Chapter 8

Social Media: An Enabler for Governance

N. Raghavendra Rao
FINAIT Consultancy Services, India

ABSTRACT

Social Media is becoming increasingly important in society and culture; making people to join together on common interests and share opinions through internet. Most of the business organizations have been using social media as a communication tool for public relations and marketing. It is high time government departments should engage citizens of their country for interaction through social media. There are many schemes and programs initiated by the government need the attention of their citizens in a country. Government departments are required to form strategies to involve their citizens for making use of their schemes and programs. This chapter stresses the need for making use of social media by a government creating awareness of the schemes and programs to their citizens. Further it explains the importance of the interaction with their citizens through social media for good governance.

INTRODUCTION

Social media are nothing more than a special class of websites. They can be considered as second generation websites. First generation websites are those that are created by an organization or authority to upload information to be read by the users of their site. This model can be said as one-to many. Social media websites by contrast are platforms that provide users the ability and tools to create and upload their own mini websites or web pages. The content on these sites is created by the participants. This can be said as many-to-many model. Participants in this model are active in creating, commenting, rating and recommending content. Social media sites have three distinct characteristics. They are 1) majority of the content is generated by users, 2) high degree of participation and interaction between users, and 3) easily integrated with other sites. Social media are different from industrial or traditional media such as newspapers, television channels, and films.

Social media are relatively inexpensive and accessible to enable any one to publish or access information compared to industrial media, which generally require significant resources to publish information.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0846-5.ch008
One common feature in social media and industrial media is capability to reach small or large audiences. For an example either a blog post or a television show may reach none or millions of people. The features that help to know the differences between social media and industrial media depend on one’s understanding. Some of the features are described below:

1. **Reach:** Both industrial and social media technologies provide scale and enable any one to reach a global audience.
2. **Accessibility:** The means of production for industrial media are typically owned privately or by government. Social media tools are generally available to everyone at little or no cost.
3. **Usability:** Industrial media production typically requires specialized skills and training. Most of social media does not need specialized skills. In fact anyone can create and manage a social media site.
4. **Time Period:** The time taken between communications produced by industrial media can be long compared to social media. In the case of social media, communication will be virtually instantaneous responses.
5. **Feasibility:** Once a magazine article is printed and distributed, changes cannot be made to the same article. In the case of social media it can be altered almost instantaneously by comments or editing.

**SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS AND APPLICATIONS**

Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Social media sites applications are dedicated to forums, micro blogging, social networks, social bookmarking, and social curation.

- **Forums:** Forums are like social mixers where every one is at equal level discussing with others. This can be considered as many to many communication tools. This tool allows anyone to start a topic and anyone to respond to one member or at equal levels. Content is usually a particular topic of interest to most of them.
- **Micro Blogging:** Micro Blogging is a web service that allows the subscriber to broadcast short messages to other subscribers of the service. Micro posts can be made public on website and/or distributed to a private group of subscribers. Subscribers can read micro blog posts online or request that updates be delivered in real time to their email id as an instant message or sent to a mobile device as SMS text message.
- **Social Networking:** Online social networking brings people with common interests, ideas, goals, and experiences together. Some of the most popular social networks are face book, linked in and twitter.
- **Facebook:** Face Book is a popular free social networking websites that allows registered users to create, profiles, upload photos and video, to send messages and keep in touch with friends, families and colleagues.
- **Linkedin:** Linkedin is a social networking site designed specifically for the professionals. The goal of the site is to allow registered members to document and establish network among people they know and trust professionally.