

Social media playing the role of Subaltern Media and emerging as Bahujan media for SCs/STs and OBCs: A Sociological Study

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Abstract

Marginalized communities in India are facing many kinds of socio-economic problems. These communities are not privileged with the facilities like forward communities. In contemporary times communication network is also considered a major asset for an individual or a group. As per the Oxfam report 2022, 90% of high-ranking leadership positions in Indian media companies are held by the upper caste and 80% of news articles in Hindi and English language are written by the upper caste. Overall representation of SCs, STs, and OBCs is very less as compare to forward communities. So the Marginalized group started their own media handles to raise their voice. They prefer social media platforms for activism. The purpose of this study is to understand the utilization of social media for activism by marginalized communities in India.

Keywords

Social media, Citizen media, Mobile journalism, Bahujan media, Manu media, Subaltern Media.

Introduction

In today's interconnected world, the media's influence spans across multiple facets of life. Its power to inform, shape opinions, drive change, and connect people globally underscores its paramount importance. However, ensuring ethical reporting, transparency, and accountability within the media landscape is crucial to harnessing its potential for the greater good of society. Media plays an immense role in shaping opinions, disseminating information, and influencing societal perspectives, especially in today's interconnected world. like Information Dissemination, Public Awareness and Education, Cultural Influence and Expression, Political Influence and Accountability, Global Connectivity and Exchange, Advocacy and Social Change. As per the Oxfam report 2022,

- **Leadership:** 90% of high-ranking leadership positions in Indian media companies are held by the upper caste.
- **Articles:** 80% of news articles in Hindi and English language written by the upper caste.
- **Discussion anchors:** 75% of panelists on news stations' primetime discussion programs are upper caste.
- **Newsrooms:** Newsrooms in India are not inclusive for Marginalized communities.

History of Media

The history of media spans millennia, evolving from rudimentary forms of communication to the sophisticated, interconnected network we see today. Here's an overview:

- (i) **Oral Tradition:** Initially, communication relied on oral traditions, where stories, knowledge, and information were passed down through spoken words, songs, and folklore.
- (ii) **Written Communication:** The invention of writing around 3500 BCE marked a significant milestone. Writing systems like cuneiform, hieroglyphics, and later alphabets allowed for the recording and sharing of information beyond oral traditions.
- (iii) **Printing Press:** The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the 15th century revolutionized mass communication. It enabled the mass production of books, facilitating the spread of knowledge and ideas.

- (iv) Newspapers: The 17th century saw the emergence of newspapers, providing regular updates and information to the public. They became essential sources of news, opinions, and advertisements.
- (v) Telegraph and Telephone: In the 19th century, the telegraph transformed long-distance communication by transmitting messages electronically over wires. The telephone, patented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876, further revolutionized real-time communication.
- (vi) Radio and Television: The early 20th century saw the rise of radio broadcasting, allowing audio content to reach mass audiences. Television, introduced in the mid-20th century, added visual elements, revolutionizing entertainment and news delivery.
- (vii) Digital Revolution: The latter half of the 20th century and the early 21st century witnessed the digital revolution. Computers, the internet, and mobile technology have transformed communication. The internet provided a platform for instant global communication, while social media platforms further revolutionized how information is shared and consumed.

Throughout history, the media has evolved in response to technological advancements, societal changes, and communication needs. Its impact on society, politics, culture, and economies has been profound, continuously shaping and reshaping how information is transmitted, received, and understood.

Constitutional Provisions Regarding Media

The freedom of speech and expression in India is protected under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India. It guarantees to all citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression, which includes the right to express one's views and opinions freely through speech, writing, printing, or any other mode of communication.

However, this right is not absolute. It comes with certain restrictions outlined in Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution. These restrictions can be imposed by the State on grounds of sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation, incitement to an offense, and the sovereignty and integrity of India.

Terms & Terminologies

Media: Media refers to various means of communication that transmit information, news, entertainment, or messages to a large audience. It encompasses a wide range of platforms, including television, radio, newspapers, magazines,

websites, social media, and more. Media can be divided into different types, such as print media (newspapers, magazines), broadcast media (television, radio), digital media (websites, social media), and outdoor media (billboards, posters). Its primary purpose is to inform, entertain, educate, or persuade people by disseminating content across different channels.

Social Media: Social media refers to online platforms and websites that allow users to create, share, and interact with content in real-time. These platforms enable individuals and groups to connect, communicate, and share various forms of information, such as text, images, videos, and links.

Citizen Media: Citizen media refers to content produced and shared by individuals who are not professional journalists or members of traditional media organizations. It involves ordinary people creating and disseminating their own news, information, and opinions through various channels, particularly through digital platforms and social media.

Community Media: Community media refers to media outlets that are owned, operated, and controlled by a specific community or group within a locality or region. These outlets serve the interests of the community by providing information, news, and content relevant to their specific needs, concerns, and cultural preferences.

Mobile journalism: Mobile journalism, often referred to as “mojo” or “mobile reporting,” involves the use of smartphones or other mobile devices to capture, edit, and distribute news stories and content. It enables journalists and content creators to gather, produce, and share news on-the-go without relying on traditional, bulky equipment. Mobile journalism has several advantages such as portability and Accessibility, Cost-Efficiency, and user engagement.

