

# **Social Media and Social Marketing – Catalysts of Social Change**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of social networking site (i.e. Facebook) usage in achieving social marketing objectives of social change. Based on the literature review, the following outcomes of social change were chosen: civic participation, empowerment and attitudes. The sample consisted of 175 male and female students between the ages of 18-25 who had active Facebook accounts. The survey method was adopted and a questionnaire was developed with 23 total items of which 19 items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Statistical tests of correlation and regression were applied to establish the relationship between Facebook usage and social change. The results of this study support the hypothesis that Facebook usage has a positive and significant relationship with the social marketing objective of social change and between all three dimensions of social change. The results of this research study has implications for NGO's, public sector policy makers and social marketers who need to determine the feasibility of using social networking sites as a means of achieving their organizational objectives.

**Keywords** – Facebook, Social Change, Social Marketing, Social Media

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## **Introduction**

In this age of information technology, mass communication, and mass socialization, consumers have been bombarded with information and messages from a plethora of media sources (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). Media plays a pivotal role in our society and in recent years, the method by which people get information and share it with one another has changed drastically (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). According to Weaver and Morrison (2008), communication through the media, which once was depicted as a one-way form of communication, is now converted into a highly interactive form of social networking— an activity which people have been engaging in long before the advent of the Internet or even mass communication. Nevertheless, this need to “socialize” created a cultural-wide paradigm shift resulting in a mass adoption of social networking sites instigated by a new revolution in human social interaction (Weaver and Morrison, 2008). While the Internet was once thought of as an information repository, the advent of social media, in the form of social networking sites, has empowered individual users into creating profiles, personal/professional networks and content that everyone can share (Boyd, 2008)---no matter how frivolous or serious the information exchange. This era of social media usage can be described best by Vollmer and Precourt (2008, p.5), “consumers are in control; they have greater access to information and greater command over media consumption than ever before.”

Moreover, social media, also termed consumer-generated media, includes a variety of online sources of information used by consumers with the purpose of educating one another about products, brands, services, personalities and issues (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2004). Mangold and Faulds, (2009) assert that messages transmitted through social media, such as blogs, social bookmarking, social/business networking sites, company-sponsored websites and chat rooms, to name a few, have in one way or another influenced various aspects of consumer behavior. The researchers also state that organizations are increasingly using social media as a hybrid element in their integrated marketing communications approach along with the traditional promotional mix. Two examples of prominent organizations that have successfully incorporated social media in their IMC strategies and promotional efforts are General Electric and Proctor and Gamble in 2008 (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Similarly, social media has been used by organizations such as Ben and Jerry’s, Body Shop, or “Product Red” to support causes that are important to consumers, i.e., promoting social and environmental issues, human rights, education, child welfare or even health conditions and cures for diseases (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Aside from cause-related marketing by for-profit organizations, another field in marketing gaining momentum is social

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marketing. The Social Marketing Institute (2005) defines social marketing as “the use of commercial marketing concepts, tools and programs designed to influence individuals' behavior to improve their well being and that of society”. In the past decade, New Zealand applied various social marketing techniques and asked its citizens to eat moderately, teach children to read, use recycling bins, drive safely, immunize children, conserve water, use public transport and install smoke alarms (Varcoe, 2005).

Subsequently, the main objective behind social marketing is to initiate and eventually sustain a change in behavior by the individual for the greater good (Lefebvre, 2000). Lefebvre (2000) argues that this objective may be the bottom-line focus for many social marketers, but social marketing has an overall focus on influencing population groups to achieve social change objectives, which is what makes it so promising as a field of study. Although creating and inspiring change can be a daunting task, especially with limited resources, creating an online presence through social media seems to be the more feasible choice (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Since social media has been used as a tool for traditional marketers, then why not for social marketers and if the objective of social marketing is social change, then can social media become the forum by which such objectives can be achieved?

In today's society, social media such as social networking sites (SNS's) play an important role in the life of every individual. Their relevance and integration in the daily lives of individuals cannot be overlooked. Social media, although considered an imperative element of the integrated marketing communication mix, is not considered as such within the tools and strategies of social marketing, specifically for its main purpose of promotion and sustainability for social change. Hence, this study intends to determine whether the use of SNS's in the social marketing arena has a positive relationship with the outcomes of social change within the context and culture of Pakistan. Furthermore, the significance of this research lies in the applicability for non-profit organizations, NGO's, public sector policy makers and social marketers who need to determine the feasibility of using SNS's as a means of achieving their organizational objectives. In addition, the use of SNS's by youth provides them with an impetus or forum for the exchange of information, which may lead to the motivation of using this information for the greater good.

