Slicing Social Media and It's Evolution

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Abstract - While traditional media allows for vertical flow of content from powerful conglomerates to isolated consumers, social media has allowed information to flow horizontally between consumers. It is considered as a trustworthy source of information compared to the traditional marketing communication tools. As Social media diffusion and adoption has been recognized by researchers as well as industry this study attempts to provide a chronological order of social media evolution together with its significance, types, users and attributes based on the review of existing body of knowledge. It concludes by highlighting the imminent significance of social media in contemporary world and its prospective relevance.

I. DEFINING SOCIAL MEDIA

The term 'Social Media' is a construct from two areas of research, sociology and communication science, it enables its users/participants to communicate along dyadic ties [1]. Integration of social communication and online media that facilitate interaction between users is termed as social media. Kaplan & Haenlein [2] define social media as "a group of internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". This definition is somewhat similar to that of Murphy, Hill, and Dean [3], who define it as: "The network of web-systems and websites and that allow mass interaction, conversation, and sharing among members". Also, Filo et al, [4] provided a similar definition of social media as, "New media technologies facilitating interactivity and co-creation that allow for the development and sharing of user-generated content among individuals, groups as well as organizations". Some of the major definitions of social media that shaped the literature are as:

Table 1 Definitions of Social Media

Author	Definition	Reference
Blackshaw and Nazzaro	A variety of new sources of online information that are created, Initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on education each other about products, brands, services, personalities and issues.	[5]
Alexander Richter & Michael Koch	Social media are online applications, platforms and media which aim to facilitate interactions, collaborations and the sharing of content	[6]
Brian Solis	Online tools that people use to share content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives and media itself, thus facilitating conversations and interaction online between groups of people	[7]
Mark Dykeman	Social media is the means for any person to: publish digital, creative content; provide and obtain real-time feedback via online discussions, commentary and evaluations; and incorporate changes or corrections to the original content.	[8]
Larry Weber	Online environments where people with common interest share their ideas and comments.	[9]
Andreas Kaplan & Michael Haenlien	Social media is a group of internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.	[2]
Angella J. Kim & Eunju Ko	Social media are the two-way communication platforms that allow users to interact with each other online to share information and opinions	[10]
Alison Henderson and Rachel Bowley	Social media is collaborative online applications and technologies that enable participation, connectivity user-generated content, sharing of information, and collaboration amongst a community of users	[11]
Laura Malita	"Social media are the tools that facilitate the socialization of content, social media services encourage collaboration, interaction, and communication through discussion, feedback, voting, comments, and sharing of information from all interested parties"	[12]

Jaclyn Cabral	Social media is basically a template for the user who can then personalize the source's uses and productivity. It is a highly dense and vast resource that is being used on a consistent basis to maintain relationships.	[13]
Jan H. Kietzmann et. al.	Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content.	[14]
Berthon et.al.	Social media is a series of both hardware and software technological innovations (Web2.0) that facilitate creative online users' inexpensive content creation, interaction, and interoperability.	[15]
Irem E. Erdogmus, & Mesut Cicek	activities, practices and behavior met in the communities which gather to share information, knowledge and opinions by means of conversational environments	[16]
Joe Murphy et. al.	Social media is the collection of websites and web-based systems that allow for mass interaction, conversation, and sharing among members of a network.	[3]
Kevin Filo et. al.	New media technologies facilitating interactivity and co-creation that allow for the development and sharing of user-generated content among and between organizations, groups and individuals.	[4]

We understand Social media as usage of web and mobile technologies to create, consume and share knowledge and information without any geographical, social, political or demographical boundaries through public interaction in a participatory and collaborative way. Its key feature can be summed up as:

