

Original Article

SOCIAL NETWORKING MEDIA: GOING ONE STEP AHEAD FOR SMOKING AWARENESS AND IEC

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: New digital media (e.g. Internet, text messaging and social networking websites 'SNW') have dramatically altered the communication landscape, especially for youth. These communication platforms can be used as a tool for engaging youth in health promotion and risk reduction. The study has done to determine the efficacy of using social networking site as a media to deliver tobacco related health messages.

Methods & Material: A webpage named "Smoke Free India" was created on Facebook and was put under 'Sponsored advertisement' for 15 days targeted on Indian population. Short messages regarding smoking and tobacco in the form of text, images, video clips and web links were shared on the page for 30 days.

Results: Total 907 users from different cities "Liked" the page, out of that 63.8% were by age of 13 to 17 years. Male gender preponderance was seen for maximum likes in all age groups. Highest uptake occurred for the images followed by text update, video clips, and web links. While use of internet media is considered as challenge in tobacco control policy, the present study favours use of SNM as a communication tool to spread health messages among the internet users.

Keywords: Social Networking Websites, Facebook, Tobacco, Smoking, Youth

INTRODUCTION

Social network websites (SNW) are web-based services that allow individuals to (a) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (b) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (c) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.¹Facebook, with more than 1.5 billion active users, is one of the famous SNW in today's modern era of digitalization. Follow up rates with active users are also considered good for such SNW.²

Just after USA and China, India stands 3rdrank for highest number of internet users with 12.6% penetration in population. ³Today Social Networking Media (SNM) has eroded its roots very strong into the society. Now-a-days many people especially Youth spends average 50% of their time on internet to surf Social Networking Media.⁴As various types of text messages, images, video, audio etc. can be made available to each and every member in seconds after upload it is considered as one of the latest communication channel. The marketing world has already collaborated with Social Networking Media and making their benefit. As one can also deliver IEC's related to health, warn users about various health hazards provide spe-

cific health education and can guide them for healthy lifestyle, there is ample future scope of collaboration of health sector with SNM.⁵

Prevalence of smoked tobacco is 16 % in India, being higher among youth population.⁶A large number of public health researchers has shown that tobacco control media campaigns can decrease smoking initiation in youths, increase motivation among adults to quit and reduce overall smoking prevalence.⁷Some of the developing health problem like tobacco smoking is considered a public health issue in India. While tobacco control program is still in infancy, this study will be useful in planning levels of advertisement placement for future media campaigns.

OBJECTIVES

This study was designed to explore possibility of use of Social Networking Media for delivering messages regarding Smoking and tobacco hazards. Active participation & responses was evaluated to determine the uptake of such intervention among users.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design: It was an interventional study, where smoking related health message was adapted as the intervention. The study has design in two phases: a) recruitment phase b) study phase

Study Setting & participants: A web page was created on Facebook named "Smoke Free India". Objectives and short introduction of the study were enumerated on the page for user's information. The page was kept under sponsored advertisement (ad) program of Facebook for 15 days target upon Indian Facebook users. Sponsored ads are those who appear on side bar of the Facebook page of every user. It ensured that every Facebook user get a chance to get involved. In these 15 days of recruitment phase users were requested to refer other potential users for the page. As the page was made for open population, anyone can join the page any time through friend's invitation. And the same way any one can dislike the page and opt out. Thus study participants were the Indian Facebook users who at least once liked the page. The analysis of user's response for different types of messages was done after another 30 days of study phase.

Intervention: Intervention was planned & design for Indian users of SNW. Messages regarding smoking and tobacco hazards were delivered on the page on daily bases for 30 days of the study phase, in the manner that in a day minimum one message and maximum 3 messages shared to the user's wall. The messages were in different forms e.g. texts, images, video, web links etc. Contents of the messages were hazards of smoking, passive smoking, COTPA rules and benefits after cessation of smoking. Daily responses by users were observed and active responses by page administrator were also given to all queries and temptations in comment. That's how stories were generated among the users through likes, comments, share and tagging. Some of the shared post were not related to tobacco health hazards and were shared keep interest of users, which were excluded from analysis.

Analysis: The data thus collected from the analysis page of Facebook were analyzed. Total no of likes for the web page, number of people talking about this page, no of users reached, number of impression made and popularity graph of the page were calculated and analyzed. Outcome variables were defined as standard Facebook definitions of Impressions, Reach and Engagements. *Impressions* are the number of times a post from the Page is displayed, whether the post is clicked or not. People may see multiple impressions of the same post. For example, someone might see a Page

update in News Feed once, and then a second time if their friend shares it. *Reach* is the number of unique people who received impressions of a Page post. The reach number might be less than the impressions number since one person can see multiple impressions. *Engagement Rate* includes rate of any click (like, share, tag, comment etc) on the post by unique user. Thus stories generated by comments, tag and sharing with friends can be taken as predictor of popularity. The result was analyzed into descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

Total 62,04,1440 Indian audiences could target through the SNW media. Total 907 users "Liked" the page, and enrolled in the study.

