

TOPIC:"Emerging Power of Social Media:
Prospects and Problems"OUTLINE:

A. Introduction

B. Prospects of emerging power of social media:

(1) Enhances connectivity with other people irrespective of time and place

(2) Source of information about current affairs

(3) Social media as a source of earning for many people

(4) Improves inter-state relations by serving as a tool for modern diplomacy

(5) Enhances the efficiency of businesses through online marketing

(6) Provides a platform for voicing social issues

(7) Social media as a tool for political communication

C. Problems of emerging power of social media:

(1) Hampers face-to-face interaction and socialization

- (2) Raises fundamental privacy concerns
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- (4) Atmosphere of misinformation, disinformation and propaganda
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- (6) Spreading inappropriate content on social media
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D. Conclusion

ESSAY

As of July 2024, 5.17 billion people, which account for 63.7 percent of the world's population, use social media, as stated by DataReportal. It is rapidly transforming the way people communicate and even think.

Just as the printing press revolutionized the spread of information in 15th century, social media is revolutionizing it in 21st century at the speed of light. One of the greatest inventions of this generation is social media. It is one of the types of mass media, which can be simply defined as: "Internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings". With rapid advancements in digital technology, numerous applications and platforms of social media have emerged. The top five most used social media platforms include:

Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Whatsapp, TikTok.

However, ^{the} emerging power of social media presents both prospects as well as problems for modern world. Social media has reduced the distances among people of the world by enhancing connectivity. It is a crucial source of information and keeps people update about the

happenings in the world. Most importantly, social media offers a new source of learning for people. Also, social media serves as a tool for modern diplomacy, improving inter-state relations. However, despite these prospects, the problems associated with the emerging power of social media cannot be ignored. Although it enhances connectivity among people, yet, at the same time, it hampers ^{their} face-to-face interactions. Further, privacy of social media users is often threatened. With the rapid growth of social media, evils like cyber-crimes have also raised their heads. Undoubtedly, social media provides a breeding ground for spreading misinformation, disinformation and propaganda easily. Therefore, the emerging power of social media brings forth both its diverse prospects and multiple problems, which need to be taken into account.

Social media, as a revolutionized medium of communication, enhances the connectivity among people irrespective of time and space. In the busy schedules of their lives, people find it difficult to spare time to meet their relatives, friends and loved ones. The contemporary world has

transformed into a "global village" with the advent of social media. With the social media applications like Instagram, Whatsapp and Facebook, etc., cheaper, easier and interactive communication with one's loved ones, peers and family has become possible. For instance, people can easily communicate with their relatives and family members living abroad as it is just one click away. Most people post stories and statuses ^{of their activities} on social media platforms, which also keeps their loved ones updated about them. Thus, enhanced connectivity among people is one of the most striking prospects of emerging power of social media.

Another important prospect of emerging power of social media is that it serves as one of the best sources of information for people. Social media keeps people updated about what's happening in the world around them. Almost all the media houses maintain their dedicated social media accounts, where they post all the latest developments and news, both national and global. Additionally, all multinational companies (MNCs) have their presence on social media platforms, where they keep the audience informed and updated about all their activities, developments, products

, and services. For example, people of Pakistan get time-to-time updates about the ongoing Israel-Hamas war and Russia-Ukraine war through the social media accounts of various international news organizations. Hence, the emerging power of social media presents the prospect of keeping people informed about the current affairs of world.

Besides, in recent years, social media has emerged as a new way of earning for people. People monetize their social media presence and make money from it. Brands collaborate with social media influencers to advertise and promote their products and services and pay them for their services. Also, social media provides employment opportunities to people as many businesses, organizations and firms hire people to manage their social media accounts. They pay handsome salaries to their social media managers. YouTube pays content creators through ad revenue, where creators earn money based on the number of views their ads receive. More subscribers mean more views, which can increase ad revenue. Therefore, new ways of earning provided by social media is an important prospect of emerging

power of social media.

Moreover, Social media has a prospect in improving inter-state relations by serving as a tool for modern diplomacy. Historically, diplomats relied on slow processes like letters, face-to-face meetings and time-consuming travels. With the advent of social media, traditional role of Foreign Ministries has revolutionized. Foreign ^{diplomatic} Communication has become more transparent and publically engaged.

For instance, now the diplomats of different countries can connect with one another ~~like~~ ^{through} virtual meeting platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Skype or simply Whatsapp Video Chat Feature. In summary, social media offers prospects in the domain of diplomacy, playing a facilitating role.

Additionally, one prospect of social media is making businesses around the world efficient. Social media platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn allow businesses to connect with a global audience, regardless of geographical barriers. Businesses use these platforms for online marketing of their products and services. In fact, online marketing is relatively less costly as compared to other means. Almost all businesses, whether

big or small hire & social media management teams, which are tasked with online marketing of their products and services. These teams run marketing campaigns on social media handles of their respective businesses. Thus, to summarise, online marketing of businesses is important prospect of emerging power of social media.

Another prospect of emerging power of social media is its use as a platform to voice social concerns. It is a platform where people can exercise their freedom of speech and express. Social media users can run social media trend campaigns by using popular "hashtags (#)", to generate widespread attention towards an issue. It can create a pressure on policy-makers to respond and address the concerns of people. For instance #BlackLivesMatter hashtag was used in 2013 to divert world attention towards the racial injustice, police brutality faced by the Black communities, particularly in United States. Millions of people around the world tweeted this hashtag. Therefore, the emerging power of social media can be seen in its use as a platform for bringing social issues into limelight.