- It's an online media.
- It is a two way communication platform.
- It is interactive in nature.
- It supports user generated content.
- It is Real-time.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has become an undeniable source of information for businesses as well as customers and it has led to the customer empowerment by reducing organizational control on communication. The world that is today, is a world designed by social media and the free-flow of conversations that this phenomenon enables and endorses [17]. Social media is a marvel that has drawn a lot of devotion of the researchers as well the industry. Social media allows organizations to communicate with customer and get their feedback [18]. Hanna, Rohm, and Crittenden [19] argue that consumers anticipate and even appreciate their role as active participants in business consumer interactions driven by social media, thereby revolutionizing marketing practices such as advertising and promotion. Social media have transformed the Internet from a platform for information, to a platform for influence. According to Rangaswamy and Van Bruggen [20], customers are becoming accustomed to social media for communication and interaction with businesses. The contemporary world is fast paced and does not allow for many opportunities of interaction at a personal level. Social media provides business organization an opportunity to connect with its current as well as potential customers and further develop and establish a strong long term relationships. Social media prompts impulse purchases, drive sales from new and loyal customers, and

also provide credible information of customers and their interests, perceptions and attitudes [21].

Social Media and Social Networking

Social networking is often used interchangeably with social media. However, Social networking is one of the services in the social media. The term "Social Network" existed far before the internet came into picture. However, it got popular due to the advent of internet and web 2.0 that resulted in launching of the very popular social networking websites such as Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn [22]. Social Networking is a tool that connects people together, while as social media is a full-fledged marketing strategy. Social media is primarily used to disseminate information with a broad audience, while social networking aims at engaging and building relations with people of common interests [23] [24]. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines social media as "forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)." The same source defines networking as "the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions; specifically: the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business." Social media is a system, a communication platform, in contrast, social networking is a two-way communication channel through which relationships are developed [25].

Social Media and Web 2.0

With the internet boom most of the business organizations rushed to have an internet presence and thereby converted their corporate information brochures into websites [15]. These websites were mainly static and were published by the website owners in a way that visitors could only view the content provided on the website. However with the advent of web 2.0, websites became interactive and dynamic. More importantly it shifted the control of content from business organizations to customers/users [26]. While Web 2.0 media presents communications and sales opportunities for marketers, it brings with it an opportunity for marketers and worrying lack of control of marketing

messages [27]. The advent of Web 2.0 technologies over the past has given rise to the growth of Social Media Sites (SMSs) such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter [2]. Musser and O'Reilly [28] define Web 2.0 as: "a set of economic, social, and technology trends that collectively form the basis for the next generation of the Internet—a more mature, distinctive medium characterized by user participation, openness, and network effects". Hoegg et al, [29] suggested that web 2.0 is "the philosophy of mutually maximizing collective intelligence and added value for each participant by formalized and dynamic information sharing and creation. Constantinides & Fountain [30] defined web 2.0 as "a collection of open-source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes." The Web 2.0 concept refers to second generation internet based web services; namely, social networking environments, web based encyclopedias, forums, podcasts and other environments where online sharing is possible.

From the marketing perspective, the web 2.0 should be perceived as the new tool for the marketing communication mix and facilitator and enabler of social media. Now users can create content and share it without the need for technical expertise. For many people, Web 2.0 is a concept representing technologies that makes our lives easier such as blogs, wikis, and podcasts Web 2.0 is a catalyst that reflects and accelerates changes in technology and society. Web 2.0 can be thought of as the technical infrastructure that enables the social phenomenon of collective media and facilitates consumer generated content, it enables the creation and distribution of content that is social media [15]. In accordance to the Web 2.0 concept, the social media concept was created. Social media is a media system that turns unilateral information sharing into a bilateral and simultaneous one with the public offering of Web 2.0. Social media has empowered customers to become active members rather than being passive respondents.

III. SOCIAL MEDIA AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Social media is an important networking medium among youngsters, its unique features have created huge impetus on the contemporary marketing mix. Marketers have realized the importance of social media as an essential component of integrated marketing mix which can ultimately lead to higher sales and help in increasing the market share of their products [31]. Social media has rapidly changed the present-day marketing approach. Customers have embraced social media in their day to day lives enabling them to connect with friends and acquaintances as well as complete strangers that in turn has affected their shopping behavior. Nowadays every

business activity revolves around social media, businesses are taking advantage of this contemporary marketing platform for customer engagement, relationship building and promotional activities on real time basis with relatively low cost and high efficiency. Social media has brought considerable and persistent changes to whole communication system and it is clear that, for better or for worse, social media is very powerful [14]. Social media being a two way communication system is different than other traditional modes of communication, it not only reduces the time constraint but provides a way for continues interaction. From the idea generation stage to the after sale service the customers are in touch with the business organization providing the valuable feedback that helps a business organization to continuously update or alter a product. Consumers as well as marketers have adopted this paradigm shift across the length and breadth of globe. McAllister and Turow [32] stated that this new media offers three essential elements that differentiate it from traditional ones.