Subaltern media: refers to forms of media that aim to represent and amplify the voices, perspectives, and experiences of marginalized or oppressed groups within society. The term “subaltern” originates from the field of postcolonial studies and denotes groups that have been historically excluded, silenced, or oppressed within dominant power structures.

Characteristics of subaltern media include:

- a. Representation of Marginalized Voices: Focusing on stories, issues, and experiences of minority groups, indigenous communities, socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals, or other marginalized populations.

- b. Alternative Forms of Expression: Embracing diverse media formats, including community radio, grassroots publications, independent films, blogs, social media activism, and other platforms that empower marginalized voices.
- c. Empowerment and Social Change: Advocating for social justice, challenging dominant narratives, and promoting inclusive representation to create awareness and social change.

In the Indian Context

BR Ambedkar's Efforts on the Media:

“Mooknayak” was a Marathi-language publication founded by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in 1920. The name translates to “Leader of the Silent” in English. This newspaper served as a platform for addressing social and political issues faced by the Dalit community in India during that time. Ambedkar utilized Mooknayak to advocate for the rights of the Dalits (formerly known as “untouchables”) and to challenge the prevalent social injustices and caste-based discrimination. The newspaper played a crucial role in voicing the concerns of the oppressed communities and promoting social reform. Bahishkrit Bharat, Janta and Prabuddh Bharat

Aim Of the Study

- The Aim of the study is to understand the role of social media among SC, ST and OBC Communities.
- Another objective of the Study is to understand the Term Bahujan Media in the consciousness of Respondents and the how important it is for Marginalized Communities.

Research Methodology

- Snowball sampling method is used for the study and the sample size taken is of 52 Respondents. These 52 respondents comprise all social media handle which claim to be Bahujan Media.

Description of Respondents-

Media Handle of	Numbers
SC Community	47
ST Community	02
OBC Community	02
Muslim Community	01

The schedule is used for Data Collection Consist of 11 questions.

Findings: -

1. What is the Meaning of Bahujans? Meaning of Bahujan by Respondents:

SC + ST + OBC + All Muslim	56%
SC + ST + OBC + All Minority	16%
SC + ST + OBC + Pasmada Muslim	12%
SC + OBC	4%
Only OBC	4%
Only SC Caste	4%
SC + Muslim	4%

2. Role of Social Media Platform in Activism

All respondents gave their mixed opinion in that case like –

- 52% respondents consider Economical for pocket as Major Factor.
- 48% respondents consider Reachness among people as Major Factor.
- 48% respondents consider Discriminatory behavior by Main Stream Media as Major Factor.
- 45% respondents consider Youtube income as Major Factor.
- 32% respondents consider Equal opportunity as Major Factor.
- 20% respondents consider Censurship free work as Major Factor.

3. Diffrent Social Media Platform using by Respondents-

Youtube	100%
Facebook	100%
Instagram	80%
Twitter	88%
Linkdin	8%
Telagram	12%
Koo	4%

4. Response From Audience –

- 80 % respondents claim Positive Response from Marginalized community.
- 6 % respondents claim Negativ Response from Marginalized community.
- 14 % respondents claim Mixed Response from Marginalized community.
- 16 % respondents claim Positive Response from Forward community.
- 28 % respondents claim Negativ Response from Forward community.
- 56 % respondents claim Mixed Response from Forward community.

5. Financial Aid by Community-

YES	32%
No	68%

- 66% of Respondents those got financial help claims the help is Very Less.

6. Working time –

Less than 5 Hours	54%
More than 5 Hours	46%

7. Future of Bahujan Activism on social media-

Bright Future	54%
No Future	8%
Uncertain	28%

8. Professional Qualification in Media –

- 8% Respondents holds Diploma in Media Journalism/ Mass Communication.
- 4% Respondents holds UG Degree in Media Journalism/ Mass Communication.
- 4% Respondents hold PG Degree in Media Journalism/ Mass Communication.
- 84% Respondents do not hold any qualification in Media Journalism/ Mass Communication.

9. Technical Equipment and Gadgets

- 64% Respondents don't have a professional camera for Journalism.
- 42% Respondents don't have Professional Mic for Journalism.
- 44% Respondents don't have a personal computer for Journalism.
- 72% Respondents don't have a studio or Media Room for Journalism.

10. Awareness About All India Bahujan YouTuber Meet-

Yes	96%
No	4%

11. Participation in All India Bahujan YouTuber Meet-

Participated	46%
Not Participated	54%

Conclusions

Marginalized communities are opting for social media platforms to raise their voice. This clearly indicates that social media is playing the role of subaltern media for Marginalized communities like SCs, STs, OBCs and other religious minorities. They have named this media handle as Bahujan Media. As per the study not all media reporters have professional equipment and academic qualifications. All have different reasons for doing their work and also have mixed opinions on public reaction to their work. In the end most of the Bahujan Media Reporter looking towards to the bright future for their profession.

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