

# The Application of Social Media in Knowledge Management

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**Abstract** - The social networking sites are being used predominantly at the age of Information and communication technology. The sites are now regarded as one of the prime disseminator and consolidator of information. The study is directed to unveil the implications of social networking software, especially Facebook, over the knowledge management. A methodology of reviewing related literatures and a quantitative analysis of the postings under the Facebook group 'LIS Group in West Bengal' have been followed to establish the theoretical propositions on the factual ground. Finally, some conclusions are drawn on the basis of the findings. It was found that the use of the social networking sites in knowledge management is gaining popularity day by day. The job oriented information was published in most of the cases and the male group members participate more in the group communication.

**Keywords:** Social media, social networking sites, Facebook, Knowledge management

## L.INTRODUCTION

Knowledge becomes prominent through conversations. In practical cases knowledge emerges from the various collaborative activities and social capital plays an important role in this respect. Social Software facilitates the interactions among the people and thus helps in the knowledge creation, knowledge designing and dissemination. Social software also helps to accumulate expert opinions, irrespective of the special boundaries. It leaves the control of knowledge with the individuals owning it.

While using the social software a person can manage his own space and he can administer the sharing of information according to his own desire.

Knowledge Management (KM) and collaboration are very significant in generating innovativeness and creativity among the people. Primarily almost each KM effort was to be used as synonymously with the creation of knowledge bases to allow the use and reuse of the stored knowledge and various collaborative activities were performed on the basis of the knowledge bases, in a typical top-down approach where knowledge was regarded as a separate entity. The emerging Social Software offers a possibility to complement the top-down approach with user friendly tools and many simpler and more flexible features.

Sometimes even email, discussion lists or message boards are regarded as different manifestations of Social Software.

It is true that, they facilitate social interaction to some extent. But there is an important contrast between the traditional communication software - forming people into groups with a top-down approach and assigning membership, as discussion lists and forums usually do, and Social Software - with its bottom-up approach, enabling people to organize themselves into a network based on their preferences.<sup>[1]</sup>

Generally a social software is assumed to possess the under stated characteristics-

- a. It facilitates interaction among people of various socio-cultural dimensions. The interaction can be a real time conversation, like instant messaging, or it can be slow time conversations, like collaborative virtual conversations.
- b. It allows the members to give proper feedback. The provision for feedback mechanism can significantly affect the improvement of the communication among the members.
- c. It helps to form the virtual networks of people. The networks they form can illustrate their social network in the real world and this network can be extended through the social networking sites.

The use of the social technologies is increasing rapidly due to the application of various low-cost tools. The growing popularity of internet among the members is also a crucial factor which plays a pivotal role in the promotion of social technologies. People tend to form their own virtual network in alignment with their own social network rather than any traditional company like top-down order.

**Social media:** There are mainly three types of social technologies, weblogs, wikis and social network services. These types are discussed briefly in the following lines.

**Weblogs:** A weblog is a type of web application. It allows its members to post periodically on a common webpage which is accessible to others. The postings are arranged in reverse chronological order.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Wikis:** Like the weblog a wiki enables a user to add any content, but it also permits anyone to edit the published content. A wiki facilitates the creation of knowledge through collective effort with the help of a HTML web browser.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Social network software:** The social networks are the platforms which enables people to familiarize and

communicate with other people. They promote the sharing of knowledge in the efficient and effective way. The social networking software enables its members to form virtual communities.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Facebook:** Facebook is a social networking website which was launched on February 4th, 2004. The components of the basic structure of Facebook are discussed below<sup>[3]</sup>:

**News Feed:** Primarily, the users were enabled to create and customize their own profile. After recent modifications now the users are provided with the provision for creating an alternative home page, which can display the recent activities of the other members belonging to their Facebook community.

**Friend:** A member of Facebook can send invitation to another user to join him in the group. If the recipients accept the request then he will be the ‘friend’ of the sender of ‘friend request’. A user can also de-friend another user if he wish to do so.

**Wall:** Originally, the Wall was the main space for displaying the uploaded contents by a user. But now the Wall is replaced with a new and modified feature named, ‘Timeline’. Timeline provides a profile layout to display the contents uploaded by the user.

