Media and Communication Technology: An Analytical Study of Internet Community in Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper discusses the net community in Pakistan. Media & communication technology reduced the distances between the people. It can be easily said that online or virtual community is different from face to face meetings. Net community shares ideas in seconds. This paper explore the time given by the individual and agreement with the statements that how much they significant. The present study closely monitored the traditional ties among the members of the society. The era is advanced and it provides modern techniques of transformation attitude and behavior.

Key words: Communication technology, Internet, Community and Broad Interest

1. INTRODUCTION

Online, or virtual, communities are distinct from face-to-face communities because they are created and sustained almost exclusively through computer-mediated interactions. They are also historically recent phenomena. The effects of changes in the technology of communication on community are considered vulnerable in Pakistan. The growth of the global computer network known as the Internet has facilitated the rapid emergence of online interactions of dispersed groups of people with shared interests. Much of the work on new media has been interdisciplinary, originating many times in communication and media studies, and often called computer-mediated communication (CMC) research. “Individuals belong to many communities, bounded to different extents and in varying ways. In some cases the term suggests, as in the community studies of the 1940s and 1950s, that the defined entity was reasonably complete and self-contained. Within sociology and psychology, as well as in more popular genres, considerable attention has been given to the idea that virtual spaces allow for fundamentally new constructions of identity: Interactive chatrooms and online spaces were often seen to be gender-neutral, egalitarian spaces. Any investigation into the nature of online communities involves language and communicative practice. The most comprehensive overview of the language of new media is synthesis of emergent communicative practices surrounding the Internet”. Indeed, it is becoming more difficult to distinguish the Internet as a special medium as the variety of computer-mediated communication proliferates from email to chats, instant messaging, short text messages and video conferencing with pictures and videos attached to email messages and telephone calls routed over the Internet. The Internet is becoming another means of communication that is being integrated into the regular patterns of social life.

Lave and Wenger (1991) used the term communities of practice to capture the importance of activity in binding individuals to communities, and in communities legitimizing and developing individual practices. While communities come in many shapes and sizes, in brief, a community of practice involves a collection of individuals sharing mutually defined practices, beliefs, and understandings over an extended time frame in the pursuit of a shared enterprise (Barab, McKinster, & Scheckler, in press; Wenger, 1998). Collaboration among individual community members allows them to view one another as part of a collective whole working toward the joint goals of the community and its members. As such, a community is an interdependent system defined by the collaborative efforts of its members (Barab et al., 1999).

Buzz City is an internationally-acclaimed provider of mobile social networking and mobile advertising services. We launched our mobile advertising network in late 2006 and have been tracking its growth since then. The Buzz City Advertising Network currently comprises more than 2,000 mobile publisher sites of various categories, including community sites, entertainment, downloads and news information services. Buzz City began surveying mobile internet users in June 2007 to gauge consumer habits and trends.

2. Statement of the problem

Internet use has spread more slowly throughout the developing world, elites, students and the ambitious have found ways to connect. Internet neither isolates people nor weakens local community. Internet has not dragged people away from their friends, relatives and neighbors; neither has it created a situation where many people hang out online sharing interests with soulmates around the world. The statement of the present study is “Media and
Communication Technology: An Analytical Study of Internet Community”.

3. Rationale

For the Digital Future Project, an “online community” is defined as a group that shares thoughts or ideas, or works on common projects, through electronic communication only. These online communities represent broad interests -- professional, social, spiritual, hobby, and political, among others. Internet actually grew in importance as it became deeply embedded in everyday life. It is probable that people not only have more relationships than in pre-Internet times, but that they are also in more frequent contact with community members. And the longer they have been on the Internet, the more they use it to communicate. Experience counts as the Internet becomes embedded in the routine of people’s lives. Internet users are becoming “globalized” that is, heavily involved in both local and long-distance relationships. Internet has become incorporated into everyday life; it has fostered changes in community.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the time spending of target sample
2. To investigate the activities when you go online
3. To see the access to Internet they have
4. To know the use of the Internet increased or decreased doing other activities