## **Literature Review**

Recent trends have clearly shown a shift in the traditional communications paradigm as the traditional

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sources of advertising, such as magazines, newspapers, television and radio, are no longer appealing to consumers who are more demanding, requiring more control over their consumption of media and desiring access to information at their own convenience (Rashtchy, Kessler, Bieber, Shindler, & Tzeng, 2007; Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). As social media is being perceived by consumers as a more trustworthy source of information about products and services (Foux, 2006), they are using social media more and more to conduct information searches and make their purchasing decisions (Lempert, 2006; Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). The Internet reaches more than 60% of all United States consumers (an average weekly usage rate of more than 100 minutes) and is now the number one source of media for consumers at work, number two at home, and has become a mass media vehicle for consumer-sponsored communications (Rashtchy et al., 2007).

One of the most recognized examples of social media is social networking sites (SNS). SNS's are computer-mediated communications that have gained massive popularity to the extent that they have permeated throughout the daily lives of its users (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). SNS is now the world's fastest developing personal networking tool, with Facebook, MySpace, and Friendster being the more successful examples (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). According to a survey by the Pew Research Center (2009), 73% of American teens, 72% of young adults, and 47% adults are now using social networking sites. Although marketing research indicates that SNS's, such as the most popular sites of MySpace and Facebook are experiencing dramatic worldwide growth, especially in the Asian and European markets, there are no reliable data regarding how many people actually use SNS's (comScore, 2007).

Moreover, researchers have contended that the perceived benefit of use of SNS's achieves network externalities in which positive feedback produces more and more users, thereby increasing its social platform (Powell, 2009). Facebook is example of this phenomenon where statistics indicate that its global members have swiftly increased from 150 million to about 350 million between January and December 2009 (Eldon, 2009). Consequently, SNS by definition, "provides a new method of communicating, employing computers as a collaborative tool to accelerate group formation and escalate group scope and influence" allowing users to present themselves, connect to a social network, and develop and maintain relationships with others (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Ellison et al. (2007) suggest a strong link between use of Facebook and the three types of social capital, with the strongest relationship being bridging social capital. The same study found that Facebook usage interacted with measures of

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psychological well-being and that it might provide greater benefits for those experiencing low self-esteem and low life satisfaction. In addition, social capital has been connected to a variety of positive social outcomes, such as more efficient financial markets, better public health, and lower crime rates (Adler & Kwon, 2002) and although it is an important resource, it has been declining in the U.S. for the past several years (Putnam, 2000). The adverse effect of declining social capital amongst a community is increased social disorder, reduced participation in civic activities, and potentially more distrust among community members whereby the benefits include an increase in commitment to a community and the mobilization of collective actions (Ellison et al., 2007).

Furthermore, ever since Facebook began registering organizations in April 2006, more than 4000 organizations joined within 2 weeks and with an average of 250,000 people registering to use Facebook daily, this tool for engaging and fostering relationship growth among an organizations' stakeholders cannot be overlooked (Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas, 2009). A content analysis of 275 nonprofit organization profiles on Facebook revealed that if an organization is to advance its mission and programs, it must carry out careful planning and research so as to develop an enduring relationship with its stakeholders (Waters et al., 2009). In addition, other organizations including foundations, music industry celebrities, corporations, and wealthy donors, have used social media to reach and engage young people in civic and political activities in hopes of reviving such participation amongst youth (Montgomery, 2008). Enhanced engagement in social media has features such as increased speed with which information can be gathered and transmitted, greater volume of information that is easily accessible, more flexibility in how and when information is accessed, and much greater opportunity to interact with others in a range of contexts (one to one, one to many, many to one, and many to many), using text, audio and video (Carpini, 2001). As legal scholar, Benkler (2006, p. 272) argues, "We are witnessing a fundamental change in how individuals can interact with their democracy and experience their role as citizens. They are no longer constrained to occupy the role of mere readers, viewers, and listeners. They can be, instead, participants in a conversation. Practices that begin to take advantage of these new capabilities shift the locus of content creation from the few professional journalists trolling society for issues and observations, to the people who make up society, the public agenda." Consequently, social media has altered the media marketing paradigm by defining a new set of relationships between young people and organizations in which marketing and advertising have become pervasive, creating new hybrid forms that blend communications, content, and commerce (Montgomery,

2008).