1. Its digital nature that enables users to access, send, transform, create, and store materials online.
2. Ability to create a real-time, two-way interaction.
3. Ability to track, sort and predict users' activities.

Social media is not a broadcast medium, it is not based on one-to-many communication model rather it is a many-to-many open and disruptive communication system [33], therefore customers are utilizing it for making purchase decisions [34].

Social Media Statistics

Social media has become an indispensable part of contemporary business organizations. In the last decade, social media use has become one of the most rapidly growing activities worldwide since the invention of television. While as Radio reached fifty million listeners in roughly about 30 years, television took about thirteen years to reach this number of viewers. Surprisingly, internet reached the same number of users in only four years, and one of the social media network, Facebook reached that figure in only one and half years. Today more than half of total world population is using internet among that about 3.196 billion people amounting to approximately 42% world population are active social media users [35]. With an astonishing global growth rate of 21%, social media users are increasing rapidly, Facebook has retained its spot for being the mostly used social media and with 2.167 billion active users approximately 28.5% of world population is using Facebook [36].

Evolution of Social Media

Marketing channels have evolved over time, this has led to many changes in the ways business organizations connect with customers. Although the traditional channels of communication are not completely obsolete, contemporary communications channels especially social media have taken over marketing landscape. Marketing channels are increasingly becoming blurred, social media provides brands with direct as well as one of the most trusted and personal points of access to the customers. It provides a good opportunity now, and a great opportunity lies ahead. Therefore, it is essential for businesses to start testing this medium, or they risk being left behind in the future [37]. Social media evolution began with the introduction of UseNet in 1979 [38], [39]. However Borders argue that emergence of social media began in the 1950's with phone phreaking [40]. MashableIndia, a digital media news site also published a timeline, but it marked the beginning of social media as the first email in 1971 [41]. The history of social media traces back as far as the late 1970s, when computer hobbyists Ward Christensen and Randy Suess invented the bulletin board system (BBS) [42]. The first network allowing users to share data on the internet was developed in 1969 by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), a United States government agency, and was called ARPANET [40].

Lot of changes has taken place since 1960s when the first email was sent, this is mainly credited to the information and communication technology revolution. Very early on, social media was considered as an illegal and ungoverned networking medium for tech savvy individuals. It was not widely embraced by businesses and not much value was placed on the usefulness of the technologies. However, due to the unexpected diffusion of internet, social media spread to global audience within no time. Marketing managers are still attempting to understand the nitty gritty of social media in order utilize the enormous data to produce valuable customer insights, to increase sales and to improve their return on investment. There are hundreds of different social media sites accessible to users nowadays, this rich and diverse ecology of social media vary in terms of scope and functionality. The timeline of significant aspects of the evolution of social media have been noted below.