Further, the use of social media as

a tool for political communication is a prospect of the emerging power of social media. It allows the politicians and political organizations to communicate directly with the public and mobilize support. Political parties effectively use their social media handles to shape public narratives in their favor and increase their vote bank. It also influences the political inclination of people as they decide which candidate to vote according to the recent news, developments, and trends in politics. It is the social media which informs them about these developments. During the 2008 U.S. elections, around 74% of internet users sought election news online during Obama's first campaign (Pew Research Center). Hence, the emerging power of social media is manifested in its use as a tool for political communication.

There is no doubt in the fact that emerging power of social media presents multiple prospects for its users all over the world. However, along with these prospects, it also brings forth various problems and challenges. It is important to recognize these problems to ensure careful and safe use of social media.

Firstly, the foremost problem with the

Emerging power of social media is that it extremely reduces face-to-face interaction and socialization. In modern digital age, ^{almost} people all people prefer to use social media platforms to communicate with others rather than physically meeting them.

Although social media has enhanced connectivity among people, yet, at the same time, it has pulled them apart. Online interactions, no matter how much convenient they are, can never replace real-time face-to-face interactions. Simone Heng, who has written a book on loneliness, stated: "Online connection is the junk food of connection".

In short, social media reduces face-to-face interactions among people, drifting them far apart from one another.

Secondly, social media threatens the fundamental privacy of people. Data protection issues and loopholes in privacy controls can put users' information at risk when using social media. The more people public their personal information on social media platforms, the higher risk there is that they will be targeted by scammers and stalkers. The data at risk includes location information, private messages, images, identity, sexual orientation ^{and} bank account details of

people. To summarize, fundamental privacy breaches are a problem in the wake of emerging power of social media.

Third, increasing cyber crimes is another problem created with the emerging power of social media. As the technology advances, the nature of crimes also changes. Cyber crimes can range from hacking, identity theft, harassment and blackmailing to more complex forms like cyberterrorism, online fraud, phishing and intellectual property violations. These risks often cause great troubles for social media users, harming their personal security and privacy. According to a study conducted by CompuTech, approximately 88.5 million people are victims of cybercrimes every year. Hence, cybercrimes are a serious problem created with the emerging power of social media.

Fourth, as the use of social media becomes widespread, it raises serious concerns about the risks of misinformation, disinformation and propaganda. Misinformation is the false information that is spread without the intent to mislead, whereas, disinformation is deliberately intended to deceive. Propaganda is the systematic attempt to manipulate perception to accomplish

Some goal. Due to the ability of social media to transmit news, rumors or any information with just one click, spreading misinformation and disinformation is very convenient. It leads to chaos, fear and panic among the audience. In 2016, a fake news story was published, which highlighted that Israel has threatened to use nuclear weapons against Pakistan. Pakistani Defence Minister Khwaja Asif also took to Twitter to warn Israel. The two nuclear powers had come to verge of nuclear war. In short, misinformation, disinformation and propaganda are serious problems created by social media.

Fifth, the use of social media platforms by terrorists to shape narratives of people is another problem created by social media. Terrorist outfits use social media to spread their poisonous ideology and for purpose of recruitments. Since social media profiles are a reflection of one's personality, terrorist organizations observe activities and hire those people whose mindset is ideologically aligned with theirs. For example, terrorist groups like Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) use high-quality propaganda videos showing their battlefield victories and humanitarian efforts to attract people towards their ideology. Thus,

social media is used as a tool by terrorist outfits to propagate their ideologies and shape narratives.

Sixth, social media can be easily used to propagate inappropriate content, which is quite problematic. Since every one has unrestricted access to internet, it has become very easy for users with malicious intentions to upload inappropriate content on social media platforms. The content containing violence, obscenity, and vulgarity harms the societal values and exploits people, particularly youngsters. Due to the ease with which content can be shared across networks and platforms, inappropriate content goes viral rapidly due to its controversial nature. Approximately more than 50% children and teenagers are exposed to sexually explicit and vulgar content on social media. In summary, social media can be used for malicious purposes and spreading inappropriate content.

Last but not the least, increasing addiction to social media is great problem that is associated with its emerging power. Social media users have cheap, unrestricted and 24/7 access to internet due to which they spend most of their time scrolling social media. The curiosity and excitement to constantly engage

with their social media friends and getting updates with what is happening in others' life keeps them hooked to their phones. Also, algorithms on social media platforms tailor content according to an individual's preferences and behaviors, which makes it difficult for users to disengage. According to research from University of Michigan, estimated 210 million people worldwide suffer from social media and internet addiction. Therefore, addictive use of social media is a problem that has serious repercussions.

In conclusion, the emerging power of social media has both prospects and problems in its usage. Undoubtedly, if an invention can solve problems, it can also create new ones. Social media can enhance the efficiency of businesses through online marketing. Also, social media platforms can be used to voice social concerns, particularly empowering the oppressed and it is an effective tool for political communication. However, despite its numerous prospects, social media also ~~has~~ ^{creates} some problems for its users. It is frequently used by terrorist to propagate their toxic ideologies and shape public narratives.

Moreover, due to the ease with which content can be shared among networks, social media can be negatively used to propagate inappropriate content. Lastly, addictive use of social media has also become quite problematic. It is important that while taking into account the problems of emerging power of social media, one must not forget that this invention is benefitting humanity to a great extent. If regulated ^{and controlled} this technology offers a future with numerous opportunities for its users. When used wisely, it has the potential to transform into a space for creativity, learning and innovation. Ensuring effective safety standards can harness the problems created by the emerging power of social media.