5. Theoretical Framework

The concept of community has been a major concern of sociological research since the beginning of the discipline. The industrial revolution was associated with technological changes and urbanization. The concept of community was introduced, at least partly, as a means of expressing anxiety about the social effects of industrialization (Nisbet, 1967)

Theoretical underpinning of the study falls under the basics of activity theory drawn heavily on Vygotsky’s concept of “mediation” (Vygotsky, 1978). His famous triangular model includes subject, object, and tool and shows the relationships between each item to mediate an interaction. Activity Theory is a sociocultural theory that helps researchers to examine an individual in a large activity system. Rather than investigating an individual separately from his or her surroundings, however, minimal meaningful context must be included in the analysis (Kuutti, 1995). Therefore, activity theory framework is a useful analytical lens for understanding the social structure of online environments, which show a learner both in an individual group and in a large community (Engeström, 1999; Barab, Evans, & Baek, 2003). This study discusses findings from the perspective of activity theory to understand the dynamics of two online communities of practice.

This study is secondly based on the Theory of Information Sharing. Formulated through the study of the attitudes and norms that affect information sharing in organizations, the Theory of Information Sharing has its roots in the Social Exchange Theory. Kramsch and Thorne (2002), for example, interrogate the presumption that computer-mediated communication naturally helps learners to understand their partners’ local conditions of language use and to build a global common ground for intercultural understanding.

The time-displacement hypothesis posits that if people begin a new activity, they will have to reduce their time spent with other activities. The key assumption of the concept is that human activities have a zero-sum property – that is, people cannot begin a new activity without decreasing time devoted to prior activities because everyone has only 24 hours a day to spend. When the hypothesis is applied to Internet use, people starting to use the Internet will have to decrease time devoted to other activities. Though the hypothesis seems self-evident, the concept has long served as a theoretical basis for dozens of studies that examined how each new media technology affected people’s use of traditional media (e.g., Coffin, 1948; Belson, 1961; Nie & Erbring, 2000).

5.1. Tönnies' Theory of Community

The concept of community was given prominence by Tönnies (1887), who emphasized the impact of modernization and the degeneration of traditional social structure on the nature of community. He regarded urban industrial society as a contrast with, rather than a continuation of, the past. The differences between pre-industrial and urban industrial societies gave rise to two types of social relations or dichotomies: Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft - often translated as community and society.

5.2. Durkheim's Forms of Solidarity

Durkheim was interested in what held society together. In his doctoral thesis, The Division of Labor in Society (1893), Durkheim introduced a distinction between two dimensions of solidarity: mechanical and organic solidarity. The former is based upon similarities and shared location, the latter upon differences and shared interests.

5.3. Community and Communication

It is generally argued that communication, defined by Fiske (1990) as social interaction through messages, is an essential element in the development of a community. Putnam (2000) argues that communication is a prerequisite for community.

5.4. Formal and Informal Networks

There is network distinction between formal and informal networks. In his early writings, Putnam (1993) concentrated on civic engagement or formal networks focusing on membership in organized groups such as choral societies, neighborhood associations or sport clubs along with activities such as voting and newspaper readership. Formal participation builds civic skills and provides access to information and formal support, such as support from various service agencies in the community, e.g. childcare and medical services.
5.5. The Information Society

There are many different labels and descriptions of today's society, such as post-industrial society, network society and information society. Bell (1974), using the first label, argued that information would be the key resource in this new society. However, many scholars point out that there is nothing new about the importance of information (e.g. Castells, 1996), but that ‘what is new is how you get access to information, and to much more’ (Dutton, 1999: 4).

6. The Internet

The Internet had its origins as an academic and research network in the 1960s. Its growth in the past decade has been characterized as a revolution (Lin, 2001). In the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, it is described as the greatest technological innovation of the twentieth century (Marshall, 1998). Barlow et al (1995) find no parallel in recorded history for the advent of the Internet. With the development of the Internet, and with the increasing persuasiveness of communication between networked computers, we are in the middle of the most transforming technological event since the capture of fire (p. 40).