**Like:** A user can give his positive feedback to any posting (it may be text, photo or video) by clicking on ‘Like’ option in Facebook. The number of likes by a user represents his feedback and preferences and the News Feed cater him according to these factors.

**Messages and inbox:** From the beginning Facebook is providing the messaging facilities to its members. A user can send message to his any Facebook friend at a time. Even if the recipient deletes the message from his inbox it will be present in the inboxes of the other group members for future requirements.

**Notifications:** ‘Notifications’ inform the users about any inclusion to his profile. A user will be notified if a message is shared on his Timeline or any comment is made by others on user’s postings or even any modification on a post against which the user has commented earlier.

**Groups:** A Facebook user can create and join a ‘Group’. The group members can share and edit textual documents, comments, messages, events, photos and videos among themselves. A user can join maximum 6,000 groups in Facebook.

The groups facilitate collaboration in knowledge creation and sharing. Through this particular feature a number of people can assemble online to share their contents. In Facebook according to the level of privacy and preference there are three options related to the groups.

- a. In ‘Open’ group any one (even the non-members) can see the group, its members and their activities but none can interact with the group members without joining.
- b. In ‘Closed’ group any one (even the non-members) can see the group and its members but the comments of the group members are not for public unless joining the concerned group.

- c. In “Secret” group no one can view anything unless being invited by a group member to join the group.

## II.OBJECTIVES

The study is mainly aimed at-

- I. Highlighting the use of Facebook in the dissemination of knowledge among the users of a particular group, during a particular span of time.

## III.SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study has been conducted with special emphasis upon a Facebook group named, ‘LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL’. The group is primarily concerned with the accumulation, sharing and acquisition of knowledge, particular to the library and information science. The postings which were done during the year 2014 have been analyzed in this paper.

## IV.METHODOLOGY

The concerned literatures were reviewed in a conceptual mode and a quantitative analysis of the postings under the LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL group has been followed. The total no. of postings done in the year 2014 was calculated. The number of postings during the first and second half of the year was compared. The postings were classified according to their content into four categories: Job oriented information, information regarding the upcoming events (like- seminar, quiz, etc.), information regarding the UGC CBSE NET examination and other information requirements (like- admissions, enquiries on specific issues, etc.). The members who have posted the information during 2014 were categorized according to their gender into two categories, i.e., Male and Female.

## V. LITERATURE REVIEW

Wikipedia (December, 2014) have discussed the main components of the basic structure of Facebook with details. Randolph Chun Ho Chan (August, 2013) has presented a comparative study between the blogs and Facebook in knowledge management activities. Xuan Zhao (May, 2013) has discussed how the users can use the social media platform to create, disseminate and curate their knowledge in their day to day life. Jeff Hemsley (April, 2013) has discussed the application of social networking sites in alignment with different knowledge management models. Satidchoke Phosaard (2011) has presented a blueprint of an organizational framework of knowledge management through the use of social media. Gabriela Avram (2006) has discussed the main categories of the social media with detailed explanation and a practical study was provided to display the use of social media in knowledge management.

## VI. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims to provide answers to the following questions in a precise manner-

1. Which gender category of group members shared information in most of the cases?
2. How many postings were done during the first and second half of the year 2014?
3. Which type of information was published in most of the cases during 2014?

## VII. FINDINGS

1. Male users are participating more in group communication than their female counter parts in the Facebook group LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL.

As we can observe from Table I, during 2014 total 241 postings were done under LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL group, among which 79% of postings were done by the male group members and 21% of postings were done by the female group members.

TABLE I GENDER WISE DIVISION OF LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL GROUP MEMBERS WHO POSTED INFORMATION DURING THE YEAR 2014.

Genders of the group members	No. of Postings
Male users	191
Female users	50

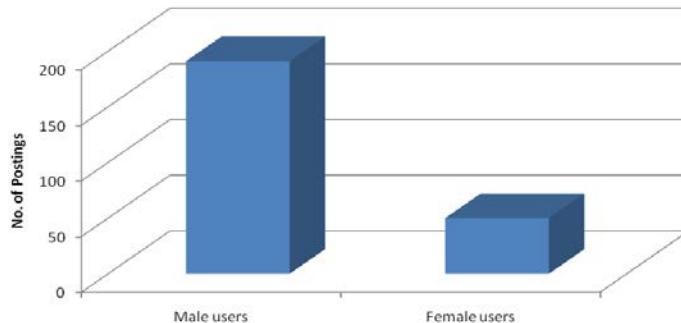


Fig. 1 Gender-wise division of LIS groups

2. The use of Facebook group LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL in information sharing and accumulation is rising.