Table 1: Participant's profile

Characteristic of population		No. of Participants
Targeted audience		62,04,1440
People who show sponsored add		31631
People who liked the page		907
Life time Engagement		847
People talking about the page		745-801
Age wise distribution of user's who like the page (n = 907)		
Age group	Female (%)	Male (%)
13-17 years	14.6	49.2
18 - 24 years	4.4	21.1
25 - 34 years	1.1	6.9
35 - 44 years	0	1.6
45 - 54 years	0	0.2
55 - 64 years	0.3	0.3
65 + years	0	0.3
Location distribution of user's who like the page (n = 907)		
City	State	Participants (%)
New Delhi	Delhi	23
Mumbai	Maharashtra	18
Surat	Gujarat	14
Hyderabad	Andhra Pradesh	14
Calcutta	West Bengal	11
Bangalore	Karnataka	7
Chennai	Tamil Nadu	7
Pune	Maharashtra	6

Out of the total no of users who have ever seen the sponsored ad, 2% liked the page. People talking about the page noted daily and number of users talking about the page range from 745 to 801, ensures live page. Life time engagement rate was 93.4% for the page. (Table 1)

Table 2: Uptake of messages among participants (n=907)

	Reached (% of participants)	Impression	Stories generated	Engage rate (%)
Status updates	652 (71.9%)	1341	1531	61
Images	742 (81.8%)	1522	2214	63
Video	502 (55.4%)	537	993	39
Web links	414 (45.6%)	495	469	16

Table 2 shows uptake of the each form of the messages e. i. Images, web links, status update and video clips. Highest reach were for Images (81.8%) followed by status update (71.9%), Video (55.35%) in decreasing order, while lowest uptake(45.64%) was observed for web links. The same order of preferences was found in

impression & story generated by users. While analysing life time engagement, 63% of the unique users had any click for images, 61% users had any click for status update, 39% of the unique users had any click for video and 16 % of the unique users had any click for web links.



Image I: Popularity Graph of the Page

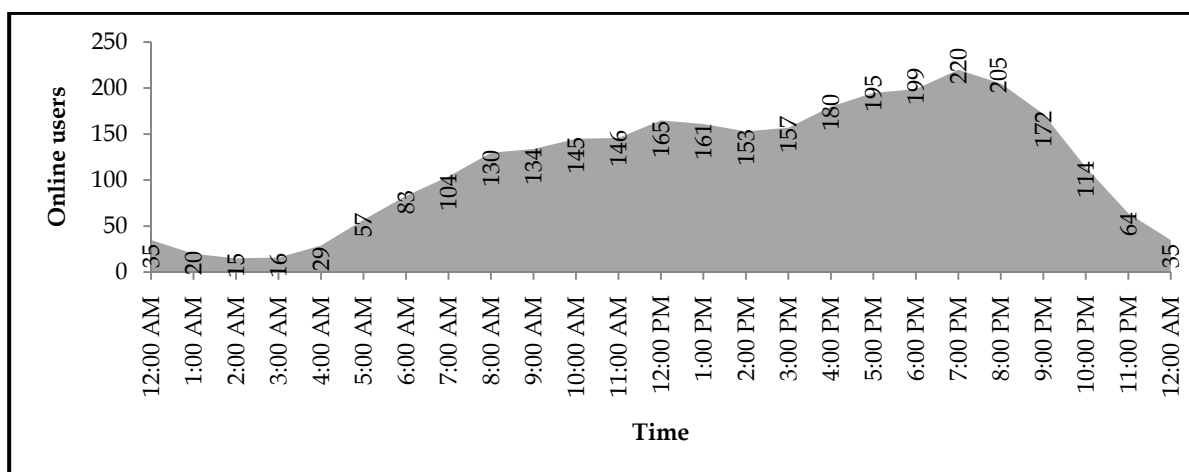


Image II: Distribution of time of online users for the page (Indian Standard Time)

While studying the popularity graph (Image I), it was observed that popularity of the page increase with sharing new post on regular interval. It was also observed that users were actively having conversation on the post and easily putting their queries in comments or in inbox. Active responses by the page admin were provided to all comments/queries of the users. While three negative feedbacks noted on insight analysis page, out of the surprise, no participants unsubscribe from the Facebook page.

While analysing the distribution of timings to be online, majority of the users stay online between 6pm to 10pm. A considerable proportion of users were noted online around 9 pm. (Image II)

DISCUSSION

New digital media such as social networking websites 'SNW' have dramatically altered the communication landscape, especially for youth. Though highest reach population were from 25 - 34 years age group, more than half (63.8%) likes were from the users of 13 - 17 years age group. Attraction of adolescents in this subject can clearly perceive from the high proportion likes from this age group.

Male preponderance was noted for maximum likes in all age groups. Among the people who liked the page 49.2% were males of age group 13-17 years. Most of the likes were driven by urban youth among them New Delhi and Mumbai was on top. It may be due to ease of internet accessibility to the urban population. Highest uptake occurred for the images followed by

text updates, video clips and web links. That means that Images were the preferred form of health message among the users to give response. This study examines the responses of tobacco and smoking related messages through social networking website. As the study participants were from an open population throughout the study, it has been observed that all users were from urban areas.

By studying pattern of timing of being online, different post can be chosen to increase uptake. A considerable amount of users were noted online during midnight which reflects their sleeping & different behaviour pattern. However, timing of post uptakes could not be studied in the present study. Active conversation by users and admin suggests acceptability of such medium for spreading awareness. Thus the SNW was accessible medium to solve queries and satisfying user's temptation of right information.

While Tobacco control program is yet in planning phase of web based interventions in tobacco related health problems, this study findings support Facebook as a viable option for tobacco related health education among the population.^{8,9} In a study done by DE Ramoet al, at California in 2010 has also recommend Facebook as a mechanism to reach tobacco and other substance users.¹⁰ While use of internet media is considered as challenge in tobacco control policy, the present study favours use of SNM as a communication tool to spread health messages among the internet users.¹¹

CONCLUSION

A web-based intervention through SNW is an attractive media especially for youth. Being user friendly tool, SNW can also become a platform of right information. Images of smoking hazards, text and animated videos sharing can play important role in internet based media, with increasing opportunities for tobacco awareness among youth. The use of internet based media for the purpose of IEC is advocated to be vigilant for opportunities that do arise in the era of digitalization and technology. There is a definite wide future research scope to explore the real effective benefits of such interventions and to see the impact of such campaigns on behaviours of the users.

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