Subsequently, societal participation is defined as the “growing possibilities to participate, i.e. communicate, comment and elaborate ideas, in different societal spheres spanning from interpersonal level to local community level and from there all the way to provincial, regional, national and even international level” (Ahlqvist, Bačck, Heinonen & Halonen, 2010). Ahlqvist et al. (2010) argue that social media could be a catalyst for societal participation as it has been used for self-expression as well as grass-root activism, for example, engaging in political prediction markets or “idea futures” (Hanson, 2007; Abramovicz, 2007), initiating urban demonstrations, long-term and international scale political activities in the context of environmental and climate change issues, or utilizing crowd-sourcing where firms allocate tasks to the general public in order to utilize their creativity and ideas (Owela, InnoCentive, Crowd Spirit and Yet2.com are few examples of these kinds of services). Brown (2007) proposes that social media could also form communities of change by engaging them in competitions or triggering changes in local governance allowing “reflexive empowerment” which is based on temporary coalitions on topical issues (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994).

Since social media has created significant trends in information gathering, processing, and sharing information across a communication medium by consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), it is imperative that this shift should also occur in the realm of social marketing. Donovan and Henley (2003) believe that “in social marketing the product is often information designed to bring about attitudinal and behavioral change”. In essence, social marketing is the use of marketing strategies to produce social change (Lefebvre, 2000) and the latest innovations and management of information in social media can be utilized to influence the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of select communities and populations. Also, social marketing is considered to be a process that augments the prevalence of specific behaviors among target audiences rather than an alternative to individual behavior change strategies (Lefebvre, Lurie, Goodman, Weinberg & Loughrey, 1995).

Various researchers have established frameworks for social issues (in health, education, environment, politics, safety, etc...) in their social marketing campaigns however, the model of Communication for Social Change (CFSC) describes this iterative process best whereby a social change in a community improves the health and welfare of all its members, driven by dialogue and collective action (Figueroa, Kincaid, Rani & Lewis, 2002). This model is descriptive, dynamic, prescriptive and pragmatic in nature

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and its key features include: owning the process and content of communication for sustainability of social change; empowering or giving a voice to the unheard members of the community; becoming agents of their own change; engaging in dialogue, debate and negotiation on issues that are relevant to the community where outcomes should include individual behavioral changes as well as towards social norms, policies and culture (Figueroa et al., 2002).

Most of the literature assumes that the community spontaneously initiates dialogue and action, however, a catalyst is needed which triggers the initiation of community dialogue about a specific issue of concern or interest to the community (Figueroa et al., 2002). Figueroa et al. (2002) contend that among other catalysts (change agent, innovation, policies, internal stimulus, technology), this catalyst for promoting social change is the mass media (specifically, social media) which provide information that is designed to promote individual behavior or collective action that may stimulate members of a community to adopt the behavior or to imitate other communities that have achieved some common goal by working together.

Likewise, for any social marketing campaign to work, it is necessary that various factors need to be assessed, i.e. the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of the target communities, their cultural priorities, the basis by which they envision their participation in a community (demographics) and how the communities locate, assess, test, construct and communicate knowledge as well as how new knowledge is received from outside the community (Grier & Bryant, 2005). Varcoe (2005) suggested that the best practice in assessing the effectiveness of a social marketing program requires systematic assessment at five levels of change, namely awareness, engagement, behavior, social norm and well being. Keeping in mind that the objective of social marketing is to create social change for the well-being of the individual and society through application of marketing techniques (Lefebvre, 2000), this research attempts to study the effects of social media as part of an integrated marketing communication approach to achieving these objectives. However, what constitutes social change varies within various cultural contexts.

Khan and Khan (2004) view social change in Pakistan as an increase in “horizontal linkages” among civil society organizations and unfortunately traditional social movements have been focused on local issues with the support of the public; however, it still remains a challenge to broaden this base to be truly effective. They suggest that movements for social change are promising and built upon a newer model of alliances that have the potential to grow. A study by Yusuf (2008) helps to shed light on this

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phenomenon as Pakistan is a developing nation where digitally networked technologies and new media platforms are just emerging. Although many concluded that the availability of digital technologies and social media platforms facilitates democratic practices and participatory behavior, whether this is equally true for the developing countries like Pakistan, is still debatable (Yusuf, 2008). In her research report, she argues that the ability to use digital technologies and new media meaningfully, impacts participatory behavior and civic action, which is often overcome through the combined use of different technologies and concludes that new media platforms are increasingly effective as tools for community organizing and information dissemination (specifically during the “Pakistan Emergency” between March 2007 and February 2008). Furthermore, she claims that people are now empowered with creativity and commitment as both the digital divide and participation gap are narrowed through this new awareness and communication of new media and technologies that are “emergent, ad hoc and culturally specific”. These tools of communication may be the answer to the issues faced by many Third World countries if realization of its effects can be organized and harnessed for the greater good, leading to a crucial question for research.

