

ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN DISSEMINATING BUDDHA'S *DHAMMA* ALL OVER THE WORLD

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Introduction

Social networking websites like Facebook, Twitter, Google + and YouTube are becoming more and more popular and has become part of daily life for an increasing number of people. Because of their features, more people are attracted to social networking sites. In this paper, the author explores the role of social networking sites in disseminating Buddha's *dhamma* all over the world. The study shows that these social networking websites can be used to disseminate any religion information to large number of people, but it also has some extremism as well. Moreover, the research concludes that social networking websites have both positive as well as negative impact on the religion, depending on one's interest to use it in a positive manner for disseminating religious information. Specially in disseminating Buddha's dharma in all over the world.

Literature review

Social media is a web based platform where people share information, thoughts and activities. According to the Fletcher's *Facebook: Friends without Border*, The social networking site, Facebook was introduced in 2004. Just six years after its inception, the number of Facebook users crossed 500 million and has reached 800 million now. It has become the third biggest country in the world (Fletcher, 2010).

Some studies highlight Facebook in their profile in different way. Krause said in his profile *How Social Relationships affect Health* that "people find in religious organizations as the major source of well-being"(Krause, 2008). While other Sociologists like, Greely and Hout wrote in their book *Happiness and Lifestyle among Conservative Christians* shows

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the "private and subjective aspects of religion" (Greeley and Hout, 2006). While both styles are believable, it remains unclear which aspect of religion plays a more significant role and how these extents might interact to shape personal happiness.

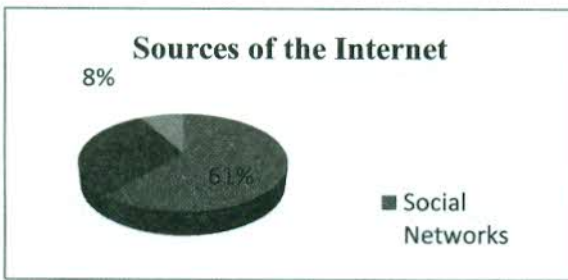
The debate of religion in social media in the past two years was quite different than the attention in the other press. According to *Religion in the News*, None of the top religion related subjects among bloggers in 2011 was a top story in traditional media outlets. While the presidential campaign and political incidents involving Islam captured the attention of the traditional press. Bloggers also tended to cover religion in a less sustained way than the mainstream media. Religious people are more gratified with their lives because they regularly attend religious services and build social networks in their audiences through social networking sites like Facebook. The effect within viewer's friendship is dependent, however on the presence of a strong religious identity. One explanation for this is that religion offers personal networks and support. This suggestion dates back to classical sociologists. Durkheim's and Simmel, who considered the social aspect of religion the "essence and substance" of religion in their book *Suicide: a Study in Sociology and Essays on Religion* (Durkheim 1951; Emile 1997). According to this argument, religious involvement increases personal happiness because religious organizations offer opportunities for social communication between compatible people, the development of friendship and social bonds.

Methodology

This study is mainly based on secondary data gathered from various sources like research articles, books and some Internet sources. For the purpose of analysis, researcher used social networks expansively to find the gap between each media. The aim of this study is to explore the impact of Social Networking web sites which can be used in the process of disseminating Buddha's Dharma in all over the world.

Discussion

There are number of ways that can be used to disseminate religious information on the Internet, like. Blogs, wikis, Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Google +, Youtube) etc. Analysis among these internet sources shows that (see *Figure 1*) more than 60% of the Buddhist organizations, Temples, Buddhist Associations and Buddhist people use Social networks to disseminate dharma Information, more than 30% uses websites and blogs, and other methods less than 10%.



Further analysis among Social Networking web sites shows that (see *Figure 2*) many of the Buddhists use facebook to share Buddhas Dharma information (includes fan pages, images, quotes, animations, videos and audios) which is more than 40%. 27%, 15%, 9% and less than 4 % respectively by Youtube, Twitter, Google + and others.

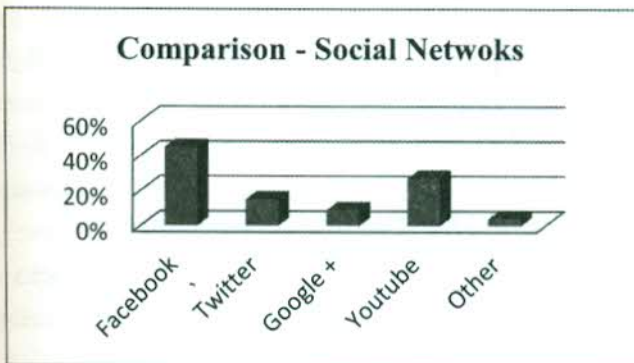


Figure 2

Conclusion

One of the today's challenges is dissemination of Buddha's teaching to young people in a meaningful way. Since social media became more popular among young people, it is a great way to teach all over the world, specially the new generation on religious teachings. A social network is a mode that can broadcast a message to many in a matter of minutes. So just like businesses spread information about their products and services, religious activists and followers also use that mode to spread information about their religious teachings, events and activities. Social networking websites have both positive as well as negative impact on the religion. Spreading religion through social networking is not bad. But has a great impact on dissemination of religious information.

Keywords: Social Networking, Buddha's Dharma, Facebook, Religion

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