The Internet is not about technology, it is not about information, it is about communication – people talking with each other, people exchanging e-mail… The Internet is mass participation in fully bidirectional, uncensored mass communication. Communication is the basis, the foundation, the radical ground and root upon which all community stands, grows and thrives. The Internet is a community of chronic communicators (p. 11).

Putnam (2000) stresses the potential positive association between CMC and community, arguing that the Internet can enhance community substantially, perhaps even dramatically.

Virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on… public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace (p. 5).

The first and best known form of online community is based upon common interests. It is often referred to as 'the virtual community' (Rheingold, 1993; 2000). As one of the most distinguishing features of the Internet is that it is free of physical barriers, most communities online are based on interest rather than geography. The online community of interest is typically geographically dispersed and is brought together through diverse CMC tools, such as mailing lists and chat groups.

7. Research Hypotheses

H 1: The more the use of Internet the less is face-to-face communication
H 2: Internet community is more likely the netflix

8. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature generally tends to treat the phenomena of Internet community. Media have become so powerful that they can shape and influence the individual’s attitudes, beliefs, values and lifestyles. Surveys on Internet access and use by children and the youth are now being regularly conducted in many countries. Existing literature on Internet community looked at Internet access and utilization particularly in terms of what is the activities when you go online, computer at home and the Internet increased or decreased the amount of your time. As increasing numbers of young people seek to master the use of media tools to express themselves, explore their identities, and connect with peers—to be active creators as well as consumers of culture—educators have an opportunity to encourage young media makers to exercise active citizenship.

Rheingold (1993) defined a virtual community as a social aggregation that has emerged online, which is able to carry public discussion for a long duration. The community members are able to form relationships through this discussion. Rheingold (2002) later updated his description. Virtual communities are social environments organized around shared interests, many-to-many communication, web-based media (which is always evolving) and relatively uncoupled with physical life.

Alternatively, Fernback and Thompson (1995) defined an online community as a social relationship constructed in cyberspace through repeated contact within set boundaries. Similarly, Koh and Kim (2001) defined an online community as a group of people with a common interest or goal within cyberspace. Chayko (2007) interpreted a social network as; “a set of linked individuals whose patterns of connectedness form a channel through which information, influence, emotional intensity and sociability can be measured and charted. The more multifunctional the community is the larger the attraction and future loyalty, however there is the problem of focus. The community must be guided in the direction of original main purpose. Therefore the formality of the community should be built around its overall function (Matzat et al., 2000). For an online community to be considered formal, internal
parameters that structure the virtual space are required (Butler et al., 2002).

Kietzmann (2004) states that, “modes of communication, whether formal (perhaps hierarchically determined) channels or informal (such as CoP [Communities of Practice] oriented communication, grapevine, gossip) can be verbal or non-verbal, can include local face-to-face or face-to-group interaction, or distant interaction via audio, visual and written communication”. Preece et al. (2003) discuss how the technologies of the Internet and the tools available have developed over time, which has greatly increased participation in online communities amongst young people; from emails to instant messaging services and websites. “Online communities appeared in a variety of media, which were gradually integrated into single environments.

Significantly, the findings of the previous studies are mixed at best. For example, Nie and Erbring (2000) and Kraut et al. (1998) found that the more people used the Internet, the lonelier they felt and the less they engaged in interpersonal communication, even with their family members. The finding was consistent with the findings of McKenna and Bargh (2000), and McKenna, Green, and Gleason (2002). Not surprisingly, other studies found the positive impact of the Internet on social interaction with family and friends (e.g., Kraut et al., 2002; Lee & Kuo, 2002; Robinson, Barth, & Kohut, 1997) and on community and political involvement (e.g., Katz, Rice, & Aspden, 2001). Notably, the studies suggesting negative impact of Internet use on people outnumber those that reported beneficial influences of Internet use.

