

The Impact of *eWom* towards the Religious Conflicts in Sri Lanka

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Introduction

eWom is one of the highest growing subject with high internet penetration and Social media usage. Online chatter is spontaneous, passionate, widely available, low cost, granular, and live (Tirunillai and Tellis 2014). This paper is about the impact of eWom towards the religious conflict in Sri Lanka. Within the previous 5 years the social media usage has been highly increased in Sri Lanka and the young generation mostly addicted to social media more than the traditional media. The main aim was to identify that which type of impact that the eWom does to the religious conflicts in Sri Lanka. During recent 3 years the religious struggles has been increased in Sri Lanka and several became to conflicts situations. The main question addressed in this research paper does the eWom gives negative or positive impact towards the religious conflicts in Sri Lanka. There is an emerging belief that the media may well be the most effective means of conflict resolution and preventing new wars” (Howard, 2003) Therefore “Nearly all modern post-conflict peace-building efforts have included media programs” (Kalathil et al. 2008) The eWom has fast spreading than word of mouth. The eWom is sharing among last amount of people than the word of mouth.

Discussion

This eWom become benefited for marketing sector. But as inaccurate news is spreading it became an issue too. The worthless and inaccurate news spreads among a large number of people. At the same time they has the platform to spread their views and ideologies for number of audience at one time. This is a qualitative research. Research conducted with gathering primary and secondary data. The primary data collected through interviews. The interviews were taken from selected 10 people and the content analysis also conducted to identify the findings. Online chatter is easier from firms to measure and monitor than traditional media. This has high visibility and the impact of online chatter can be catastrophic for negative events. Collaboration and community are important characteristics of the web development and are key features of social communication services like

social network (E.g my space, facebook and LinkedIn)

The religious conflicts are conflicts between religious groups often as a result of religious unity, nationalism and ethnic hatred. They are of interest because of the apparent prevalence since the Cold War and because they frequently result in war crimes such as genocide. Indeed researchers have found that the bad news travels fast in social media and the negative chatter is more informative about sharing the news than the positive chatter. (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006). Online chatter can be their view point which taken from the family back ground, education or the other social facts. This online chatter of communication defined as a statement made by potential actual or ideological view of the person which is made to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet (Henning – Thureau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremle, 2004)

The use of social media such as Internet and mobile phones enabled the “silent majority” (silent either by oppression or lack of good governance) to stand for their rights. In Egypt social marginalization can be considered as a root cause of conflicts illustrated by the fact that, while around 150,000 businessmen and their families lived in exclusive resorts around Cairo, millions of people lived in 1500 slums) People were aware of the fact that, if the government could not solve the problem within a reasonable time-frame, a conflict would have occurred. Indeed the young generation benefited a lot from the use of ICTs thanks to an increasing access to information, freedom of expression and dissemination of information. At the same time ICTs contributed to the promotion of peace, being the most obvious instrument among people using it on a daily basis (Taylor & Quayle, 2003)

Hate media is used to encourage ‘violent activities, tension or hatred between races, ethnic or social groups, or countries for political goals and/or to foster conflict by offering a one-sided or bias view or opinion, and/or resorting to deception.⁵³ The use of hate media can cause incitement to attitudes, which provides grounds for action to take place– for instance Nazi Germany used propaganda to inspire racial hatred, which subsequently resulted in the Holocaust

Conclusion

The research findings are very interesting. The audience trust the eWom of the strangers more than the familiar people. This negatively impact towards the religious conflicts. The eWom has no positive influence of religious harmony. The minority and the majority has the equal platform of eWom. The hate messages and the posts shares very quickly. It creates like hood sub groups in e- platform. The word of mouth is spreading in e- platform among the same religious group than the different religious group. This cause to create different inaccurate news to share among the people. There is e- conflicts occur among the different religions with the eWom. This situation is not in a control situation during recent year in Sri

Lanka. The inaccurate news became very credential in this situation and it has a huge impact to control the public opinion than the traditional media in Sri Lanka.

So the eWom has a negative impact more than the positive impact in the conflicts situation in Sri Lanka and it leads to different small conflicts as well. This situation should be under controlled by the traditional media with being very powerful. There should be new media law and ethics which include the new media as well.

Keywords: eWOM, Religious Unity, Silent Majority, Media, Nationalism