As we can observe from Table II, during 2014 total 241 postings were done under LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL

group, among them only 49% postings were done during the first half of the year (January 01, 2014 – June 30, 2014) and 51% postings were done during the second half of the year (July 01, 2014 – December 31, 2014).

TABLE II NUMBER OF POSTINGS ON LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL GROUP DURING THE YEAR 2014

Period	No. of Postings
January 01 - June 30, 2014	117
July 01 - December 31, 2015	124

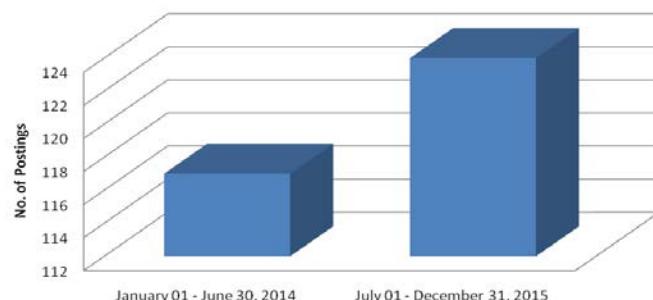


Fig. 2 No. of postings on LIS group

*3. Job oriented information are being shared in most of the cases in the Facebook group LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL.*

As we can observe from Table III, during 2014 total 241 postings were done under LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL

group, among which 41% postings were job oriented, 30% posting were related to other issues, 19% postings were about seminar/ journal publication and quiz and only 10% postings were related to UGC-CBSE NET examination.

TABLE III TYPES OF POSTINGS DONE UNDER LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL GROUP DURING THE YEAR 2014.

Types of Postings	Definition	No. of Postings during January 01 - June 30 in 2014	No. of Postings during July 1 - December 31 in 2014
Job oriented	Postings that explain the vacancies of various government and non-government jobs and some interview schedule.	56	42
Upcoming events (like-seminar, quiz, etc.)	Postings related to the sharing and exchanging of information about seminar, workshop, quiz and call for articles.	17	30
UGC-CBSE NET	Postings that interprets the questions and answer related to UGC-CBSE Net and SET questions, process of form-fill up, and how to apply online, etc.	9	14
Others (admission procedure, enquiries)	The postings which disseminate the news related to the admission procedure of various institutions, the enquiries related to specific issues.	35	38
Total		117	124

### VIII. LIMITATIONS

The study is primarily concerned with the application of the ‘Groups’ feature of Facebook upon the knowledge management. The other features like, Notifications, Events, Photos and Videos were not studied.

This study is concentrated on the information that was posted during the year 2014. But it is quite difficult to set forth any concrete conclusion about the trends prevailing among the members of the concerned web community through such a short time study.

### IX. CONCLUSION

The interactive bottom-up model followed by the social networking sites encourage the people to get involved in sharing of their knowledge in a collaborative space. The professionals who belong to different socio-cultural backgrounds but interconnected with a same professional interest are finding the social media very useful to accumulate the expert opinions and comments throughout the globe. The professionals can update their knowledge by following the shared information regarding the recent developments in their fields and even in the allied disciplines.

The approach followed by this social media is very flexible. The mode of communication among the users is basically informal.

This paper has attempted to study the application of social technologies, especially the social networking sites, in the

process of knowledge creation, sharing and accumulation. Facebook has been selected to represent the varied field of social networking sites and the postings under the Facebook group named, LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL has been analyzed to fulfill the objectives of the study. The information posted under the LIS GROUP IN WEST BENGAL group during the year 2014 was analyzed to measure up the usage of the Facebook group in the collaborative interaction among the group members. The postings were categorized according to their content to find out the type of information, which was published in most of the cases. The group members who posted information during the year 2014 were classified according to their genders.

The study has provided answers to some specific questions. According to the findings the use of social networking sites in knowledge management is gaining heed day by day. In most of the cases Job oriented information is being shared in the group communication environment. The male group members are posting more information than the female group members.

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