### **Research Question**

How do social media effect social change?

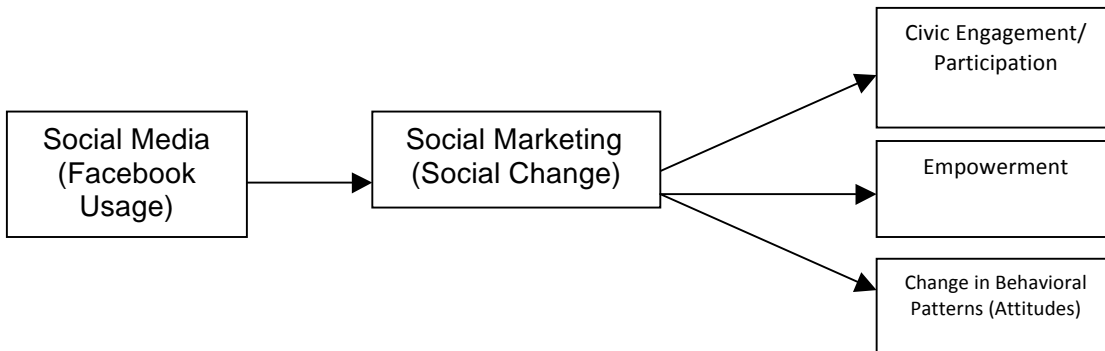
### **Objectives**

Subsequently, the objective of this study is to determine whether social media forms of communication (SNS's) can help consumers mobilize themselves according to interests, causes, etc..., especially youth, so that they have a forum to promote social change and become active citizens of the society. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to determine the impact of social networking site (i.e. Facebook) usage in achieving social marketing objectives of social change. Based on the literature review, the following outcomes of social change were selected: civic engagement or participation, empowerment (individual) and change in behavioral patterns (attitudes). The schematic below highlights the conceptual framework of this research study where Facebook usage is the independent variable and social change is the dependent variable.



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## Conceptual Framework of Research Study Illustrating the Independent Variable of Facebook Usage and Dependent Variable of Social Change With Three Indicators



### Methodology

The sample obtained for this study consisted of users of Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>), an online social networking site (SNS), to determine the effects of its usage on the social marketing outcome of social change. It is feasible for this study due to its global popularity amongst students in colleges and universities (Cheung & Lee, 2010). The demographic of college students between the ages of 18 and 25 years fit SNS users and is therefore justified (Montgomery, 2008) to obtain this sample from the sampling frame of college students for the purpose of this study. In addition, most of the literature justified this age group as their sample where statistics show that 90% of most college campuses in the United States are using Facebook (Ellison, et al. 2007). A study by Forrester Research (2008) found that youth incorporate digital media into their lives at a faster rate than any other generation, calling them “Net natives” (Montgomery, 2008) and 75% of Internet surfers joined social networks by 2008. This largest cohort of young people has been labeled the “i-generation”, or more popularly the “Generation Y”, and are characterized as being socially conscious, individualistic and idealistic (Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001). Another justification for choosing this sample is that youth in Pakistan have also become the defining users of new media (i.e. SNS’s) and as a result are increasingly becoming engaged in participatory behavior and action (Yusuf, 2008).

Consequently, for the context of this study, it is of utmost significance to understand the youth demographics of Pakistan. Pakistan has one of the largest cohorts of young people in its history where an estimated 103 million people, or 63 percent of the population, are less than 25 years-old (UNDP, 2010). Although many lack access to education and employment opportunities, still the percentage increase of

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students being enrolled in universities from 2001 is a staggering 190.94% according to the Economic Survey of Pakistan (2009-2010). Also, statistics from the same survey estimate 948,364 students enrolled at 132 Universities/Degree Awarding Institutions (excluding affiliated colleges) and 458,835 students enrolled in 1,443 Degree Colleges. In addition, an estimated 4.3 million Pakistanis (penetration of 23.4% of the online population) have Facebook accounts of which 50% fall within 18-25 years of age (“Facebook Statistics in Pakistan”, 2011).

Therefore, the sampling technique used in this study is purposive or judgment sample since it is most suitable for achievement of this study’s research objectives. Based on the results of the pilot study, the sample was expanded to include the same demographics of students (both males and females between the ages of 18-25), but from two different universities in Islamabad and again from varying disciplines. The sample size collected was 175.