Table 2 Evolution of Social Media

Year	Development	Remarks
1969	Arpanet	Arpanet was developed under the direction of United States Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) in 1969. It was used mainly as a network for scientific collaboration by University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Stanford Research Institute (SRI), University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) and University of Utah School of Computing.
1980's	Usenet	Usenet was Established in 1980's, it is a collection of user generated messages, posts and notes clubbed under various subjects/categories known as newsgroups. These newsgroups are hosted and distributed via usenet servers and are available for a particular time period. Other users can read and reply to newsgroups after signing in.
1983	America Online	America Online AOL. Started as Control Video Corporation in 1983 and shortly went bust. In 1985 it was reborn by the name of Quantum Computer Services, later renamed as AOL in 1991 with over 1,00,000 user base. By 2000 AOL was Americas biggest internet service provider with a worth of 125 Billion USD. AOL products comprised of E-mail, instant messaging, web browser and web portal.
1984	Prodigy	An online service introduced in 1984 and became the second largest service provider by 1990
1985	Genie	Genie General Electric network for information exchange was created in 1985 by General Electric and claimed to have 3,50,000 users with 10,000 peak simultaneous users. It included forums (Roundtables), chat rooms (LiveWire), games (gemstone III), etc.
1988	Internet Relay Chat	IRC (Internet Relay Chat) created by Jarkko Oikarinen at University of Oulu, Finland in August 1988. IRC offered real time discussions, chatting and other Bulletin Board features.
1990's	Bulletin Board Systems	BBSs (Bulletin Board Systems), prior to internet revolution of early 1990's, the combination of inexpensive dial up connections and computer software allowed users to connect to a system. Once logged in the user was able to upload and download data and software, reading news, exchanging messages with other users through public message boards, direct chatting and via email.
1990's	CompuServe	CompuServe was the first major commercial online service provider in United States comprising of online chat systems, message forums, online games and software libraries. It remained a major influence till mid 1990's.
1996	Instant Message Client	ICQ Instant message client was developed and popularized by Mirabilis an Israel based company. ICQ was the first standalone online instant messenger.
1997	SixDegree	SixDegree The first social media site that everyone can agree actually was social media was a website called Six Degrees (Hale, 2015). It was named after the 'six degrees of separation' theory and lasted from 1997 to 2001.
1997	Asian Avenue	Asian avenue a social network that targeted Asian-American community.
1998	MMORPGS	MMORPGS (Massively multiplayer online role-playing games) Underlight, world of Warcraft, star wars, etc.
1999	Blogger	Blogger is a blog publishing online service with time stamping and geo tagging facilities.
1999	Livejournal	Livejournal started by an American Brad Fitzpatrick.
1999	CyWorld	CyWorld a southkorean social network, it was Korean equivalent to American Myspace.
2000	MiGente	MiGente is as an online social networking site targeting Hispanic community.
2000	Tripadvisor	Tripadvisor is a review service providing reviews about hotels, restaurants, accommodation and travel related queries.
2000	LunarStorm	LunarStorm a Swedish commercial virtual community based social networking website targeted at teenagers.
2001	BlackPlanet	Blackplanet launched by Omar Wasow. It was an African-American matchmaking and job-posting network, later it also introduced interactive games for its users.

2001	Napster	Napster was founded as rhapsody later renamed as Napster in 2016, it is an online music subscription service.
2001	Ryze	Ryze founded by Adrian Scott. Ryze is a professional network for budding entrepreneurs.
2001	Wikipedia	Wikipedia a web based free encyclopedia that is openly edited by volunteers mostly being anonymous.
2002	Friendster	Friendster started as a social networking website and later relaunched as a social gaming website based in Malaysia in 2011.
2003	H15	HI5 is a social networking site based in California, by the end of 2006 it was 8th largest social network.
2003	LinkedIn	LinkedIn a business and employment oriented website. It uses professional networking to bring together job seekers and job providers.
2003	Myspace	MySpace is an interactive social networking site providing user-submitted network of friends, profiles, groups, photos, blogs, music, and videos.
2003	Photobucket	Photobucket is an online community of image and video hosting, embedded blogs and photobucket stories.
2003	Delicious	Delicious is a social bookmarking service for discovering, storing and sharing web bookmarks.
2003	Second life	Second life is a virtual world Gaming service wherein users called as residents create a virtual representation of themselves called as avatars.
2004	Facebook	Facebook is a social networking site launched as a Harvard exclusive and later went out as open user access in 2006.
2004	Orkut	Orkut is a social networking website owned by google.
2004	Flickr	Flickr was acquired by yahoo in 2005. Flickr is an online image and video hosting web service.
2004	Digg	Digg launched as a social news website enabling users to discover, share, recommend and vote web content up (digging) or down (burying). Digg now works as a news aggregator for online users.
2005	Yahoo 360	Yahoo 360 launched iby Yahoo as a social networking site including blogs, feeds, photos, friend updates, music, feeds etc.
2005	BeBo	BeBo is a social app comprising of livestream, Bebo Author, chat and groups etc.
2005	Youtube	YouTube is a video hosting service, it allows users to upload, view, rate, share and comment on videos.
2005	Reddit	Reddit is a social news, media aggregation, online discussion, web content rating service.
2007	Zynga	Zynga mainly focuses on social video games like FarmVille, FrontierVille and CityVille.
2007	Ustream	Ustream.tv is a live video streaming and video hosting service.
2007	Twitter	Twitter is an online social networking service with a niche of micro blogging. It restricts the tweets to 140 characters.
2007	Justin,tv	Justin.tv online video broadcasting service where users broadcast video through their accounts called as "channels".
2007	Tumblr	Tumblr a microblogging and social networking site. Users post images, videos and other multimedia through blogs.
2007	Vimeo	Vimeo is a video sharing service.
2008	Posterous	Posterous started as a blogging service that supports integrated posting of blogs on other social media applications like Facebook and twitter.
2008	ResearchGate	ReserachGate a social networking site for researchers and scientists to share their work, papers, answer questions and find collaborators. .
2008	Airbnb	Airbnb is an online market for hospitality industry that enables people to lease or rent rooms, apartments, lodges, hostels etc.
2008	Zomato	Zomato is a restaurant search and review service.
2009	Whatsapp	It is a cross platform application that enables users to send images, videos, documents, etc., and users can also make voice and video call. Whatsapp was acquired by Facebook in 2014.
2010	Pinterest	Pinterest launched in 2010, it discovers information, collects as well as stores it on internet utilizing images, videos and GIF's.
2010	Instagram	Instagram pictures and video sharing service started by Facebook in 2010.
2010	Quora	Quora made public in 2010, it is a question and answer community.
2011	Snapchat	Snapchat mainly a photo and message sharing service, that later on started stories and video chat.
2011	Google Plus	Google Plus is a social networking site launched by goggle.
2012	Vine	Vine is a video hosting service.
2012	hike	It is a cross platform instant messaging service and also provides the facility of voice over internet protocol.
2015	Periscope	Periscope is a live video streaming application.

