facing an unprecedented crisis of public understanding. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO), noted that urgent measures must now be taken to address the "coronavirus infodemic[7]."

This infodemic compromises outbreak response and increases public confusion about who and what information sources to trust; generates fear and panic due to unverified rumours and exaggerated claims; and promotes xenophobic and racist forms of digital vigilantism and scapegoating.

Spread of Rumours

Rumours are a second form of misinformation. One popular conspiracy theory held that the virus was developed as a means to wage a biological war against China. In China, a rumour spread that bio-weapons research in a Wuhan laboratory resulted in the genetic engineering of COVID-19 that was then released. Such rumours may have even jeopardized the working relationship between Western scientists and their Chinese counterparts searching for a COVID-19 vaccine.

Untrue, exaggerated and dubious medical claims and hoaxes are other common forms of misinformation. Various unproven natural and traditional remedies were proffered as cures to both Ebola and COVID-19, such as drinks that contained mint and spices like saffron and turmeric that spread in Iran through Twitter.

To conclude, I would close my statement by saying that today, social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, have become primary sources of information. They are also vehicles for fake news and disinformation. During a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, how should social media be mastered and employed in a responsible way? How media need to work ? Governments, public health authorities and digital corporations need to not only promote digital literacy, but combat ways in which the impact of social media may be spawning an irreversible post-truth age, even after the COVID-19 pandemic dissipates. Media can play a great role to aware the society and secure the public for its betterment. This could only possible if it is being done with full accountability and surveillances.

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6 Situated in outer skirts of Ludhiana, news on facebook
7coronavirus-how-who-leading-social-media-fightagainst accessed at www.scmp.com