9. METHODS
Participants and Procedure

Three hundred students were selected from four government colleges in district Dera Ismail Khan (2 male and 2 female colleges). The age limit was 18 and was of 25. This survey collected the data from 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year classes. The questionnaire was distributed among both the discipline physical and social sciences. One hundred and fifty were male and 150 female students. Sample size was 300. The purpose was to ensure a representative sample. Random sampling technique was adopted to ensure the choice of selection.

9.1. Data Collection

This section explored the different ways in which various data collection methods have been used, including questionnaires and focus groups. The data assessed students’ responses through ordinal level of measurement. The main thrust of the inferential statistics was the correlation matrix. Correlation synthesis of the result presents a clear decorum of empiricism approach. The questionnaire survey aimed to evaluate the computer projects in terms of their success at creating digital inclusion and the sense of net community in D.I.Khan district. A considerable amount of time and effort was put into the surveys in terms of, for example, design, questions and operationalisations of the concepts. The questions were based upon the initial in-depth interviews and participant observations. The surveys were piloted on about 20 Swedish people. Feedback on the questionnaires was provided by people at educational institution in the said district.

10. Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More IT-Interest and Knowledge</td>
<td>201.71</td>
<td>42.41</td>
<td>59.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Contacts between Residents</td>
<td>205.69</td>
<td>43.24</td>
<td>61.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Contacts with Politicians</td>
<td>199.06</td>
<td>41.85</td>
<td>59.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger Cohesion</td>
<td>199.06</td>
<td>41.85</td>
<td>59.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Group Tension</td>
<td>204.37</td>
<td>42.96</td>
<td>60.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased national/ international Identity</td>
<td>199.06</td>
<td>41.85</td>
<td>59.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Face-to-Face Contact</td>
<td>199.06</td>
<td>41.85</td>
<td>59.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result of $X^2$ have been shown that net community is distinct from sociological bonds because net crosses the borders and expends knowledge share/increased contacts with all people in the world. The alpha was set at .05 which is <0.000. The significant level of p was ***0.000 that showed that net community was more strong than the other contacts.
Table 1.2: Removing Resilience
Analysis of Variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>138042</td>
<td>69021</td>
<td>151.78</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8185</td>
<td>455</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>146227</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Individual 95% CIs For Mean
Based on Pooled StDev

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StDev</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>213.29</td>
<td>29.26</td>
<td>(---)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>13.43</td>
<td>(---)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>62.43</td>
<td>18.10</td>
<td>(---)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pooled StDev = 21.32

Finding revealed that social Networks build a sense of Community, Net encourage community involvement. Build networks among voluntary organizations, Stimulating communication and goal-setting, Community and individual resilience Show the positive outlook and Encapsulates a range of interrelated innate at p***sig. 0.000 M=213.29, 26.00 and 62.43 while SD was 29.26, 13.43 and 18.10 respectively foe agree neutral and disagree.
11. CONCLUSION

We have concluded that internet and world community is a phenomenon of trust and resilience. Individuals can choose friends with similar characteristics. It was found that actions of adjacent agents in a social network is external influence from elements in the environment (also referred to as confounding factors), which are more likely to affect individuals that are located close to each other in the social network. There are still many interesting open directions left for future research. First, our techniques provide only a quantitative indication of the existence of influence and not a qualitative measure. Furthermore, we do not provide any formal verification of our results.

We investigated what kind of psychological benefits Internet users gain from their participation in an online community. We discovered that the benefits associated with group belonging and emotional support slightly prevail over the benefits connected with the particular content of communication in the group. Apart from that, we determined that respondents tend to see more benefits from their membership if they visit the community more often, strengthening thereby their group identity; nevertheless, the amount of time spent online does not itself increase the perception of benefits.

The loss of community members - is a risk posed to online communities and one that community operators wish to avoid. Successful online instructors realize that building a sense of ‘community’ in the online classroom is necessary for successful learning outcomes... The development of community becomes a parallel stream to the content being explored’ in online courses.

REFERENCES


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