IV. SOCIAL MEDIA TYPES

Scoble [43] developed an interesting diagram in the form of a starfish representing the social media landscape, popularly known as scoble's starfish. According to him social media comprise of Videos, photos, blogs, events, white label social networks, collaborative tools, wikis, audios, email, sms, microblog and personal social networks.

Brain Solis on the other hand introduced a visual map of social media in 2008 called as "Conversation Prism" and further updated it in 2013. According to this social media morphology comprises of Social Networks, Blogs/Micro blogs, Expert Question-Answer, Comments, Social Commerce, Social Stream, wikis, Social Bookmarking, etc. [44].

Figure 1 Scoble's Starfish *[43]*

Constantinides & Fountain [30] classified social media into five main categories: Blogs, Social Networks, Content Communities, Forums/Bulletin Boards, and Content Aggregators. While as Fischer & Reuber [45] proposed eight types of social media: Social Networks, Blogs, Micro-Blogs, Video Sharing, Picture Sharing, Social Bookmarking, User Forum and Professional Networks. Social media include Blogs, Wikis, Social bookmarking, Social networking, Status-update services, Virtual world content and Media sharing sites [46]. Kaplan & Haenlein [2] categories social media into Collaborative projects, Blogs, Content Communities, Social networking sites, virtual game world and Virtual social worlds. Social media include social networking sites, Consumer review sites, Content community sites, Wikis, Internet forums and Location-based social media [47]. It also includes blogs and microblogs, social networking sites, virtual worlds, collaborative projects, content community sites, and sites dedicated to feed back [48].

Figure 2 Conversation Prism 5.0 *[44]*

As more and more social media types are adding rich features like livestreaming and augmented reality, the demarcating lines between their feature set continue to disappear. Social media in general can be categorized into ten major types, i. e.

- Social networks. (Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Micro blogging. (Twitter, plurk, plerb)

- Media sharing networks. (Instagram, Snapchat, Youtube, Vimeo)
- Discussion forums. (Quora, Digg, Reddit)
- Wikis. (wikiwikiweb, Wikipedia, Mediawiki, WikiLeaks)
- Bookmarking and content curation networks. (Pinterest, Flipboard)
- Consumer review networks. (TripAdvisor, Zomato, Yelp)
- Blogging and publishing networks. (Tumblr, Wordpress, Medium)
- Interest based networks. (Goodreads, Houzz, Last.fm)
- Social shopping networks. (Etsy, Fancy, Polyvore)
- Sharing economy networks. (Uber, Airbnb, Taskrabbit)
- Anonymous social networks. (After School, Whisper)

Knowing these types/categories of social media and the reason people use them can open up new ideas and channels of engagement with audience [49]. Out of all the social media, Facebook and Twitter are the most widely used in the industry [48], as well as by the generation Y [13].