The instrument used in this survey research study is the questionnaire. Results of the pilot study and second EFA (after elimination and re-arrangement of items) revealed 5 factors and 30% of the variance was explained by factor one and approximately 13% variance was explained by factor one after rotation whereas cumulative variation was almost 58%. Two factors were found to measure the same variable, Facebook usage. According to Ellison et al. (2007), measurement of Facebook usage was attained through a more robust measure, namely Facebook intensity. It was designed to assess the degree to which participants felt emotionally connected to Facebook as well as the extent to which it was integrated into daily activities. Also, this measure included the duration of use, the number of friends and number of groups which participants interacted with the most. Therefore, Facebook intensity as well as Facebook interaction was identified as two separate factors (dimensions) that were essentially used to measure the same variable, Facebook usage, but in different aspects. As mentioned, one measure is more “robust” than the other, although they measure essentially the same variable. Both of these measures were combined into one scale, namely Facebook usage (8 items). All items except for 4 items which measured Facebook usage were rated on a 5 point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) “Strongly Disagree” to (5) “Strongly Agree”. Fifteen of the items measured three dimensions (participation, empowerment and attitude, 5 items each) of the dependent variable, social change. The total number of items in the questionnaire was reduced from 27 to 23 items due to self-development of questionnaire, time constraints and results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

The participant was screened by asking the preliminary question of whether the participant had an active Facebook account or not. The questionnaires were personally administered to assure reliability and only those that had an active Facebook account were given the questionnaires. Proper informed consent was obtained, the purpose of the study was explained and confidentiality of the participants was assured. In addition, participants were given ample time to fill out the questionnaires. One hundred and ninety samples were collected from the universities yielding 100% response rate however, only 175 questionnaires were usable because an inadequate number of questions were answered or because of ineligibility, therefore, the actual or active response rate was 92%.

### **Results/Analysis**

This study applied the statistical tests of correlation and regression to establish the relationship between Facebook usage and social change. A 0.01% and 0.05% percent level of significance was used for all tests. Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses were tested:

**H1:** The use of social media (i.e., Facebook usage) has a positive relationship with civic participation as an indicator of the objective of social marketing, social change.

**H2:** The use of social media (i.e., Facebook usage) has a positive relationship with empowerment of an individual as an indicator of the objective of social marketing, social change.

**H3:** The use of social media (i.e., Facebook usage) has a positive relationship with attitude of an individual as an indicator of the objective of social marketing, social change.

**H4:** The use of social media (i.e., Facebook usage) has a positive relationship with the overall objective of social marketing, social change.

Consequently after conducting EFA, descriptive statistics, correlations as well as Cronbach's alpha reliability of each scale improved, as Tables 1 illustrates.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for Facebook Usage and Three Dimensions of Social Change (N=175)*

<b>Scales</b>	<b>N of Items</b>	<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Coefficient Alpha</b>
Facebook Usage	8	1.13-4.50	2.70	0.74	0.80

Facebook Participation	5	1-5	3.37	0.78	0.77
Facebook Empowerment	5	1-5	3.25	0.77	0.75
Facebook Attitude	5	1-5	3.52	0.78	0.79

Frequency of demographics shows that the sample consisted of mostly males (70%) from the age group of 21-23 (65%). Again, the standard deviation from the mean, for all variables (scales) is below one, which depicts less dispersion of responses from the mean. Also, the highest frequency of the “type of information” sought on Facebook was for learning about new contacts (16%), for general activities i.e., to learn about local events or happenings (12%) and for learning about news (12%). The highest frequency of “type of group” participants belonged to the most were social groups (38%) and entertainment groups (18%) followed by professional groups (11%). In addition, the mean of all variables are between 2.7 and 3.5, which are not due to more “neutral” responses, rather it is due to the responses being divided almost equally between “agree” and “disagree” ratings based on the frequencies of each item within the variables.

Moreover, the correlations of each variable (scale) and between the independent and dependent variables collectively are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

**Table 2**

***Correlation Coefficient Matrix between Facebook Usage with Three Subscales (Dimensions) of Social Change (N=175)***

Scale	I	II	III	VI
I- Facebook Usage	-	0.55**	0.42**	0.35**
II- Facebook Participation	-	-	0.59**	0.55**