V.   SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

Social media is an important source of information that influences consumer behavior. Weather a person seeks information from other consumers or provides information to others gives them a different role in each situation. Based on the roles played on social media, consumers are categorized into two broad groups, Opinion leaders and Market mavens.

Opinion Leaders; Opinion leaders are consumers who actively transmit information to other consumers either on their own initiative or after information seekers solicit them. They belong to a particular product category. Opinion leaders are always eager to buy and try new market offerings and are highly motivated to influence other users. These few opinion leaders are able to dominate the flow of information on social media [50]. Vernette [51] recommends identifying opinion leaders and targeting them through social media is realistic, and therefore will help to set off the negative effects of UGC and E-WOM. Opinion leaders spread their influence far beyond their immediate contacts, they are consistently engaged with community work and voluntarism and hence influence more people than an average individual [52].

Market Mavens; Feick & Price [53] describe market mavens as: ''individuals having information about numerous products and markets. They initiate discussion with customers as well as respond to their queries for market information''. They have the general market place
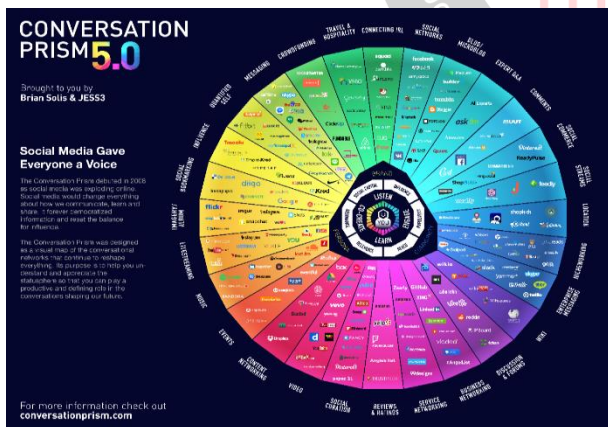
information including wide range of products, have wide circle of acquaintances with which they communicate. Market mavens feel obligated to share market place information with others offline and online [54], they are motivated by perceived pleasure, enjoyment and subjective norm to share information [55].

Kozinets [56] Described various type of social media users as;

1. **Tourists;** users skimming/browsing information on social media now and then with less interest and few social ties.
2. **Minglers;** users having strong social ties but marginally interested in consuming the content.
3. **Devotees;** users having less social attachment but high content consumption rate.
4. **Insiders;** users having high content consumption rate as well as strong social ties.

Nielsen [57] suggested three types of social media users based on the 90-9-1 rule, these types are:

1. **Lurkers;** comprising of 90% of total users, who only consume content on social media rather than creating it.
2. **Intermittent contributors;** 9% of total users, who consume content as well as create it from time to time.
3. **Heavy contributors;** 1% of total active users, who are the main content creators on any kind of social media.

Ofcom [58] suggested five types of social media users as;

1. **Alpha socializers;** regular social media users, using social media often but for a very short span of time.
2. **Attention seekers;** users mostly carving for attention in the form of likes, follows and comments from others.
3. **Followers;** users who join social media in order to follow social media activity of their peers.
4. **Faithful;** users who use social media to remain in touch with their old friends and connections.
5. **Functional;** they use social media for a particular function like music, sports etc.

Based on the cluster analysis in a longitudinal study with a sample of 2000, [59] identified five types of social media users:

1. **Sporadics;** these users have less participation and do not visit social media frequently. They are usually information seekers.
2. **Lurkers;** this is the largest group of social media users who don't contribute much and mostly kill time on social media.
3. **Socializers;** their participation level is higher and often resort to small chats. They look for new contacts and friends.