III- Facebook Empowerment	-	-	-	0.61**
IV- Facebook Attitude	-	-	-	-

Note: \*\*p<0.01

**Table 3**

***Correlation Coefficient Matrix between Facebook Usage and Social Change (N=175)***

Scale	I	II
I- Facebook Usage	-	0.52**
II- Social Change	-	-

Note: \*\*p<0.01

Table 2 results show Pearson's correlation coefficient between Facebook usage and the three dimensions of social change (Facebook participation, Facebook empowerment and Facebook attitude) to be positively and significantly correlated ( $r=0.55$ ,  $n=175$ ,  $p=.000$ ), ( $r=0.42$ ,  $n=175$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and ( $r=0.35$ ,  $n=175$ ,  $p=.000$ ), respectively. Collectively, results from Table 3 show Pearson's correlation coefficient between Facebook usage and social change to be positively and significantly correlated ( $r=0.52$ ,  $n=175$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

Due to factor analysis (EFA) and increase in sample size, the alpha reliability of each scale improved from the results of the pilot study, with only Facebook attitude slightly decreasing (from 0.82) perhaps because of the elimination of irrelevant items from this variable (factor). Table 4 illustrates the alpha reliability of each of the scales.

**Table 4**

***Alpha Reliability Coefficients for Scales of Facebook Usage and Three Subscales (Dimensions) of Social Change (N=175)***

Scales	N of Items	Coefficient Alpha
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Facebook Usage	8	0.80
Facebook Participation	5	0.77
Facebook Empowerment	5	0.75
Facebook Attitude	5	0.79

Through correlation, a moderate relationship was found between the independent variable, Facebook usage, and the three dimensions of the dependent variable, social change, as well as between the Facebook usage and social change, collectively as highlighted in Tables 2 and 3. The results of correlation analysis were further verified through regression analysis as seen in Tables 5 to 8.

**Table 5**

***Regression Analysis between Facebook Usage and Dimension 1 of Social Change- Facebook Participation (N=175)***

Model	b	SE	$\beta$	T	p
Constant	1.82	0.19		9.70	.000
Facebook Usage	0.58	0.07	0.55	8.62	.000
$R^2 = 0.301$					
$\Delta R^2 = 0.297$					

Note: b= Unstandardized coefficient,  $\beta$ = Standardized coefficient, SE=Standard Error

**Table 6**

***Regression Analysis between Facebook Usage and Dimension 2 of Social Change- Empowerment (N=175)***

Model	b	SE	$\beta$	T	p
Constant	2.07	0.20		10.28	.000
Facebook Usage	0.44	0.07	0.42	6.06	.000
$R^2 = 0.175$					
$\Delta R^2 = 0.170$					

Note: b= Unstandardized coefficient,  $\beta$ = Standardized coefficient, SE=Standard Error

**Table 7*****Regression Analysis between Facebook Usage and Dimension 3 of Social Change- Attitude (N=175)***

Model	b	SE	$\beta$	T	p
Constant	2.52	0.21		12.00	.000
Facebook Usage	0.37	0.08	0.35	4.91	.000
$R^2 = 0.122$					
$\Delta R^2 = 0.117$					

Note: b= Unstandardized coefficient,  $\beta$ = Standardized coefficient, SE=Standard Error

**Table 8*****Regression Analysis between Facebook Usage and Social Change (N=175)***

Model	b	SE	$\beta$	T	p
Constant	2.14	0.16		13.14	.000
Facebook Usage	0.46	0.06	0.52	7.93	.000
$R^2 = 0.267$					
$\Delta R^2 = 0.262$					

Note: b= Unstandardized coefficient,  $\beta$ = Standardized coefficient, SE=Standard Error

R is the correlation coefficient ( $\beta$ ) which measures the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variable, i.e., Facebook usage and social change ( $\beta = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) as also revealed from the correlation coefficient (Table 13). The t-statistics for Facebook usage in Tables 15 to 18 are all above 2.7 and are therefore statistically significant at the 5% level. R-square ( $\Delta R^2$ ), the coefficient of determination, explains that there is 26.7% variability in the dependent variable, social change, which can be explained by the variability in the independent variable, Facebook usage. The standard error terms explain the rest of the variability which is minimal as seen in Table 18. Although the statistical tests are significant, the strongest relationship is seen between the first dimension of the dependent variable and the independent variable as R-square depicts 30.1% variability in Facebook participation that can be explained by the variability in Facebook usage ( $\beta = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The results show a positive but moderate strength of relationship between social change as a whole with Facebook usage. The strength of the relationship between the third dimension of the dependent variable, Facebook attitude and Facebook usage was the weakest showing only 12.2% ( $\Delta R^2$ ) variability.

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Nevertheless, the results of this study provide support for all four hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4) as Facebook usage has a positive and significant relationship with all three dimensions of social change, namely Facebook participation, Facebook empowerment and Facebook attitude, as well as a collective positive and significant relationship with social change as a whole.