4. **Debaters;** their participation level is as high as socializers and are very active in discussions
5. **Actives;** theses users are very active on social media sharing pictures and video as well as creating content for others.

Features/ attribute of social media

Major features of social media have been identified differently by different authors and hence are presented below:

- Mayfield [60] Identified five characteristics of social media as:

Participation/Engagement: Social media stimulates content creation and encourage participation as well as feedback from all its users and therefore removes the barrier between media and participants.

Openness: Social media platforms actively support openness of information, it encourages sharing and utilization of content available on social media platforms in the form of comments, voting, and ratings.

Conversation: Social media platforms permit a two-way conversation between its users. It is interactive in nature different from traditional broadcast media.

Community: Social media helps in formation of online communities, these communities are formed quickly and often shaped around common interests; encouraging communication, interaction, and engagement.

Connectedness: Social media platforms prosper on generating links and connections among vast audience.

- Taprial & Kanwar [61] Proposed five characteristics of social media that differentiate it from traditional media, as:

Accessibility: Social media is easily accessible with very less cost. It is easy to use and does not require any specialized knowledge or skills.

Speed: Social media content is available without any geographical boundaries on real time basis. It enables instant communication and the response is not affected by any external factor.

Interactivity: Social media is interactive in nature allowing real time dyadic as well as multiple interaction among user.

Longevity/volatility: Social media content does not come with an expiry date, it is available forever as long as the creator of that content is interested. The content is available for editing and updating throughout.

Reach: Social media has enormous reach across the length and breadth of the globe. It can be accessed by anyone anywhere, the only prerequisite being availability of the internet.

- Haven [62] asserted that following characteristics of new technologies set them apart from the traditional ones:

Reach: Traditionally, for the common individual there were limited audience in the form of family, friends and neighbors. Social media enables a common individual to reach out to a global audience at minimal cost in no time.

Accessibility: Earlier content creation used to be limited in the hands of enterprises with unconstrained financial and human resources. Contemporary media has shifted this power to common users enabling them to create and share content with little or no cost.

Usability: Traditional media required specialized knowledge and skills for producing content which is contrary to contemporary media. Social media has simplified this process and thereby allows anyone to create and operate the means of content production.

Transparency: Usually individuals kept their personal information to themselves and valued privacy over and above everything. Social media has changed this perception to a great extent, individuals are now willing to share their personal information in public space, facilitating transparency.

Recency: Social media allows instantaneous responses on dyadic basis whereas in traditional media, the time lag between communications was typically long.

Social media comprise of Entertainment, Customization, Interaction, Word of Mouth and Trend [10]. Ahmad, [63] Identified five characteristics of social media as: Connectedness, Openness, Speed, Accessibility and Participation. Kim, Sohn, & Choi [64] suggest that major motives for using social media are: Seeking Friends, Social Support, Entertainment, Information and Convenience.

VI.   CONCLUDING REMARKS

Social media has become a platform of influence irrespective of the socio demographic barriers. As more and more people are accepting it as a mode of communication and engagement, it creates an impeccable opportunity for the businesses throughout the globe. The ever increasing time spend by people on social media and its viral diffusion has reinforced the promise that social media is here to stay, therefore in future, marketers need to learn to co-exist and communicate with an empowered customer. It is a better avenue for marketers than other advertising platforms as it has abundant and precise user information that ensures marketing message reaches its target, Business organization can also utilize this information to improve user experience [65]. Social media usage among adolescents is not just a fad; it is part of their culture [66]. Further, customers are little sensitive to old-fashioned push/interruptive marketing and by and large are

determined to participate on equal footing in the marketing process [67]. Organizations have adopted social media at a remarkable speed [68]. As of January 2017, there were 2.789 billion social media users globally with approximately 37% penetration [69], creating, sharing and consuming information and knowledge in a participatory and collaborative way. Social media has become a powerful networking force connecting people from every corner of the world. It reinforces the process of socialization by being instant, cheap, and easy to use having enormous reach [70]. The current study has identified major social media types and their users prevalent in the contemporary times. It has documented the chronological order of evolution of social media and provided a comprehensive list of social media attributes based on the review of pertinent studies from the existing literature. This study will be the foundation for future research on social media.

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