## **Discussion**

Social media is as ubiquitous as change itself. The evolution and pervasion of social media in everyday life shows that they are having significant social implications (Cachia, 2008). But does it mean that these applications have the capability to promote or even instigate social change? The answer is --- to some extent. The results of this study support all four of the hypotheses proposed. The independent variable of Facebook usage has a positive and significant relationship with the overall dependent variable of social change (H4). Facebook usage also has a positive and significant relationship with civic participation as an indicator of the social marketing objective of social change (H1) and the same applies to the other two indicators of social change, empowerment (H2) and attitude (H3), but to a lesser extent. Overall, the “type of information sought” mainly dealt with learning about old and new contacts, about local events or happenings and about the news whereas the “type of groups” the participants belonged to were mostly social and entertainment followed by professional. Eastin (2005) found that entertainment, information sought and provided and social motivations all predict older adolescent Internet use.

A report by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2006) found that young people are amongst the most enthusiastic communicators and they view their online communication as “vehicles for personal expression rather than civic discourse” but there are apparent indications that these applications are also being used by youth to participate in public conversations and become “citizen journalists”. Similarly, a study by Yusuf (2008) found that digital technologies, such as Facebook, were used to promote democracy, coordinate action and propagate citizen journalism during the “Pakistan Emergency” (the period between March 2007 and February 2008 when a state of emergency was imposed, the constitution suspended, a popular politician assassinated, media censorship imposed and general elections conducted). This “citizen journalism” prompted university students to organize political action and report on matters of public interest in both Lahore and Karachi. Her study concluded that new media platforms have become increasingly effective as tools for organizing the community and disseminating vital information to the public (Yusuf, 2008), especially in times of political unrest as Pakistan is a



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country that is marred by political instability, economic strife, social inequities and religious extremism. Perhaps the youth can use such media platforms to facilitate more liberal and democratic practices and exhibit participatory behavior that will not only empower the individual but also transform the entire community, and even the society, towards action.

In addition, SNS's are user-generated form of communications which are characterized by the enormous speed with which information can be gathered and transmitted, great volume of information that is easily accessible and flexible as to how and when the information is accessed and with the opportunity to interact with others in a multitude of contexts using text, audio and video. This "digital empowerment" by the user leads to creativity that is practically endless. One only needs to harness and guide this potential energy towards the greater good. For example, a study by Montgomery (2004) and a team of researchers at American University found more than three hundred websites created by and for young people of which the 2004 youth vote initiatives illustrated how the Internet became an effective mobilizing force in electoral politics. It also displayed how interactive media made it much easier for individuals to learn about the critical issues of the day where they also have the opportunity to voice their opinions if not actively participate. Ellison et al. (2008) even suggests that Facebook usage helps reduce barriers which lower self-esteem in students.

In this study, the participants' responses as to whether they felt "empowered" as individuals to resolve issues of the society through social media were divided, although more youth agreed that Facebook can be used as a medium to mobilize people and bring a positive change in society. Perhaps, this is more possible at a localized level. Although most people agree that there are many social changes which need to take place in Pakistan, yet few believe that they can do anything about it. Pakistanis have become too complacent with the current state of affairs that maybe they feel that they cannot do anything about it as individuals. However, an example of Karachi residents demonstrates how digital technologies can be adapted and adopted to respond to highly localized issues that are ad hoc and culturally specific as they use FM radio broadcasts, cell phones and landline connections not only to negotiate urban violence but to also navigate flash floods during the monsoon seasons, provide awareness of bad traffic due to construction and monitor protest rallies in the city (Yusuf, 2008).

Consequently, for social change to occur communication is required that is cyclical, relational and leads

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to more than individual change, rather it should lead to an outcome of mutual change (Figueroa, 2002). This process can begin with a “catalyst” which “triggers” or initiates the community towards dialogue, collective action and ultimately the resolution to a problem that was an issue of concern to the community. Media, in any form, is a mode of communication and invaluable source for mobilizing community support through facilitation of dialogue and action and exchange of ideas and experiences (Bordenave, 1998). Practitioners and scholars have found considerable agreement on the role of communication for social change as the outcomes of this process of sharing information are social, dealing with mutual understanding, agreement and collective action as well as individual, dealing with perceiving, interpreting, understanding and believing (Figueroa et al., 2002). The individual outcomes are the attitudes that are formed through direct influence from the messages retained through media, specifically through social media.

Social change is the objective of social marketing where the message or information is the product that will bring about the change in behavior at the individual as well as group level. Traditional marketing has integrated social media as a hybrid element of its promotional mix and companies are forging ongoing relationships with individuals, a form of customer relationship management (CRM) through digital technologies that are combining behavioral , psychological and social information on individuals (Montgomery, 2008). Such strategies can also be applied by social marketers to initiate social change and utilize these digital tools to provide awareness, to allow participation and empowerment; to make a difference and solve any issues which the society may face. This study shows that change is coming slowly but surely as most participants agree that Facebook is the forum through which issues can be addressed through participation in groups and discussions to bring about a positive change in our society. Eighty-four percent of the sample has joined at least one group of which 46% claim that they interact with at least once a week. Even though the type of group joined the most is social, almost 40% agree that the information exchanged and interaction one has with the Facebook community can be for the greater good. The right attitude is there, only the right guidance remains.

## **Conclusion**

There are a myriad of ways in which youth of today are engaging themselves with social media. The role of young people in the media culture and in the society as a whole has been significantly altered. As a result, this study attempted to determine the effect of social media, specifically through usage of

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Facebook, on the social marketing objective of social change. The findings of researchers and scholars have highlighted the mechanisms, characteristics and benefits of the Facebook phenomenon. This study has also provided practical examples of how it is being used and why it has created such worldwide hype. Still, questions remain. More research needs to be undertaken to deepen our understanding of this new media culture, what it has in store for us in the future and how one can harness its potential. A better understanding of the issues that plague today's society, the reasons behind the problems and the resolutions that are needed must be given important consideration through a more multidisciplinary effort of communications researchers, sociologists, economists, political scientists, anthropologists and the youth themselves. The health, wealth and democracy of the nation is at stake and perhaps NGO's are the organizations which should be at the forefront of this new social media phenomenon while keeping in mind the cultural context of Pakistan.

### **Recommendations**

A study by Khan et al. (2004) drew attention to the civil society of Pakistan as an emerging arena for social and political change where organizations, especially NGO's, are engaging in advocacy and sustainable development. They are creating forums where citizens of the community can actively work to meet their own needs whether in terms of voicing their opinions or in providing services for their own communities. According to the Ghaus-Pasha (2002) study, which found about 45,000 such organizations active in Pakistan, the most important activity of this sector was education (religious and primary, secondary or higher) that provided the most employment followed by health. NGO's rely on the government to support funding only six percent, whereas citizens contributed Rs 41 billion and volunteered 1.6 billion hours of time to philanthropic activities while 94 percent of this went to religious institutions and causes (Ghaus-Pasha, 2002).

Wealthy donors, non- profits, corporations and foundations in the United States have also provided funding for a variety of initiatives aimed at using digital media to reach and engage the youth in civic and political activities (Montgomery, 2008). Perhaps similar initiatives relevant to a developing nation like Pakistan could be undertaken. Youth, the greatest cohort of Pakistan, should be directly involved in dialogue as the key stakeholders, innovators, future policy-makers and leaders of this nation. This process may lead to public as well as private initiatives that will help to unleash the potential of social media as drivers of social change in hopes of achieving sustainability and benefitting successive

## **Discussion**

Social media is as ubiquitous as change itself. The evolution and pervasion of social media in everyday life shows that they are having significant social implications (Cachia, 2008). But does it mean that these applications have the capability to promote or even instigate social change? The answer is --- to some extent. The results of this study support all four of the hypotheses proposed. The independent variable of Facebook usage has a positive and significant relationship with the overall dependent variable of social change (H4). Facebook usage also has a positive and significant relationship with civic participation as an indicator of the social marketing objective of social change (H1) and the same applies to the other two indicators of social change, empowerment (H2) and attitude (H3), but to a lesser extent. Overall, the “type of information sought” mainly dealt with learning about old and new contacts, about local events or happenings and about the news whereas the “type of groups” the participants belonged to were mostly social and entertainment followed by professional. Eastin (2005) found that entertainment, information sought and provided and social motivations all predict older adolescent Internet use.

A report by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2006) found that young people are amongst the most enthusiastic communicators and they view their online communication as “vehicles for personal expression rather than civic discourse” but there are apparent indications that these applications are also being used by youth to participate in public conversations and become “citizen journalists”. Similarly, a study by Yusuf (2008) found that digital technologies, such as Facebook, were used to promote democracy, coordinate action and propagate citizen journalism during the “Pakistan Emergency” (the period between March 2007 and February 2008 when a state of emergency was imposed, the constitution suspended, a popular politician assassinated, media censorship imposed and general elections conducted). This “citizen journalism” prompted university students to organize political action and

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